

# Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee

## Annual Report

2020 - 2021

**Scrutiny**  
in Carmarthenshire



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Cyngor **Sir Gâr**  
**Carmarthenshire**  
County Council



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## Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present this Annual Report of the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee which provides an overview of the work undertaken during the period between May 2020 to April 2021.

I would like to start by stating that there is no doubt that 2020/21 was a significantly challenging time for everyone. My condolences to those families who have lost loved ones and those persons and businesses who are struggling from the impact of Covid-19.



I am proud to say that during the pandemic, this Council had an overwhelming focus to protect its residents and continue to operate its key functions.

Together, we have learnt to scrutinise remotely, maintain a flexible approach to our forward work programme and adapt rapidly to changing priorities. Whilst working closely with officers, the Committee was able to continue to undertake a robust and member led approach.

This report includes evidence that, by managing the forward work programme this scrutiny committee can produce good quality scrutiny at pace. The new virtual way of working has taught us that we can maintain quality scrutiny whilst being flexible and agile.

This year was a much shorter Municipal Year than normal due to the pandemic related suspension of scrutiny April to November.

From November, we were able to resume our activity with a revised, carefully managed forward work programme which included the emerging issues such as Covid-19 related reports as well as the traditional scrutiny reports. The Committee was alert not to place any undue burden on officers who were involved in the Covid response and recovery process.

In addition, the change in the format of Scrutiny Committees to include Executive Board Members to present the reports placed on the Forward Work Programme by the Committee, has strengthened the decision-making process. This, I feel has been extremely beneficial and I express my thanks as Chair, to the Executive Board Members who have presented reports during this year.

I would like to thank my Vice Chair, Councillor Aled Vaughan Owen, for his invaluable support and officers for their hard work both in facilitating the Scrutiny process and for providing opportunities to enhance our collective resilience, enabling us to focus on key issues for the benefit of the communities that we serve.

Lastly, but not in the least, I am grateful to all the Committee Members who have been well prepared and focused for all meetings, thus allowing the Committee, through discussion and debate, raise pertinent questions/comments and implement informed decisions.

**Councillor John James**  
**Chair of Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee**

## 1. Introduction

The scrutiny function is a key element of the County Council's governance arrangements and decision-making process. Although not a decision-making body, Scrutiny is at its most effective when it grasps the potential to influence and inform decisions made by both the Council and partner bodies affecting the County.

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

This report provides an overview of the work of the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee during the reduced six-month committee cycle for 2020/21 municipal year. It aims to highlight the work of the Committee and reflect on the achievements identifying what worked well and where improvements could be made. This analysis is instrumental in developing scrutiny. In addition, this report may aid to facilitate discussions on items which could be identified for inclusion within future work programmes.

The Committee is chaired by the Councillor John James and is made up of 14 Elected Members. Support is provided to the Panel by the Democratic Services Team and other Council officers as and when required.

The Committee helps deliver a number of key outcome measures within the Council's Corporate Strategy 2018-23:

- **Wellbeing objective 8** –  
Live Well-Help people live healthy lives
  
- **Wellbeing objective 9** –  
Live Well/Age Well – Support good connections with friends, family and safer communities
  
- **Wellbeing objective 12** –  
Healthy and Safety Environment – Look after the environment now and in the future
  
- **Wellbeing objective 13** –  
  
Healthy and Safe Environment – Improve the highway and transport infrastructure and connectivity

Some of the measures and actions within Wellbeing objective 12 overlap with Community Scrutiny, however the necessary information was also be provided to this Committee.

## 2. Overview of the work of the Committee in 2020/21

### 2.1 Number of Meetings

The Scrutiny Committee held 5 meetings during the 2020/21 municipal year.

Scrutiny meetings in Carmarthenshire was suspended during April and October 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. The meetings recommenced in November following Welsh Government passing temporary emergency regulations to relax some of the rules relating to the conduct of council business.

The joint meeting with the Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee was also cancelled due to Health Board resourcing constraints during the pandemic.

### 2.2 The Role of the Executive Board Member

The Council, at its meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2020 agreed a number of changes to its Scrutiny Procedure Rules and remits. The principal change was that the Executive Board Members would be expected to attend, present the reports placed on the Forward Work Programme by the Committee and answer questions raised by Scrutiny Members thus holding the Executive Board to account. Relevant Officers can be called upon to provide additional information on operational issues.

#### **Environment –**

The Committee has responsibility for monitoring the work of the Environment Department which includes the work of the Waste and Environmental, Highways and Transport, Property Services and Policy & Performance divisions.

**Executive Board Member for Environment** is responsible for:

Refuse	Caretaking
Street Cleansing	Building Cleaning
Highways and Transport Services	Emergency Planning
Grounds Maintenance	Flooding
Building Services	Public Rights of Way

#### **Public Protection –**

The Committee has responsibility for monitoring the work of the Public Protection / Trading Standards Services, which are part of the Housing & Public Protection Division.

**Executive Board Member for Public Protection** is responsible for

Trading Standards;	Unlicensed Waste
Environmental Health	Parking Services;
Environmental Enforcement;	Biodiversity
Planning enforcement	

## **Community Safety / Crime & Disorder –**

One of the key roles of the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee is its capacity as the Council's Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee. The Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee has specific additional Terms of Reference whereby it has exercise of powers relating to crime and disorder ([6.4 within the Constitution](#)).

**Executive Board Member for Communities and Rural Affairs** is responsible for

Rural Affairs and Community Engagement	Community Safety; Police
Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015	Tackling Poverty;
Third Sector Liaison	Wellbeing of Future Generations
Climate Change Strategy.	Equalities

In addition, the Executive Board Member for Resources attends the meetings to present finance related reports including the budget monitoring reports.

### 2.3 The Forward Work Programme

The Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee develops its Forward Work Programme with matters that fall within remit which covers:-

- **Waste and Environmental Services including:-**
  - Refuse Collection,
  - Street Cleaning,
  - Grounds Maintenance,
  - Building Cleaning (including Schools, where relevant),
  - Public Toilets
  
- **Transport and Streetscene including:-**
  - Highways, Street Lighting,
  - Bridges,
  - Traffic Management,
  - Parking Services,
  - Cycle paths and Rights of Way;
  
- **Environmental Enforcement including:-**
  - Litter, Dog Fouling;
  - Abandoned Vehicles etc;
  - Planning Enforcement;
  - Trading Standards;

- **Community Safety issues including:-**
  - Crime and Disorder Referrals  
*(to include a power to make a report or recommendations to the County Council and/or the Council's Executive Board);*
- **Environmental and Public Health Pest Control:-**
  - Social Inclusion;
  - the Community;
  - Biodiversity;
  - Zero Carbon.

Whilst the Committee has the option to co-opt non-voting employees, officers or members of Responsible Authorities or co-operating persons or bodies in respect of its crime and disorder functions, [subject to the provisions of the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009] did not do so during the 2020/21 municipal year.

In March 2020, the Committee at its annual Forward Work Programme development session developed its own Forward Work Programme (FWP) by identifying and prioritising agenda items for consideration during the next municipal year.

In addition to the standard items such as performance and budget monitoring reports as well as action plans and monitoring reports the Committee identified pre-decision reports from the Executive Board Forward Work Programme 2020/21.

Unfortunately, due to the covid-19 pandemic the Committee's scrutiny meetings were suspended from April 2020 therefore did not have the opportunity to ratify the developed FWP. However, in line with regulations and member training the Committee was able to resume its meetings from November 2020. In preparation, the Committee met informally to review and reprioritise its Forward Work Programme for the remainder of 2020/21 commencing in November 2020.

The Committee continued with other scrutiny activities, which included a task and finish review and Members development sessions.

The following sections provide a snapshot of the Committee's work over the last year.

## 2.4 Performance Management

**Performance Monitoring Reports** - One of the principal roles of a scrutiny committee is to monitor the performance of services and functions within its remit. However, in order that the performance monitoring reports are provided to Scrutiny Committees a review on the current performance monitoring cycle was being undertaken to ensure that they were being presented in more-timely manner. Therefore, whilst the review was taking place, all standard performance monitoring reports and business plans had been removed from the forward work programme and would be re-introduced upon completion of the review.

In addition, the pandemic had resulted in the Departmental Action Plans not being presented to Scrutiny Committees, in order to allow services to concentrate on dealing with emergencies. The Committee did however receive a Covid pandemic Impact Assessment at its meeting in November 2020 (see section 2.6. Impact of Covid 19 on services covered by the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee).

**Half year Performance Report 2020/21 (1st April to 30th September 2020)** - was considered by the Committee at its meeting in February 2021, detailed the progress made against the performance measures contained in the Corporate Strategy 2020/21. During the meeting, reference was made to the fact that some measures were listed as having no target, the committee noted that the absence of targets was due to the circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic any information collected may not be informative during this period.

**Corporate Strategy 2018/23 – Update April 2021** - As part of its performance monitoring role, the Committee received relevant information from the Council's key strategies and plans. One of the key areas relating to the Council's management is the monitoring of progress achieved against the Council's well-being objectives detailed within the 2018/23 Corporate Strategy. With that in mind, the Committee, in March 2021, considered an update on the Strategy, as at April 2021.

The report detailed the progress being achieved against the Council's Well Being objectives, adopted in June 2018, as amended, to reflect developing priorities and the impact of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, Brexit and climate change. The Committee noted that while it was considered good practice to ensure the Corporate Strategy was up to date and resources allocated to priorities, the Improvement Objectives must be published annually in accordance with both the Local Government (Wales Measure 2009) and The Well-being of Future Generations Act.

<b>Outcome:</b>
The Executive Board at its meeting in March 2021 recommended to Council that the Corporate Strategy and Well-being objectives adopted in June 2018 be adjusted to reflect developing priorities, the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Brexit and climate change. Council approved the update report at its meeting in May 2021

**Departmental Business Plans (within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee) -**

The following Departmental Business plans were presented by the respective Executive Board Members to Committee Members in March 2021:-

- Environment Departmental Business Plan 2021/22
- Chief Executives Departmental Business Plan 2021/22
- Department for Communities Departmental Business Plan 2021/22

During the consideration, Members raised several comments and concerns regarding the actions and associated measures presented in the departmental plan and after discussion, the Committee unanimously resolved that further information be included in the actions and measures and that the above-mentioned Departmental Business Plans 2021/22 be submitted to the next meeting for consideration [April 2021].

Following consultation with the Chair, the meeting in April was cancelled in order to provide departments with extra time to work on the departmental Business Plans. Each of the plans would be placed on to the Committees Forward Work Programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.

## 2.5 Revenue and Capital Budgets

**Budget Monitoring Reports** - The Committee meeting having resumed in November 2020 continued to receive the budget monitoring reports on a quarterly basis 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.

**Consultation - Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24** - In February 2020, the Committee as a statutory consultee received the Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24 for consideration and comment. The report provided the Committee with the current proposals for the Revenue Budget for 2021/22 together with the indicative figures for the 2022/23 and 2023/2024 financial years.

It was reported that Covid-19 had led not just to unprecedented additional costs but also to the collapse of important income, particularly during the lockdown periods. Taken together, it was anticipated that the combination of additional expenditure and income loss would have a £30 million impact on Carmarthenshire's current year budgets. Authorities submitted monthly claims, which were assessed and to a significant extent was fully refunded by Welsh Government.

During consideration of this report, reference was made to a number of areas of concern including:-

- the increase in telephone scams targeting the elderly and vulnerable during lockdown,
- the reduction in the road sweeping budget
- reduction in funding for winter gritting

In addition to the above, the Committee resolved to recommend to Executive Board that the possibility of allocating additional funding for the Truecall service be explored.

### **Outcome:**

The Executive Board at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 unanimously recommended to Council to approve the budget strategy for 2021/22 which included the following proposals within the environment remit:-

- To remove both the gulley cleansing and road sweeping proposals;
- To reduce the highways surface dressing proposal from £300k to £100k;
- Provide funding of £75k for the TrueCall service;

The Council at its meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021, considered the Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24 which included the abovementioned Executive Board recommended adjustments. The Council resolved that the following recommendations of the Executive Board be adopted:-

2021/22:-

- The removal of the gulley cleansing saving proposal of £70k;
- The removal of the road sweeping saving proposal of £93k;  
*(The original efficiencies for these proposals would however still be implemented, leading to an overall increase in capacity in recognition of concerns over the impact of adverse weather events)*
- The reduction of the highways road surfacing saving proposal from £300k to £100k;
- Funding of £75k to be provided to support wider rollout of the TrueCall service to vulnerable residents to prevent telephone fraudsters;

## 2.6 Impact of Covid 19 on services covered by the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee

### 2.6.1 Impact of Covid-19 on the Environment Department's Services –

In November, the Committee received a report which provided a summary of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had on the Environmental department falling within the Committee's remit.

The Committee considered the areas presented by the Executive Board Member for Environment which covered:-

- “Waste and Environmental Services.
- Building Cleaning (including Schools, where relevant)
- Transport and Streetscene including Highways, Street Lighting, Bridges, Traffic Management, Parking Services, Cycle paths and Rights of Way



The Committee also considered the areas of the same report presented by the Executive Board Member for Public Protection presented the report for Public Protection which covered:-

- Environmental Enforcement including Litter, Dog Fouling; Abandoned Vehicles etc
- Planning Enforcement
- Biodiversity”

The following main points were raised which the Executive Board Member for Environment supported by officers responded:

- observation was made in relation to the recycling performance which was predicted to exceed the statutory target of 64%.

- In response to a query regarding the kerbside collection and if there had been any extra provision made during the pandemic.
- In reference to the online booking system for the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC), it was asked if this would continue into the future and what the costs were?
- As a result of the closure of the Household Waste Recycling Centres in the initial stages of the pandemic, it was asked if there was any evidence of an increase in fly-tipping.
- Queries were raised in relation to enforcement matters during the pandemic.

The Committee acknowledged the dedication, commitment, flexibility, and personal resilience shown and applied by staff, and commended their aptitude and contribution which was invaluable in ensuring the continuation of a service to the Communities within Carmarthenshire

## 2.6.2 Impact of Covid-19 on Homes and Safer Communities –

The Committee received a report presented by the Executive Board Member for Public Protection which provided a summary of how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on the Public Protection services.

The Committee raised a number of queries/observations in relation to the report where the Executive Board Members with the support of Officers responded accordingly. The main points raised were as follows:-

- Was there been any problems in receiving the correct information from the public?
- Concern was raised that vital information which helps contact tracing was being withheld by the public.
- Concerns were raised in relation the infectious period of Covid-19 and if this information was being properly broadcasted.
- Commented that the NHS track and trace app was only downloadable on newer smartphones and therefore concern was raised that there were members of the public may be being overlooked as they were not able to partake in the track and trace.
- In acknowledgement to the additional workload that had been placed upon the Trading Standards department, it was asked if there was scope to employ additional members to cope with the demand?



In recognising the unprecedented period and the sudden shift in the way of working, the Committee, together with the Executive Board Member expressed their gratitude to both staff and managers for their commitment in dealing with the most difficult of situations from homelessness, housing management and community engagement through to development and investment the flexibility and adaptability shown was exemplar.

The Committee unanimously received both reports presented.

## 2.7 Pre-Decision Scrutiny

### 2.7.1 Highways Asset Management Plan Annual Statement update – December 2020

The Executive Board Member for Environment presented the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) Annual Statement Report 2020 to the Committee at its meeting in December 2020. The Committee considered information on the highway network and provided detail on the following three key highway asset areas:

- Highways (carriageways, footways and cycleways)
- Bridges and Structures
- Highway Lighting and Traffic Signals

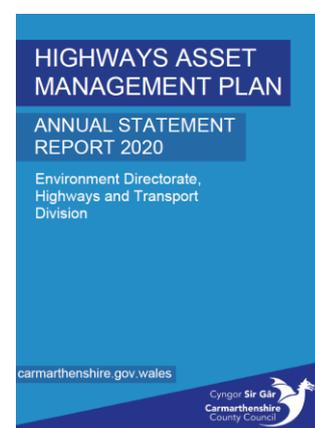
Each of the above asset categories which detailed the conditions, how conditions had changed since the last report and the future changes based on funding scenarios were considered.

The Executive Board Member for Environment supported by officers responded to number of queries raised including the following:

- Future Welsh Government funding.
- Completion of the LED conversion programme.
- Road services - the impact of extreme weather on road surfaces, it was asked what role climate change had in the future scenario of how long conditions will remain acceptable and was this factored into condition reports.
- Concerns in relation to the lack of future investments on 'C' Class roads
- Clarification sought on the Strengthening/Replacement of bridges identified and classed as substandard.

#### Outcome:

The Committee resolved to note the Highway Asset Management Plan – Annual Statement Report 2020.



## 2.7.2 Net Zero Carbon Action Plan – March 2021

The Executive Board Member for Communities and Rural Affairs - Councillor Cefin Campbell presented the draft Net Zero Carbon Action Plan to the Committee at its meeting in March 2021 which was developed in accordance with Action NZC-28 of the Plan that required performance reports on progress towards becoming a net zero carbon local authority by 2030 to be published annually.

Following the presentation of the report, Committee members raised a number of queries where the Executive Board Member for Communities and Rural Affairs, supported by Officers, responded accordingly. The queries raised included:-

- How was the Council going to work with the farming unions?
- Requested for more information on the installation of an electric vehicle superfast charging hub at Crosshands.
- Should electric vehicle charging points be included as a planning condition for large developments e.g., supermarkets?
- Western Power Distribution and its plans to improve the capacity of the local electricity distribution network system (Grid).
- Were there any other partners on the Public Services Board who had declared a climate emergency and committed to Net Zero Carbon?

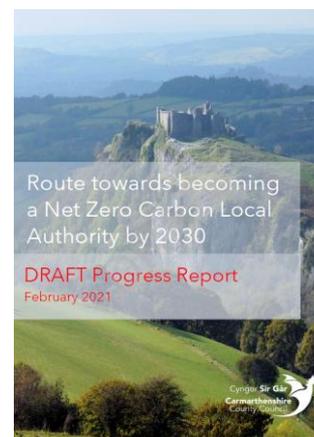
In addition to the above queries, disappointment was expressed that after two years since the Council initially declared a climate emergency in March 2019, the Welsh Government had not yet distributed its reporting guidance to Local Authorities.

Following discussion, in relation to the limited capacity of the local electricity distribution network (Grid), it was proposed that the Committee write a letter to the Welsh Government to convey its concern regarding the limited capacity of the local electricity distribution network and to request that Welsh Government work with Local Authorities, and others, to develop a clear plan to address this issue. In addition, the Committee in its letter, convey its disappointment that the Wales Carbon Reporting Guidance has not been published to date.

In addition, it was proposed that the Committee request that the Executive Board, in a separate letter to the Welsh Government echo and support the Committee's comments.

### Outcome:

The Committee unanimously resolved that the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee write to the Welsh Government to convey the comments raised and recommended to the Executive Board that the Executive Board write a letter to the Welsh Government in support of and to reaffirm the Committee's comments.



The Executive Board at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021, considered the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee's request that the Executive Board, acknowledged the importance of this matter and in order to be able proceed and continue working towards being a Net Zero organisation by 2023 and agreed to honour the request by unanimously resolving that:-

**a letter be written to Welsh Government to echo the concerns raised by the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021.**

### 2.7.3 Waste Service Review – April 2021

This report was considered by the Committee at its meeting held in April 2021. The Executive Board Member for Environment – Councillor Hazel Evans presented the report which provided information in relation to the considerations, measures, strategy options and sought the Committee's opinions and views on proposed changes to services.

In addition to the detailed report the Committee, received a supporting presentation on 'Shaping the Future of Waste Collections in Carmarthenshire'.

The Executive Board Member and officers responded to a number of queries/concerns raised:-

- Concern raised in relation to the change in frequency from weekly to fortnightly collection of nappies and incontinence waste.
- A concern was raised that boxes of glass left at the kerbside would encourage vandalism.
- Queries were raised in relation to the size of the Blueprint Kerbsort collection vehicle – seeking its suitability for rural areas.
- The capacity of the independent compartments located within the Blueprint Kerbsort Collection vehicle used to keep materials separated and what would happen should one compartment reach its maximum capacity before the others?
- Concern was raised that should the collection of black bags be reduced to one a week this could encourage an increase in contamination.
- It was commented that the collection boxes could present an issue regarding space on the kerbside particularly at locations where the properties were in close proximity.
- Concern raised regarding reduction of black bag collections.
- Concern was raised regarding the probability of the County experiencing an increase in fly-tipping due to the reduction in black bag collections.

- A comment regarding the placement of and the length of time dog/cat waste within black bags prior to collection

**Outcome:**

The Committee unanimously resolved to recommend that the Executive Board continue to develop and consult on appropriate delivery options to meet the statutory targets and address challenges as contained within the report.

The Executive Board and full Council will consider the report in the course of 2021/22.

## 2.8 Additional Reports

### Covid 19 and the Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme (FESS) – March 2021

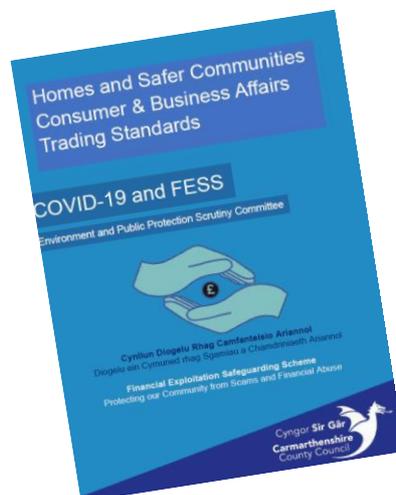
The Environment and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group, conducting a review of the Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme, proposed that this report be presented to fellow members of the Environment and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee.

At the consent of the Chair the report was added to the Forward Work Programme and was presented to the Committee by the Executive Board Member for Public Protection supported by the Officers. During the Covid -19 pandemic, the Trading Standards services developed a strategy in preparation to address financial exploitation issues that was likely to arise as a result of the pandemic. Enabling enquiries and concerns raised by vulnerable citizens or their advocates to be followed up in a timely manner. As a result, various initiatives were employed to achieve these aims.

Committee Members were grateful to receive a very informative report which provided the work of the Trading Standards Service during the pandemic and expressed their gratitude for their excellent work.

**Outcome:**

The Committee unanimously resolved to receive the Covid-19 and the Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme report.



## 2.9 Public Engagement and Scrutiny Topic Suggestions

Listening to and giving the public a voice is key to scrutiny's effectiveness. To grant the people of Carmarthenshire (and beyond) an opportunity to shape the scrutiny Forward Work Programme through active involvement is important. Therefore, ahead of the Committee developing this year's programme, throughout January 2020 the Communications department carried out a social media campaign to encourage and increase public participation whilst seeking subject topics for scrutiny.

<p><b>Cyngor Sir Gâr - Carmarthenshire County Council</b> Published by CrowdControlHQ [?] · Yesterday at 10:31 · 🌐</p> <p>A ydych chi am ddylanwadu ar waith ein Pwyllgorau Craffu? Bob blwyddyn, mae Pwyllgorau Craffu yn cytuno ar ba feysydd y byddant yn eu harchwilio a'u hystyried, gan ganolbwyntio ar berfformiad gwasanaethau'r Cyngor, gwasanaethau a ddarperir gan ein partneriaid a materion eraill sy'n destun pryder yn lleol. Rydym am sicrhau bod ein gwaith dros y flwyddyn nesaf yn adlewyrchu'r materion sydd bwysicaf i chi. Wrth ddewis materion, bydd y pwyllgorau'n ystyried a allant wneud gwahan... See more</p>	<p><b>Cyngor Sir Gâr - Carmarthenshire County Council</b> Published by CrowdControlHQ [?] · Yesterday at 10:31 · 🌐</p> <p>Do you want to influence the work of our Scrutiny Committees? Each year Scrutiny Committees agree what areas they will examine and consider, focusing on performance of council services, services provided by our partners and other issues of local concern. We want to make sure that over the next year our work reflects issues that matter most to you. When choosing issues, the committees will consider whether they can make a real difference and result in improved services. All suggestions will be considered. Find out more about Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire on our website <a href="https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/.../committees.../scrutiny">https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/.../committees.../scrutiny</a></p>
<p>995 People reached</p> <p>1 Engagement</p> <p>Boost Post</p> <p>Like Comment Share</p>	<p>1,584 People reached</p> <p>57 Engagements</p> <p>Boost Post</p> <p>3 6 shares</p>

In respect of complying with Legislation regarding promoting public awareness at Scrutiny, in April 2018, the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Forum agreed to send correspondence to Town and Community Councils which would contain information to encourage an increase in public attendance at Scrutiny Committees and also seek suggestions for future topics for consideration.

In response to this, Environment and Public Protection have received a letter from Llanycrwys Community Council requesting that the Committee draw special attention to the conditions of the roads within Carmarthenshire.

The Committee, during the formulation of its Forward Work Programme considered the request from Llanycrwys Community Council at its meeting in March. Committee Members acknowledged that the condition of the roads, particularly the rural roads was important and agreed that it would have an opportunity to scrutinise the current conditions of the roads when it received the Highways and Asset Management Plan which was on the Forward Work Programme. (see section 2.7 [Highways Asset Management Plan Annual Statement update – December 2020](#))

### 3. Scrutiny Committee Activity

#### 3.1 Scrutiny Investigations (Task and Finish)

On 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019, the Committee, after considering the Planning and Scoping document approved and commissioned to undertake a review into the Carmarthenshire County Council Trading Standards initiative – The Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme (FESS).

Accordingly, the Committee agreed on a politically balanced Membership of six Councillors.

The Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme (FESS), a multi-agency initiative created and developed by Carmarthenshire Trading Standards works to detect and prevent the financial exploitation of vulnerable people by carers, family members, doorstep criminals, mail fraud, telephone and email scams.

In accordance with the initial Planning and Scoping document, it was hoped that the Group would be in a position to present a final report to the Committee in April 2020. However, early March saw further work on the review being suspended due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Group resumed its meetings in a virtual capacity from September 2020 where the Group was able to continue to develop its final report and formulate its recommendations, presenting the report to all Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee members in April 2021.

<b>Outcome:</b>
RESOLVED that the report be received and referred to the Executive Board for its consideration. <i>The Executive Board will be considering the report and its recommendations during the 2021/22 municipal year.</i>

Furthermore, following its meeting held on 15th November 2019 where a report on Dog Breeding in Carmarthenshire was received, the Committee unanimously resolved that dog breeding in Carmarthenshire be the subject for Committee's next Task and Finish review in 2020. However, the Committee having acknowledged the increase of work-load with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic agreed to defer this project to 2021.

## 3.2 Member Development

In October 2020, Members attended a virtual Scrutiny Training session provided by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Other all member development sessions or sessions specifically for scrutiny committee members, were held virtually.

The following all-member development sessions /seminars were held during 2020/21, to which Committee members were invited:-

- Microsoft Teams Training for online meetings – numerous sessions - June 2020
- Zoom Training for online meetings – December /January
- Mod.Gov New App training (Delivered by Civica) – October
- Scrutiny Training (Delivered by Centre for Governance and Scrutiny) - October
- Online Scrutiny (Delivered by Centre for Governance and Scrutiny) - November
- Section 106 Agreements and Unilateral Undertakings – February
- Covid Vaccination Briefing (Hywel Dda University Health Board) – February
- Introduction to Ash Dieback Disease and the County Council's Roles and Responsibilities – March
- Growing Carmarthenshire: Progressive Procurement, food supply chains and Future Opportunities – March
- Rural Enterprise Dwellings – March
- One Planet Developments - April

In addition to the above, several budget seminars were held during January as part of the Council's consultation process on the 2021/22 Revenue Budget and the five year capital programme.

Due to the restrictions associated with the Pandemic the Committee was unable to carry out site visits during 2020/21.

## 4. Challenges

The past year has been a challenging period for both the Authority and the Committee but has continued to undertake a constructive role in scrutinising performance and contributing to policies and decisions. The Committee recognise that departments have been subjected to significant pressure during the Coronavirus pandemic, but everyone involved performed over and above expectations to ensure the continuation of business as usual. Many resources were also re-deployed to support the other services in support of the management of the pandemic.

Committee members, after a period of hiatus have adapted well to the virtual way of undertaking their scrutiny role. In addition, from November the Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire was for the first time webcasted to the public. Members have welcomed this and has embraced this as a way of open and transparent scrutiny.

## 5. Committee's Future Work

There is no doubt that the Committee has continued to make progress during what has been a very challenging year for all involved. Looking forward to the next year, the Committee will continue to concentrate on topics where Member's input will result in positive outcomes to drive forward service improvement.

It is important to ensure that the best use is being made of Scrutiny meeting time, therefore with the benefit of pre-meetings, the Committee is keen to continue to work together as a team encouraging an effective scrutiny process.

The future work of the Committee will be considered regularly as part of the Forward Work Programme and will continue to be monitored during the course of the year. As part of the development of the forward work programme, the Committee will aim to ensure it plans to enable focused Scrutiny to take place ensuring that there is a more equitable distribution of reports, that the statutory responsibilities is focussed and are properly aligned with the council's strategic priorities.

In order to enhance Scrutiny, Members will continue to attend development sessions, seek officer's advice where appropriate and make use of informal pre-meeting discussions.

The Committee will continue to seek topics for discussion from Town and Community Councils annually more information on how to submit a topic for consideration and ask questions at a Scrutiny meeting is available on our Scrutiny webpage:

<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-democracy/committees-meetings/scrutiny/#.Xp7Am6aQxMs>

## 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.

Support for the Scrutiny function 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 forward work programmes, task and finish reports and annual reports, visit the County Council's website at: [www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/scrutiny](http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/scrutiny)

To contact the Democratic Services Unit, please call 01267 224028 or e-mail [scrutiny@carmarthenshire.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@carmarthenshire.gov.uk)

## 7. Committee Member Attendance

A total of **5** meetings were held between May 2020 and April 2021. The scheduled meetings in May, June and September 2020 were suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Attendance by members of the Environment and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee during the 2020/21 year is shown in the table below.

<b>Scrutiny Committee Member</b>	<b>No. of meetings attended</b>	<b>%</b>
Cllr. Mansel Charles	5	100
Cllr. Arwel Davies	5	100
Cllr. Joseph Davies	5	100
Cllr. Karen Davies	5	100
Cllr. Penny Edwards	2	40
Cllr. Jeanette Gilasbey	5	100
Cllr. Tina Higgins	5	100
Cllr. John James	5	100
Cllr. Eryl Morgan	5	100
Cllr. Aled Vaughan Owen	5	100
Cllr. Dorian Phillips	5	100
Cllr. Susan Phillips	4	80
Cllr. Alan Speake	5	100
Cllr. Dai Thomas	4	80
<b>Substitutes</b>	<b>No. of meetings attended</b>	
Cllr. Deryk Cundy	1	
Cllr. Tyssul Evans	1	
Cllr. Ken Lloyd	1	
<b>Executive Board Member</b>	<b>No. of meetings attended</b>	
Cllr. H.A.L. Evans (Environment)	5	
Cllr. P. Hughes (Public Protection)	4	
Cllr. Cefin Campbell	3	
Cllr David Jenkins	2	