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Chair's Foreword



Welcome to the annual report for the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee for the 2023/24 municipal year. As Chairman I am pleased to present this report to you detailing the work undertaken by the Committee in the last year.

Scrutiny is a vital part of local democracy and good governance. The work covered by this report ensures the Council remains accountable and transparent, effective and efficient. Questioning and providing challenge to decision-makers also helps the Council to achieve its objectives and drive improvement. The Committee has continued in its role to monitor sickness absence, performance management and budgets relevant to this scrutiny.

Over the past year the committee has continued to work closely with cabinet members and senior officers.

We have also embarked on our first task and finish group in a while. Post covid members wanted reassurance about how we interact with members of the public particularly through our corporate contact centres. This work will continue into the coming year.

Members have also been able to further their development through a series of arranged seminars on a cross range of topics. Hybrid working remains available and allows members to attend meetings either in person or remotely via whatever device they choose to use.

I am looking forward, once again, to the challenge of chairing this Committee in the coming year and with the support 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.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the Committee and officers for their contributions and dedication during 2023/24.

Councillor Giles Morgan
Chair of Corporate Performance and Resources 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 across the county.

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*".

This report highlights the work undertaken by the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee during the 2023/24 municipal year. It aims to provide members with an opportunity to reflect on its achievements, identify areas of best practice and highlight areas for improvement to further enhance the scrutiny function. Additionally, this report may facilitate discussion on items which could be identified for inclusion within future work programmes.

The Committee is chaired by Councillor Giles Morgan and is made up of 11 Elected Members and Cabinet Members attend meetings as required in order to address the Committee on areas within their respective portfolios.

Support is provided by the Democratic Services Unit and other Council officers, as and when required.

2. Overview of the Work of the Committee in 2023/24

2.1 The Role of Scrutiny

The Scrutiny Committee remits were updated by Council following the May 2022 elections and each Scrutiny Committee became responsible for the overview and scrutiny of specific Cabinet Portfolios and their respective services. The Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the scrutiny of the Leader, Cabinet's Resources and Organisation and Workforce portfolio and the respective service areas:-

Councillor Darren Price - Leader

Chair of Cabinet	Liaises with other political group leaders
Welsh Government Relations	Corporate Strategy
Local Government Relations	Scrutiny
Represents Council at WLGA	SWW Corporate Joint Committee
Swansea Bay City Region	Determines Cabinet Portfolios

Marketing and Media	Public Services Board
Appoints Cabinet Members	Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
Liases with Chief Executive	Partneriaeth

Resources

Finance Strategy and Budget	Procurement & Frameworks
Capital Programme	Savings Delivery
Property / Asset Management	Financial Services
Commissioning & Procurement	Community Benefits
Risk Management and Risk Planning	Council Tax
Housing Benefits	National Non-domestic Rates (NDR)
Revenues	Strategic Finance (Corporate Projects)
Annual Governance Statement	Corporate Governance
Cabinet representative on Corporate Governance Group	

Organisation and Workforce

Contact Centres and Customer Service Centres	Agile working
Equalities – policy and workforce	Health & Safety Policy Lead
Human Resources and Workforce Planning	Corporate Delivery of Priorities
Performance Management	Electoral Services
Business and Service Improvement	Coroner
Wales Audit	Registrars (Birth Deaths and Marriages)
Training – Learning and Development	Trade Union Engagement
I.C.T. Digital Service Delivery	Skills Development
T.I.C. (Transformation, Innovation and Change)	Regional Workforce Planning
Employee Wellbeing	Skills and Talent Programme (City Deal)
Socio Economic Duty	Workforce Diversity
Armed Forces Champion	Covert surveillance, FOI and data protection
Lord Lieutenancy	Complaints
Occupational Health	Anti-Slavery and Ethical Employment Champion'
Core Values	

In accordance with its areas of responsibilities, the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee will seek to:-

- Examine how well the Cabinet and Council are performing;

- Hold the Cabinet to account and seek to promote open and transparent decision-making;
- Monitor the performance of the Council's services and functions;
- Review decisions made by the Cabinet where appropriate;
- Assist the Cabinet in the development, monitoring and review of policy;
- Scrutinise, as a key element of the consultation process, the proposed revenue budget strategy and capital investment programmes;
- Enable the participation of external organisations and partners in consideration of issues that may impact upon the delivery of Council and countywide priorities.

2.2 The Forward Work Plan

Scrutiny plays a key role in promoting accountability in the decision-making process of the Local Authority. It is also useful in ensuring that Council policies reflect current priorities, as well as promoting efficiency and encouraging partnership working with external agencies.

In order for Scrutiny Committees to take on greater ownership of their own Forward Work Plans, a pre-decision method of scrutiny was introduced in September 2022 which allows Scrutiny Committees to decide which reports from the Cabinet Forward Work Plan they wish to come before them. As per normal process, Committees are also able to identify their own topics and Cabinet are still able to invite a Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise a decision which was in the pipeline.

The Committee utilised the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny's Gateway framework to develop its Forward Work Plan for the 2023/24 municipal year which was reviewed on a regular basis. This provided a manageable, flexible, and robust approach to scrutiny and ensured that the areas for review were considered on a priority basis and in a timely manner.

In this regard, the Committee determined that periodic reports in relation to performance and budget monitoring be circulated to members outside the formal meeting programme. This process enabled any relevant matters identified by members to be placed on the formal agenda for further consideration, as appropriate. The benefits of such an approach led to an improved level of debate and input during Scrutiny Committee meetings. In the main, meeting agendas were consistent with those outlined in the Forward Work Plan.

2.3 Meetings of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Meetings are scheduled on a 6-8 weekly basis to consider issues and reports included in its FWP. The Committee held 7 formal meetings during the 2023/24 municipal year and all meetings were conducted in accordance with the provisions set out within Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

To complement the work undertaken during formal meetings, the Committee also undertakes other scrutiny functions such as Task and Finish, One Day Scrutiny and visits to establishments falling within its remit, together with development sessions and workshops.

2.4 Performance Monitoring / Strategic Issues

One of the principal roles of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee is to monitor the performance of services and functions within its remit. Accordingly, the Committee reviews performance monitoring reports and various strategies and plans to provide a balanced assessment of performance across the relevant service areas.

2.4.1 Carmarthenshire County Council Annual Report 2023/24

In September, 2023 the Committee considered the Council's Annual Report 2023/24 which had been produced in accordance with the relevant provisions within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021. The report detailed the progress made with the Council's 13 Well-being Objectives (WBO) against a backdrop of unprecedented circumstances presented by the coronavirus pandemic, together with the Council's self-assessment against the performance requirements of the previous financial year. The Committee focused upon the 4 Well-Being Objectives falling within its remit, namely:

- WBO 1:** Enabling our children and young people to have the best possible start in life (Start Well).
- WBO 2:** Enabling our residents to live and age well (Live and Age Well).
- WBO 3:** Enabling our communities and environment to be healthy, safe and prosperous (Prosperous Communities).
- WBO 4:** To further modernise and develop as a resilient and efficient Council (Our Council)

Outcome:

The Annual Report was considered by the Cabinet on the 18th October 2023 where its approval was recommended to Council and subsequently adopted at its meeting on the 8th November, 2023.

2.4.2 Draft Divisional Delivery Plans 2023/24

In May, 2023 the Committee received for consideration the draft Divisional Services Delivery Plans relevant to the Chief Executive's and Corporate Resources Directorate for 2024-2025, as follows:-

- ICT and Corporate Policy;
- People Management;
- Legal and Administration;
- Electoral and Civil Registration;
- Marketing and Media/Translation Services;
- Business and Cabinet Support.
- Revenues and Financial Compliance Service Delivery Plan 2023-24;
- Financial Services Delivery Plan 2023-24.

These plans set out the strategic actions and measures to be implemented within each Division in order for the Council to progress with its well-being objectives, thematic priorities and service priorities. This provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider and comment upon the priorities outlined for the Division.

Outcome:

The Committee received the Draft Business Plans for the Services within the Chief Executives and Corporate Resources Departments falling within its remit.

2.4.3 2023/24 Performance Reports relevant to the Committee

In accordance with the protocols established by the Committee, quarterly performance monitoring reports relevant to the Committee's remit were circulated by email to members as follows:-

- 18th October 2023 – Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring 2023/24
- 12th December 2023 – Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring 2023/24
- 17th April, 2024 – Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring 2023/24

The reports enabled members to monitor performance in respect of the Well-being Objectives relevant to the Committee's remit and aligned to the Authority's Corporate Strategy. The information provided a self-evaluation of performance in accordance with the reformed legislative framework enshrined within Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Members were afforded the opportunity to raise any concerns or matters which required further consideration at the Committee's formal meeting, in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

2.4.4 Actions and Referrals

During the course of the municipal year, requests for additional items were made by members of the Committee to assist them in discharging their scrutiny role. Updates on Actions and Referrals were presented to the Committee at its meetings held in 16th June, 2023, 12th December, 2023 and 17th April, 2024 which detailed the progress made in relation to these requests.

2.5 Revenue & Capital Budgets

2.5.1 Budget Monitoring Reports

In accordance with the protocols established by the Committee, quarterly reports on the departmental and corporate revenue and capital budgets were circulated to members as follows:-

- 18th October, 2023 – in respect of the budgetary position as at 30th June, 2023;
- 12th December, 2023 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 31st August, 2023;
- 31st January, 2024 – in respect of the budgetary position as at 31st October, 2023, and
- 17th April, 2024 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 31st December, 2023.

The reports enabled members to monitor expenditure in each service area and the progress made in connection with any capital works. Members were afforded the opportunity to raise any concerns or matters which required further consideration at the Committee's formal meeting, in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

2.5.2 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 2024/25 to 2026/27. The report provided the Committee with the current proposals for the Revenue Budget for 2024/25 together with the indicative figures for the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years.

Members accepted the report and endorsed the Charging Digest. The Committee was consulted on the Five -Year Capital Programme 2024/25 - 2028/29.

Outcome:

As part of the Authority's widespread consultation undertaken on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2024/25, the Committee considered and endorsed the Strategy at its meeting held on the 31st January, 2024. The strategy was subsequently agreed by Cabinet on the 19th February, 2024 and adopted by Council on the 28th February, 2024.

2.6 Resources Department

2.6.1 Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Report

The Committee received updates outlining the activities within the Treasury Management Function during the municipal year.

Outcome:-

The Committee considered and endorsed the Strategy at its meeting held on the 31st January, 2024. The strategy was subsequently agreed by Cabinet on the 19th February, 2024 and adopted by Council on the 28th February, 2024.

2.6.2 Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2024-25

In January 2024 the Committee reviewed the treasury management decisions and of the processes and practices applied in reaching those decisions both for the purposes of learning from the past, and for demonstrating that reasonable steps were taken to ensure that all issues relevant to those decisions were taken into account at the time.

Outcome:

The Committee considered and endorsed the Strategy at its meeting held on the 31st January, 2024. The strategy was subsequently agreed by the Cabinet on the 19th February, 2024 and adopted by the Council on the 28th February, 2024.

2.7 Chief Executive Department

2.7.1 Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (PSB)

The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 notes the requirement that a designated scrutiny, scrutinises the work of the Public Services Board. In October and December 2023 and March 2024 the Committee, as the designated scrutiny committee appointed to scrutinise the work of the PSB, reviewed and assessed the information contained in the minutes.

Outcome:

The Committee considered and endorsed the minutes of the meetings for Carmarthenshire Public Services Board.

2.7.2 Sickness Absence Monitoring

In December 2023 the Committee reviewed the Authority's sickness absence for all employees employed by the Authority. The Committee considered the report which provided sickness absence data for the cumulative period ending 31st March 2023 plus Q2 2023/24 with an overview of the employee wellbeing support provided.

Scrutiny queries raised in regard to the content of the report were responded to satisfactorily and Members were complimentary of the professional manner in which sickness was managed and thanked officers for the support provided to staff.

Outcome:

In addition to receiving the report, members also endorsed a business case for the creation of a Commercial Manager post to help develop future income generation initiatives.

2.7.3 TIC – Council's Transformation Programme

In December 2023 the Committee received an update reviewing the Authority's approach to transformation. The Transformation Strategy was reported to Cabinet in February 2023. The 8 thematic priorities are:

- Efficiencies and Value for Money
- Income and Commercialisation
- Service Design & Improvement
- Workforce
- Workplace
- Customers and Digital
- Decarbonisation
- Schools

Outcome:

The Committee considered and endorsed the report.

2.7.4 Establishment of a Task and Finish Group on the Corporate Contact Centre

In October 2023, the Committee discussed the establishment of a Task and Finish Group on the operation of the Corporate Contact Centre within the Authority.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed to the establishment of the Task and Finish group comprising 6 members, politically balanced.

3. Other Scrutiny Activity

3.1 Task & Finish

The purpose of a Task & Finish Group is to contribute to the development of new policy or to undertake a piece of investigative scrutiny work. Such groups have been instrumental in strengthening the policy development / investigative roles of scrutiny during the past few years.

During the municipal year, as part of its investigative role, the Committee undertook a Task and Finish Group to review the Corporate Contact Centre.

The aims and scope of the Task & Finish Review were to:

- Review the performance and development of the Corporate Contact Centre
- Identify if the current service was sufficiently robust, consistent, co-ordinated, non-duplicitous and presented value for money.
- Formulate recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet.

The membership of the Task & Finish Group comprised 6 elected members appointed to reflect the political balance of the Council as a whole, as far as possible:-

Plaid Cymru:	Councillor Alex Evans, Councillor Kim Broom
Independent Group:	Councillor Giles Morgan
Labour Group:	Councillor Derek Cundy, Councillor Dot Jones, Cllr Terry Davies

The Group met in November, December, February and April.

The recommendations will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in Autumn 2024.

3.2 Site Visits

The Committee did not undertake any site visits during 2023/2024.

3.3 Development Sessions

During the 2023/24 municipal year, Committee Members were invited to the following development sessions/seminars facilitated by the Authority:-

- 21st June – Housing Repairs
- 7th August – Hywel Dda University Health Board – Consultation on Urgent and Emergency
- Children and Young People Services at Withybush and Glangwili Hospitals
- 13th September – Tackling Poverty Support
- 8th November – Treasury Management
- 22nd November – I.T. Digital Strategy and Artificial Intelligence
- 30th November – Geodiscoverer Training
- 6th December – Place and Infrastructure – Service Updates
- 7th December – Geodiscoverer Training
- 8th December – Digital Transformation
- 9th January 2024 – Artificial Intelligence and Digital Strategy
- 23rd/26th February – Introduction to Anti-racism Training
- 6th March – Flooding Responsibility

In addition to the above, members attended several budget seminars held during January as part of the Council's consultation process on the 2024-25 Revenue Budget and the five year capital programme.

4. Impact

3.1 How has Scrutiny Made a Difference This Year?

The majority of decisions made by the Authority are made by the Cabinet. Scrutiny offers the other 65 non-executive Councillors an opportunity to influence those decisions and act as a "critical friend". Pre-decision Scrutiny is particularly influential in this regard as it provides Scrutiny Committees with the opportunity to consider and comment upon policies and emerging issues before they are considered by Cabinet. Scrutiny also assists in ensuring that Council policies reflect current priorities, as well as promoting efficiency and encouraging effective partnership working with external bodies.

Scrutiny plays a key role in improving the services used by the people and children of Carmarthenshire. The scrutiny function is also useful in ensuring that Council policies reflect current priorities, as well as promoting efficiency and encouraging effective partnership working with external bodies. The involvement of local residents, community organisations and partners is an important part of the scrutiny process and Councillors are committed to responding to the views and concerns of residents.

Pre-decision Scrutiny affords all Scrutiny Committees the opportunity of providing input before the reports are considered by Cabinet and this is the voice of the people. During the 2023/24 municipal year, the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee has made a positive impact in many ways, making the work of the Council open and transparent to the public.

5. Public Engagement

The Scrutiny function provides the opportunity for public participation in the Authority's activities whereby members of the public can request items to be placed on the Committee's meeting agenda. Carmarthenshire residents, or those who own a business or are employed within the county are also permitted to ask questions at meetings of the Scrutiny Committee.

Whilst the Committee did not receive any suggestions of possible topics from members of the public during 2023/24, the Committee's Forward Work Plan included a range of topics which required public consultation/participation.

In order to promote public awareness of Scrutiny Committees and the ability of the public to put forward topics for discussion, the Forward Work Plans of the Authority's Scrutiny Committees and details of how the public can become involved, are published on the Authority's website:-

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

During the municipal year, the Authority's Communications division provided digital marketing support to the Scrutiny function and proactively promoted details of forthcoming items which may be of interest to the public in an attempt to raise public awareness and participation. The public are invited, via a number of different avenues, to get involved in the Scrutiny process and to highlight any issues of concern.

6. 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.

7. Future Work

The Committee has made significant progress during the municipal year and will continue to concentrate on topics where members' input will result in positive outcomes to drive forward service improvement.

The work of the Committee during the 2024/25 municipal year will be considered by the Committee at a development planning session and will be regularly reviewed as part of the monitoring of the Forward Work Plan during the course of the year.

In order to enhance the Authority's Scrutiny function, members will continue to attend development sessions, seek officers' advice where appropriate and make full use of informal pre-meeting discussion.

8. Support for the Scrutiny Function

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

- formulating and despatching agendas for Scrutiny Committee meetings in accordance with the Forward Work Plans;
- providing support and constitutional advice to the Scrutiny Committees and to members of those Committees as well as producing minutes of their meetings and ensuring any issues arising from those meetings are actioned;
- giving support and advice in relation to the functions of the Council's Scrutiny Committees to members of the Council and its officers;
- managing the strategic development of Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire by engaging in national and regional Scrutiny networks and initiatives, supporting the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum and meetings of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny with the Cabinet;
- advising and supporting the implementation of the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021, as and when guidance is published;
- managing the co-ordination and development of the Scrutiny Committees' Forward Work Plans in conjunction with Scrutiny Committee members;
- managing and co-ordinating Scrutiny review work, including the administration of scrutiny Task and Finish Groups, assisting in writing reports in conjunction with the Groups and assisting in the implementation and monitoring of completed reviews.
- Assisting with the Scrutiny Member Development Programme.

For more information on Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire including Forward Work Plans, Task & Finish reports and Annual Reports, please 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.

9. Attendance

Attendance by members of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee during the 2023/24 municipal year is shown in the table below. A total of eight meetings were held during the 2023/24 municipal year.

Scrutiny Committee Member	Meetings Attended	%
Cllr. Kim Broom	8	100
Cllr. Derek Cundy (from December, 2023 = 4 meetings)	3	75
Cllr. Lewis Davies (up to July 2023 = 3 meetings)	2	50
Cllr. Terry Davies	7	88
Cllr. Alex Evans	8	100
Cllr. Deian Harries	1	13
Cllr. Rob James (up until mid January 2024 = 5 meetings)	2	40
Cllr. Gareth John	3	38
Cllr. Dot Jones	7	88
Cllr. Jean Lewis	6	75
Cllr. Kevin Madge (up until end of November 2023 = 4 meetings)	3	75
Cllr. Giles Morgan	7	88
Cllr. Dai Nicholas	6	75
Substitutes	Meetings Attended	
Cllr. Karen Davies	1	
Cllr. Anthony Leyshon	1	
Cllr. Michael Thomas	1	
Cabinet Member	Meetings Attended	
Cllr. Darren Price (Leader)	6	
Cllr. Philip Hughes (Organisation and Workforce)	2	
Cllr. Alun Lenny (Resources)	8	