

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report

2021 - 2022

Scrutiny
in Carmarthenshire



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Cyngor **Sir Gâr**
Carmarthenshire
County Council



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Chair's Foreword

Welcome to the annual report for the Policy and Resources scrutiny committee for the civic year 2021/2022. As Chairman I am pleased to present this report to you detailing what work has been undertaken by the committee in the last year.

The past year has seen us all still living under covid restrictions albeit things were starting to ease off by the end of the council year.



We were again during this year still subject to the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 which came into force on the 22nd April 2020 allowing the Authority to make arrangements for meetings to take place remotely. Having been using remote video conferencing software since 2020 council members have been well versed in participating in this way, which has allowed us to continue monitoring standard and regular reports, as well as new policies and strategies being introduced by the County Council.

With the pandemic still amongst us the committee sought to review the council's vaccination policy, something that was of course unique to this time. With technology playing an ever prevalent role we had several strategies and reports to review with regard to this area of policy. Our role to monitor sickness absence also continued during this difficult time.

I am looking forward, once again, to the challenge of chairing this Committee in the coming year and with the assistance of my Vice Chair and the rest of the Committee I hope we will have a positive impact on the outcomes for the residents of Carmarthenshire. We will continue to work closely with the Council's senior managers and staff to ensure that it is a productive year ahead.

One of the most positive aspects of the past year has been the increase in members of the public tuning in, to not only watch but participate in scrutiny meetings. We have had regular questions and interventions from web users and have managed to deal with them real time through our systems. Whilst the council may move back to a more hybrid style of holding meetings, with some members in council offices and others using technology from their home or work place I very much hope that the interaction between us as councillors and the public continues.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the Committee and officers for their contributions and dedication during 2021/22.

Cllr. Giles Morgan
Chair of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

1. Introduction

Article 6.2 of the Council's Constitution requires all scrutiny committees to "*prepare an annual report giving an account of the Committee's activities over the previous year.*"

The main aims of the report are to highlight the work that has been undertaken by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee during 2021/22. It outlines the potential future work of the Committee. The document may also facilitate discussions on other items that could be included within future work programmes.

The Committee is chaired by Cllr. Giles Morgan and is made up of 13 Elected Members. Support is provided to the Panel by the Democratic Services Team and other Council officers as and when required.

This report provides an overview of the work of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee during 2021/22 municipal year. It gives Members the opportunity to reflect on the achievements during the year and to identify what worked well and where improvements could be made. This analysis is instrumental in developing scrutiny.

2. Overview of the work of the Committee 2021/22

2.1 Number of Meetings

The Scrutiny Committee held 7 meetings in the 2021/22 Civic Year.

2.2 The Work Programme

The Scrutiny Committee develops its own Forward Work Programme (FWP) which, for 2021/22, was confirmed by the Committee on 30TH April 2021.

The Forward Work Programme (FWP) was mainly based on key areas identified as objectives within the Council's Corporate Strategy 2018-23 together with standard items such as performance and budget monitoring reports, action plan monitoring reports, and specific requests from the scrutiny committee itself. Additional reports were also requested by the scrutiny committee during the year and the Forward Work Programme was amended accordingly.

The development of the concept of the Forward Work Programme and the process for its agreement, has allowed each scrutiny committee to determine its own work agendas. The benefits of such an approach has led to an improved level of debate and input during scrutiny committee meetings.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 put long term sustainability at the forefront of how public services are designed and delivered and it places emphasis on public bodies to work in partnership with each other and the public to prevent and tackle problems. The Act established Public Service Boards (PSB) for each Local Authority in Wales.

To ensure that PSBs are democratically accountable there was a requirement on Councils to designate an overview and scrutiny committee to scrutinise the work of the PSB. As the Council's designated Scrutiny Committee in this regard the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee has continued in its role of scrutinising the work of the PSB and holding it to account on its performance in meeting the objectives of the Local Well-Being Plan. In this regard the Committee regularly received the minutes of meetings of the PSB.

The following sections will provide a snapshot of the main areas of the Committee's work.

2.3 Revenue & Capital Budgets

The Committee received quarterly reports on the departmental and corporate revenue and capital budgets. These reports enabled members to monitor the level of spend in each area and the progress made in any capital works.

As well as monitoring the current budget the Committee was also consulted on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25. The report provided the Committee with the current proposals for the Revenue Budget for 2022/23 together with the indicative figures for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years.

Members accepted the report and endorsed the Charging Digest.

The Committee was consulted on the Five -Year Capital Programme 2022/23 - 2026/27.

Outcome:

County Council approved the Revenue Budget Strategy and the Five-Year Capital Programme.

2.4 Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Reports

The Committee received updates outlining the activities within the Treasury Management Function, in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy approved by the County Council on the 3rd March 2021.

2.5 2020/21 Departmental and Corporate Performance Monitoring Reports

One of the principal roles of scrutiny committees is to monitor the performance of services and functions within its remit. They undertake this work mainly through the consideration of half-yearly performance monitoring reports and various action plan monitoring reports. The performance monitoring report provides a balanced picture of performance across the relevant service areas. The Committee considered the performance reports for its remit at its meetings in October 2021 and January 2022.

2.6 Sickness Absence Monitoring

In July 2021 the Committee considered an end-of-year Sickness Absence Monitoring for 2020/21 which detailed departmental sickness absence data and provided sickness absence monitoring data for the cumulative period ending 31st March 2021 and an overview of the employee wellbeing support provided. In February 2022 the Committee considered a half-year Sickness Absence Monitoring for 2021/22.

2.7 Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (PSB)

In June, October and December 2021 and March 2022 the Committee, as the designated scrutiny committee appointed to scrutinise the work of the PSB, considered the minutes of meetings of the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board. In June 2021 the Committee also received the Carmarthenshire Well-being Plan Annual report published by Carmarthenshire PSB for the period 2020-2021. In December 2021 the Committee received the Carmarthenshire draft Assessment of Local Well-being report which had been approved by the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board on 24th November 2021 for consultation with the public and stakeholders.

2.8 Annual Report 2020/21 on the Welsh language

In July 2021 the Committee considered the Annual Report in relation to the Welsh language and compliance with the Welsh Language Standards during 2020-21. The Report had been produced to comply with the Welsh Language Commissioner's monitoring arrangements.

2.9 Digital Transformation Strategy and Digital Technology Strategy Annual Report 2021

In July 2021 the Committee considered and endorsed the Digital Transformation Strategy and Digital Technology Strategy Annual Report 2021 which provided an update on two of Carmarthenshire County Councils three Digital Strategies.

2.10 Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2020-21 and Action Plan 2021-24

In July 2021 the Committee considered the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2020-21, together with the Action Plan for 2021-24, which detailed how the Council had implemented its Strategic Equality Plan and fulfilled its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Specific Duties for Wales.

2.11 Council CCTV Policy

In June 2021 the Committee endorsed the Council CCTV Policy relating to council-owned CCTV systems in public places. The policy would ensure the Council's use and management of its public space CCTV camera systems was compliant with the Protection of Freedoms Act (POFA) 2012.

2.12 Handling Personal Data Policy

In July 2021 the Committee endorsed a proposed 'Handling Personal Data Policy' to replace the 'Handling Personal Information Policy' and 'Procedure and Breach Reporting & Response Policy' both of which had exceeded their review dates and required updating to reflect changes in working practices, the use of new IT and decisions and guidance issued by the Information Commissioner's Office.

[2.13 Digital Schools Strategy Annual Report 2021](#)

In October 2021 the Committee approved the Digital Schools Strategy Annual Report 2021. The Strategy sets out the vision for the provision of ICT Services to Schools across Carmarthenshire.

[2.14 Vaccination Policy](#)

In October 2021 the Committee considered the Authority's proposed new vaccination policy for its staff that set out clearly the Authority's approach to vaccination and the ancillary workforce issues that surrounded it.

[2.15 Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Policy and Modern Slavery, Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Statement](#)

In October 2021 the Committee received the Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Policy and Modern Slavery, Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Statement.

[2.16 Departmental Business Plans](#)

In February 2022 the Committee considered the Chief Executive and Corporate Services Departmental Business Plans 2022-23 which outlined the priorities for the departments and identified how they supported the 5 Ways of Working and the 7 Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. In March 2022 the Committee also considered extracts of the Environment Departmental Business Plan 2022-23 relating to the Property Division which were relevant to the Committee's remit.

[2.17 Digital Schools Strategy and the Digital Technology Strategy 2022-2025](#)

In February 2022 the Committee endorsed the Digital Schools Strategy and the Digital Technology Strategy 2022-2025. The strategies had been revised and updated to set out the Council's strategic priorities to underpin the delivery of digital learning over the next 3 years, along with the direction of the digital technologies that would be adapted by the Council to underpin all digital services.

[2.18 Domestic Abuse, Domestic Violence & Sexual Violence Policy](#)

In February 2022 the Committee endorsed the Domestic Abuse, Domestic Violence & Sexual Violence Policy for the Council which revised the previously adopted Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy in line with aims and objectives of the Authority and prevailing legislation.

[2.19 TIC \(Transform, Innovate and Change\) Programme Position Statement](#)

In February 2022 the Committee received a report which detailed progress on the implementation of key priorities within the current TIC Programme and key actions to be taken forward next year as part of the TIC Business Plan.

3. Other Scrutiny Activity

3.1 Task and Finish

The Committee did not undertake a task and finish review during 2021/22.

3.2 Site Visits

The Committee did not undertake any site visits during 2021/22.

3.3 Development Sessions

The following member development sessions / member seminars were held during 2021/22:

- virtual demonstration of the Staff Headcount dashboard;

In addition to the above, several budget seminars were held during January as part of the Council's consultation process on the 2022/23 Revenue Budget and the five-year capital programme.

4. Challenges

In undertaking its work the Committee has faced several challenges, which have included items not being reported in line with the Forward Work Programme and the time lapse in receiving financial reports though the latter was being addressed insofar as financial procedures permitted.

5. Future Work

The Committee has made significant progress and will continue to concentrate on topics where Member's input will result in positive outcomes to drive forward service improvement. The future work of the Committee will be detailed in its Forward Work Programme which will continue to be monitored during the course of the forthcoming year.

6. Support for the Scrutiny Function

Support for Carmarthenshire County Council's Scrutiny function is provided by the Democratic Services Unit, based in the Administration & Law Division of the Chief Executive's Department. This includes:

- Providing support and constitutional advice to the Council's Scrutiny Committees and to members of those Committees as well as producing minutes of their meetings and ensuring items arising from those meetings are actioned
- Giving support and advice in relation to the functions of the Council's Scrutiny Committees to executive and non-executive members of the Council and its officers;
- Managing the strategic development of Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire through engaging in national and regional Scrutiny networks and initiatives,

- supporting the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum, and the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Executive Board Forum;
- Advising and supporting the implementation of the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 as guidance is published;
 - Managing the co-ordination and development of the Scrutiny forward work programmes in conjunction with Scrutiny members;
 - Managing and co-ordinating Scrutiny review work, including the operation of scrutiny task and finish groups, authoring reports in conjunction with the groups, and assisting in the implementation and monitoring of completed reviews;
 - Managing the Scrutiny member development programme;
 - Despatching agendas for Scrutiny Committee meetings a minimum of 4 working days prior to the meeting.

For more information on scrutiny in Carmarthenshire including work programmes, task and finish reports and annual reports, visit the County Council's website at: www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/scrutiny

To contact the Democratic Services Unit, please call 01267 224028 or e-mail scrutiny@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

7. Attendance

Attendance by members of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee during the 2021/22 year is shown in the table below. A total of 7 virtual meetings were held between May 2021 and April 2022.

Scrutiny Committee Member	No. of meetings attended out of possible 7	%
Cllr. S.M. Allen	6	87%
Cllr. K. Broom	7	100%
Cllr. D. Cundy	6	87%
Cllr. H. Davies	6	87%
Cllr. T.A.J. Davies from 20/10/21	3 [out of 5]	60%
Cllr. W.R.A. Davies up to 21/7/21	1 [out of 2]	50%
Cllr. J. Edmunds	6	85%
Cllr. J. K. Howell	7	100%
Cllr. G.H. John	7	100%
Cllr. A.C. Jones	6	85%
Cllr. K. Madge	7	100%
Cllr. A.G. Morgan	7	100%

Cllr. J. G. Prosser	4	57%
Cllr. D.E. Williams	7	100%
Substitutes	No. of meetings attended	
Cllr. D. Jones	1	
CABINET MEMBERS	No. of meetings attended	
Cllr. C.A. Davies	5	
Cllr. G. Davies	1	
Cllr. E. Dole	4	
Cllr. H.A.L. Evans	1	
Cllr. L.D. Evans	1	
Cllr. P.M. Hughes	1	
Cllr. P. Hughes-Griffiths	1	
Cllr. D.M. Jenkins	6	
Cllr. M. Stephens (Cllr. Stephens passed away on 9/1/22)	3	
Cllr. J. Tremlett	1	

8. Glossary of Terms

CIPFA - The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

PSB - Public Service Board

FWP - Forward Work Programme

TIC - Transform, Innovate & Change

WBFG – Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015