

Carmarthenshire County Council

Democratic Public Participation Strategy

Helping to increase public participation in Local
Government

This document forms part of the Carmarthenshire County Council Public Participation Strategy which can be viewed here [\(ADD LINK\)](#)

This document applies from 1st May 2022.

Democratic Services, Carmarthenshire County Council, County Hall, Carmarthen.
01267 224028 / Democraticservices@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

This Democratic Public Participation Strategy details how Carmarthenshire County Council aims to promote: -

- awareness among local people of the principal council's functions;
- awareness among local people of how to become a member of the principal council, and what membership entails;
- ways of facilitating access for local people to information about decisions made, or to be made, by the principal council;
- ways of promoting and facilitating processes by which local people may make representations to the principal council about a decision before, and after, it is made;
- arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of the council's duty in bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees
- ways of promoting awareness among members of the principal council of the benefits of using social media to communicate with local people

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What are the Council's functions?

HOW THE COUNCIL OPERATES

All councillors meet together as the Council. Meetings of the Council are normally open to the public, but occasionally the Council will resolve to go into private session if confidential or exempt business is to be transacted. Private sessions of Council are rare. At Council meetings councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year. The Council has a Cabinet which is responsible in turn for implementing policies agreed by the Council and taking executive decisions on matters which are not the responsibility of the Council or of one of its committees.

HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS

The Council comprises 75 elected Councillors representing 51 Electoral Wards. The Council normally meets on a monthly basis and has a list of functions including adopting and changing the Constitution, approving and adopting the Budget and Policy Framework, appointing the Leader, determining and agreeing Committees and their terms of reference.

Up to ten of the Council's members make up the Cabinet (the Executive), including the Leader of the Council. The Cabinet is responsible for carrying out all the local authority functions which are not the responsibility of the Council. Cabinet Members are responsible for decision making within specific areas of interest, known as portfolios.

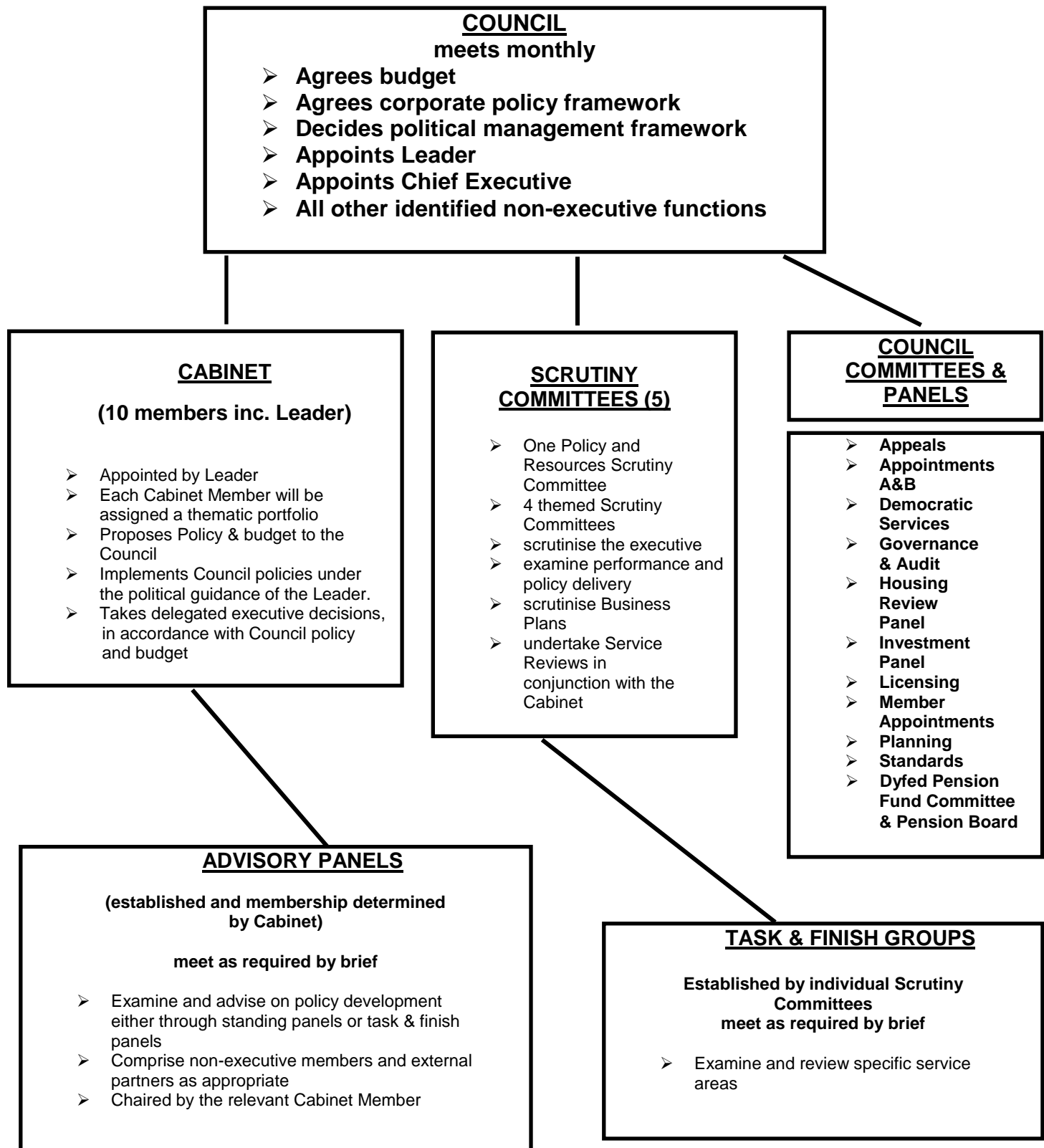
Scrutiny Committees act as a 'critical friend' to the Cabinet and other decision makers in order to promote better services, policies and decisions. Working in a similar way to parliamentary select committees, scrutiny involves councillors who are not in the cabinet.

The Planning Committee, Licensing Committees and Governance & Audit Committee make the Council's regulatory decisions. Planning Committee determines planning applications, Licensing Committee determines licences to drive a hackney carriage or a private hire vehicle (taxis), public entertainment licences for premises amongst others, and Governance & Audit Committee reviews and scrutinises the Council's financial affairs. Democratic Services Committee reviews the adequacy of provision by the Authority to discharge the democratic services function and there is also a Standards Committee to promote high standards of conduct and support Councillors to comply with the Code of Conduct.

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Council's decision making structure:-



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How to become a member of the Council and what it entails

HOW TO BECOME A COUNCILLOR

The next Local Government Elections will be held in May 2027. This section provides you with information on how to stand for election and what is expected of you should you be elected as a Councillor for Carmarthenshire County Council.

STANDING AS A CANDIDATE

A candidate for election must complete a set of nomination papers that must be signed by the candidate in the presence of a witness who must attest the signature. You then need to win a majority of the votes cast at the ballot box, if there is a contest for the seat. The number of votes you need to win depends on the electoral division in which you choose to stand for election. Some electoral divisions are two or three member divisions.

Nomination packs will be available early in 2027. If you would like to register your interest please contact Electoral Services on 01267 228609.

If you are thinking of standing as a candidate for a particular political party, then you should first get in touch with that party's local organisation. If you plan to stand for election as an independent Councillor, contact us and we will be pleased to give you more information.

Councillors receive a salary which is determined annually by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and can also claim travel and subsistence costs (subsistence is paid for 'out of county' meals and accommodation only) when undertaking official duties. Councillors can also claim towards the costs of care and personal assistance in order for them to carry out their approved duties.

The Welsh Government has approved funding for a pilot scheme to fund reasonable adjustments and support for disabled candidates seeking election to the Local Government elections. Further information can be found [here](#).

Further information on allowances can be viewed by clicking on the following Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales web page:

[Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales](#)

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WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM ELECTED?

The Council is composed of 75 Councillors who are elected every five years. Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their electoral division. The overriding duty of councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

Councillors are entitled to a basic salary (**currently £14,368 per annum 2021-22**). Senior Salaries and other allowances/expenses are paid dependant on the roles and responsibilities you may have following election. Further information on payments can be obtained from the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW). A copy of the **draft** determinations for 2022-23 can also be found on the IRPW website.

Councillors are also entitled to travel allowances and those with caring responsibilities can also receive reimbursement of costs of care.

Once elected Councillors are expected to attend various training and development sessions during their term of office. An induction session is provided for all new and returning Councillors during the first 12 months in office with further training provided on an ongoing basis through member development events.

If you are elected, you should be prepared to set aside the first two weeks after the election for the member Induction Session in May/June 2027

Councillors are expected to attend meetings and committees and are bound to observe the provisions of the Councillor's Code of Conduct.

As local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations. These responsibilities and duties often depend on what the councillor wants to achieve and how much time is available and may include: attending governing body meetings of schools within their ward, attending meetings of local organisations such as tenants' associations, bodies affecting the wider community, raising issues on behalf of members of the public, holding surgeries for residents to raise issues and meeting with individual residents in their own homes.

HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE UP?

If you are in employment and intend to stand as a candidate you may wish to ask your employer what provisions they may have in place to allow you to attend to Council business. It is estimated that on average, councillors spend the equivalent of three to four days a week on council business. Obviously, there are some councillors who spend more time than this - and some less.

The Welsh Local Government Association has produced a Be a Councillor Be the Change in association with local authorities which is an useful guide for prospective candidates.

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COUNCILLOR FACILITIES AND SUPPORT

The Democratic Services Unit administers meetings of the Council and provides a dedicated support service, providing advice on the law and practice of meetings to Councillors, officers and the public and assistance to all Councillors with queries and admin related requests.

Councillors, once elected, will be provided with a tablet device, laptop and an @carmarthenshire.gov.uk email address which must be used when conducting Council business. All Council meetings are paperless and it is recommended that all candidates are able to use IT confidently or are willing to undertake training.

The Council is a bilingual Authority and, as a Councillor, you will be able to operate in your chosen language, be that Welsh or English, and interpretation facilities are available at all Council meetings to facilitate this. Welsh language training is also available for any Councillors wishing to learn the language.

How to access information about decisions that are or have been made by the Council

NOTICES OF MEETING

The Council will give at least three clear days' notice of any meeting by posting details electronically on the Council's web site. However, an exception will arise where the Council has received an application from the Police under section 53A of the Licensing Act 2003 for the summary review of a premises licence (The Council being required to decide on whether to take any preliminary measures within 48 hours of receiving the application), the Council may give less than 3 clear days' notice of the meeting of the Licensing Committee meeting called to consider the application.

ACCESS TO AGENDA AND REPORTS BEFORE THE MEETING

The Council will make copies of the agenda and reports open to the public available for inspection on the Council's website. If an item is added to the agenda later, the revised agenda (where reports are prepared after the summons has been sent out, the Chief Executive will make each such report available to the public as soon as the report is completed and sent to Councillors) will be open to inspection for the time the item was added to the agenda.

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ACCESS TO MINUTES ETC. AFTER THE MEETING

The Council will make available to view on its website copies of the following for a period of six years after a meeting: (a) the minutes of the meeting or record of decisions taken by the Cabinet , excluding any part of the minutes of proceedings when the meeting was not open to the public because exempt or confidential information was being considered; (b) a summary of any proceedings not open to the public where the minutes open to inspection would not provide a reasonably fair and coherent record; (c) the agenda for the meeting; and (d) reports relating to items when the meeting was open to the public. A decision note which details, attendance, any interests declared and decisions will be published on the Authority's website within 7 days of the meeting.

ACCESS TO VIEW MEETINGS*

The Council will ensure members of the public can attend or view meetings that are open to the public either:-

- in person (social distancing regulations permitting and part of the meeting includes physical attendance)
- through video conferencing if making representations /asking questions
- by watching a meeting live via our webcast page or in archive (the webcast will be available to view for 6 months) Requests for copies of archived webcasts beyond 6 months can be made through Democratic Services – a small administrative charge may apply for this service.

(*This does not apply when exempt or confidential information is being discussed).

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How to participate and make representations to the Council before and after a decision has been made;

COUNCIL & CABINET

Members of the public, provided that they are residents of the County, own a business located within the County or are employed within the County can ask questions at Full Council Meetings, meetings of the Cabinet and at Scrutiny Committee meetings.

To ask a question you need to deliver your question in writing or by electronic mail to the Chief Executive (e-mail chiefexecutive@carmarthenshire.gov.uk) no later than 10.00 a.m. 7 clear working days before a meeting (NB clear days does not include the day the question is received or the day of the meeting).

When submitting your question, you must include your name and address (include your business name and address if you own a business located in Carmarthenshire or work in Carmarthenshire but live elsewhere) and you must name the member of the Council to whom it is to be put.

The Council also welcomes petitions and recognizes that petitions are one of many ways in which people can let us know their concerns and engage in the democratic process. A copy of the Council's petition scheme can be found here. (ADD LINK)

SCRUTINY

Getting involved in scrutiny is one of the best ways to influence decision making at the Council, as Councillors will hear your experiences first hand. There are a number of ways you can get involved in the work of scrutiny at the council:

- Asking a question or attending a Scrutiny meeting
- Keeping up-to-date with what's happening in scrutiny
- [Suggesting a topic for review](#)
- Contribute evidence for scrutiny reviews

Further information on participation in Scrutiny can be found later in this document and or/on our [Scrutiny pages](#) .

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REPRESENTATIONS AT PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Council has a set process for making representations at both Planning and Licensing Committees:-

To find out more about making representations at Planning and Licensing Committee meetings please click on the following links:-

[Representations at Planning Committee meetings.](#)

[Representations at Licensing Committees](#)

How to bring the views of the public to attention of scrutiny committees

HOW CAN I BECOME INVOLVED IN SCRUTINY?

The involvement of local residents, community organisations and partners is an important part of the Carmarthenshire scrutiny process and our Councillors are committed to responding to the views and concerns of residents.

Getting involved in scrutiny is one of the best ways to influence decision making at the Council, as Councillors will hear your experiences first hand. There are a number of ways you can get involved in the work of scrutiny at the council:

- Attending a Scrutiny meeting
- Keeping up-to-date with what's happening in scrutiny
- Suggesting a topic for review
- Contribute evidence for scrutiny reviews

All scrutiny meetings are open to the public except where exempt information has to be discussed. A list of meeting dates and agenda items can be found on the council's [meeting diary](#). If you would like to attend a meeting simply come along to the meeting venue (stated on the front of the agenda).

Scrutiny provides the opportunity for the public to become involved in the Council's activities. You can request that an item be placed on the agenda and if you are a resident of Carmarthenshire or own a business or are employed within Carmarthenshire you may ask questions at Scrutiny meetings. Further information is included in our [Scrutiny Procedure Rules 10. \(3\) and \(4\)](#) or contact us for further information

KEEPING UP-TO-DATE WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SCRUTINY

There are a number of ways you can keep up to date with what is happening in Scrutiny, you can:-

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- Subscribe to RSS feed on our website which will automatically update you when agendas and minutes are published. **RSS** stands for "Really Simple Syndication" and is a easily way to keep updated on Scrutiny Committee work. The subscribe button is at the top of this page.
- Download the mod.[gov app](#) which will allow you to automatically download and view meeting papers.
- Check our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) feeds for regular updates.

SUGGESTING A TOPIC FOR REVIEW

- If you think there is an issue that scrutiny should look at, then let us know. You can suggest a topic for review by emailing us, or by downloading and posting our [topic suggestion form](#).

CONTRIBUTE EVIDENCE FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS

When undertaking in scrutiny work, especially in depth reviews, Councillors hope to receive a wide-range of evidence from a number of sources. Submitting evidence will help ensure that your voice is heard and that the Councillors make recommendations that will improve the services from an user's perspective. If you are interested in any issues and would like to submit evidence, please contact us:-

Democratic Services Unit, Carmarthenshire County Council, County Hall, Carmarthen,
SA31 1JP

Tel: 01267 224028 | E-mail: scrutiny@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

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The benefits to Councillors of using social media to communicate with local people.

Social media has become a powerful tool for councillors, helping them to engage with communities, raise awareness of community issues, events, or council initiatives and to seek views and receive feedback.

Social media has changed how politics works, it makes politicians and public institutions more accessible, allows individuals to have their voices heard and helps share ideas or promote campaigns.

By using social media you can:-

- Learn about local issues, and concerns within your ward.
- Find the latest news and publications from Carmarthenshire County Council, other local authorities, the Welsh Government and organisations such as the Welsh Local Government Association.
- Promote your role and what you do on a day to day basis.
- Social media is instant, you can share information quickly and gain opinions of your constituents.

Many councillors already use social media however as a councillor, there are additional things to consider when using it, including the Code of Conduct and managing expectation.

Once elected, Councillors are invited to attend an induction session on using social media and the Council also has an e-learning module available. As a Councillor you will be personally responsible for the content you publish and you must abide by the Code of Conduct when posting information as the Code of Conduct applies to online and social media content, and by referring on line to your role as Councillor you will be deemed to be acting in your 'official capacity' and the Code will apply,.

The Welsh Local Government Association has provided free guidance for Councillors along with some tips and advice in terms of handling on-line abuse.

[WLGA Information on Social Media and Online Abuse](#)

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