

Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report 2024-25

Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire

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Cyngor **Sir Gâr**
Carmarthenshire
County Council



Contents

Chair's Foreword	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Overview of the Work of the Committee in 2024/25	3
2.1 The Role of Scrutiny	3
2.2 The Forward Work Plan	5
2.3 Meetings of the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee Scrutiny Committee	5
2.4 Performance Monitoring / Strategic Issues	5
2.5 Revenue & Capital Budgets	7
2.6 Pre-decision reports	9
2.7 Additional Reports and Update Reports	11
3. Other Scrutiny Activity	16
4. Impact	19
5. Public Engagement	20
6. Challenges	20
7. Future Work	20
8. Support for the Scrutiny Function	21
9. Attendance	22

Chair's Foreword



I am pleased to present the annual report of the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal scrutiny year.

The report demonstrates the large variety of work that the scrutiny committee has undertaken during the period between May 2024 to April 2025.

The Committee developed a comprehensive Forward Work Plan for the 2024/25 Municipal year which enabled Members to evaluate a range of pertinent issues affecting the communities in Carmarthenshire, alongside reviewing Council Annual Reports, Divisional Business Plans, and Performance Monitoring Reports relevant to the Committee.

The Committee, very aware of the continuous challenges the budget presents itself year on year took a keen interest in scrutinising the revenue and capital budgets monitoring reports. Members were attentive in the work of the Revenue Budget Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28. The work of this committee in attending the budget consultations and scrutinising the efficiency savings proposals managed to remove the proposals to make a saving on the highways. As Chair, I am proud of the work that has been carried out and the opportunity to shape policy decisions over the last year.

In April 2025, the Task and Finish Group concluded their review of the dog breeding licensing function within the Consumer and Business Affairs Animal Health team. I wish to extend my gratitude to the members of the Task and Finish Group and the officers for their diligent efforts on this significant and sensitive issue. As Chair of the Task and Finish Group, I am prepared to present the report along with the recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee for review and subsequently to the Cabinet. It is anticipated that the seven national recommendations will be submitted to the Welsh Government later this year, with the intention of influencing policy to enhance dog breeding and licensing practices in Carmarthenshire and Wales.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all the officers within the remit of the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee for their continued professionalism and support over the past year. Your provision of detailed technical and operational information upon request has been invaluable. Additionally, I wish to thank the Cabinet Members for their collaboration and support in working with the Scrutiny Committee. I wish to thank my Vice Chair, Councillor Karen Davies for her invaluable support throughout the year. Finally, my sincere thanks to all the Committee Members for your professionalism and for providing excellent scrutiny again in the last year.

It is an honour to once again serve as Chair of this Committee in the coming year. I regard it as a privilege to do so.

Councillor Kevin Madge

Chair of Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee 2024/2025

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 Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee during the 2024/25 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 Kevin Madge and is made up of 14 Elected Members. 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 2024/25

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 Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the scrutiny of the following service areas as detailed below:-

Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability – Councillor Aled Vaughan Owen

Climate Change Strategy	Statutory Nuisance Matters (Noise, pets, Overgrown Gardens)
Decarbonisation	Public Protection
Biodiversity (nature emergency)	Sustainable Development Lead
Licensing Policy	Fly Tipping
Trading Standards	Environmental Enforcement
Unlicensed Waste	Environmental (Wales) Act 2016
Air Quality	Ash Die Back Strategy
Circular Economy	Food Standards
Environmental Health	Emergency Planning
Flooding and Shoreline Management	Public Rights of Way
Coastal Defence	Countryside Access

**Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services –
Cllr Edward Thomas**

Refuse	Passenger and Community Transport
Street Cleansing	Litter Environmental Quality Strategy
Highways and Transport Services	Grass cutting services
Grounds Maintenance	Infrastructure repairs and maintenance
Building Services & Estate Management (excluding housing stock)	Litter and Community Cleansing
Bridges	Regional Transport Policy
Active Travel and Safer Routes	Parks Maintenance
Fleet Management (inc renewal and maintenance)	Regional Collaborations for Transport Highways and Waste
Narberth Crematorium	School Transport
School Transport Appeals	Streetscene
Caretaking and Building Cleaning	Waste Management
Parking Services inc. Policy, Control and Enforcement	Household Waste Recycling Centres
Recycling Services	

The following Cabinet Member presented reports/parts of reports that fall within their portfolio that reside within the Scrutiny Committee's remit.

**Cabinet Member for Resources –
Councillor Alun Lenny**

Finance Strategy and Budget	Capital Programme
Strategic Finance (Corporate Projects)	Savings Delivery
Financial Services	Community Benefits
Commissioning and Procurement	

Community Safety / Crime & Disorder –

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

In accordance with its areas of responsibilities, the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change 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 2024/25 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 Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee 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 2024/25 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, Member Development sessions and site visits falling within its remit.

2.4 Performance Monitoring / Strategic Issues

One of the principal roles of the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change 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 October, 2024 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 following Well-Being Objectives falling within its remit, namely:

Thematic/service Priority
Well-being Objective 1: Enabling our children and young people to have the best possible Start in Life (Start Well) -
Service Priority: Education
Well-being Objective 2: Enabling our residents to live and age well (Live & Age Well)
Service Priority: Housing
Well-being Objective 3 – Enabling our communities and environment to be healthy, safe, and prosperous (Prosperous Communities)
Thematic Priority: Economic Recovery and Growth
Thematic Priority: Decarbonisation & Nature Emergency
Thematic Priority: Community Safety, Resilience and Cohesion
Service Priority: Waste
Service Priority: Highways & Transport
Well-being Objective 4 – Our Council: To further modernise and develop as a resilient and efficient Council.
Outcome: Deliver organisational change that supports key Net Zero Carbon targets
Appendix 3 - Self-Assessment
Appendix 5 - Data on indicators and measures linked to each Well-being Objective and Priorities

The Committee reviewed the report and asked several questions about the actions in the annual report. Officers present addressed these queries, which mainly concerned solar panels on Council houses, highway conditions and maintenance, and carbon emissions.

Outcome:

Unanimously resolved to recommend to cabinet that the Council's Annual Report 2023/24 be approved.

2.4.2 Draft Divisional Business Plans 2025/26

In January 2025, the Committee received for consideration the Business Plans relevant to the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee for 2025/26 as follows:

- Environmental Infrastructure
- Place and Sustainability
- Service Improvement
- Leisure
- People, Digital and Policy

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 reviewed the proposed actions and measures and unanimously resolved that the business plans relevant to this Scrutiny Committee be endorsed.

2.4.3 2024/25 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:-

- October 2024 – Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring 2024/25
- February 2025 – Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring 2024/25
- April 2025 – 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.

2.5 Revenue & Capital Budgets

2.5.1 Budget Monitoring Reports

In accordance with the Committee's Forward Work plan, quarterly reports on the departmental and corporate revenue and capital budgets were considered both in an formal meeting or circulated to members as follows:-

- June 2024 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 28th February 2024.
- October 2024 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 30th June 2024.
- October 2024 – Outturn Report 2023/24 end of year financial position.
- November 2024 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 31st August 2024.

To manage the number of scrutiny items on the January 2025 formal agenda, the following budget monitoring report was distributed for review via e-mail.

- January 2025 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 31st October 2024.

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.

A number of queries, observations and comments were raised in regard to the information provided within the budget monitoring reports, including:-

- The under-utilisation of Pool cars
- Under-achievement of income for licensed premises
- Concerns regarding the insufficient funder from Central and Welsh Government to maintain the County's highways to an adequate level.
- Renewable energy
- Energy costs
- The installation of enforcement vehicle cameras
- Waste Collection
- Cleansing – rationalisation of bins

Outcome:

The queries raised were responded to by appropriate officers on the day of the meetings. The Committee resolved to receive those reports presented in the formal meetings.

The Committee considered and accepted the queries raised in regard to the report that was circulated by e-mail at the meeting on 14th March 2025, together with the responses provided – under the Forthcoming Items [Minute 7 refers].

2.5.2 Revenue Budget Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28

In addition to monitoring the current revenue and capital budgets, the Committee was also consulted on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28 at its meeting in January 2025. The report provided the Committee with the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2025/26, together with indicative figures for the 2026/2027 and 2027/28 financial years.

Due to current financial constraints faced by the Council and its departments, the Committee paid significant attention to the upcoming budgeting proposals.

The main discussion involved strong concerns regarding the continuing budget pressures having an impact on the conditions of the roads throughout the County. Many comments were raised acknowledging the difficulties in managing the deterioration of the highway network with the ever-decreasing budget allocation. In applauding the efforts of the Highways department in undertaking essential work with a such a light budget, it was recognised that further cuts would not be tolerated. In understanding and accepting the budget proposals within the report, it was proposed that there be no further budget cuts to the Highway Maintenance Service.

Outcome:

As part of the Authority's widespread consultation undertaken on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2025/26, the Committee considered the Strategy and received the report. In receiving the proposed efficiency savings, the Committee proposed a caveat that there be no further budget cuts to the Highway Maintenance Services.

The Cabinet, during its budget meeting in February 2025, adjusted the proposed savings efficiencies based on feedback from the budget consultation activities and recommendations from Scrutiny.

The proposed amendment in regard to the Highways budget was as follows:-

Highways – Remove proposed reduction based on feedback from member seminars and recommendation from scrutiny committee

Surface Dressing £100k, Gulley Cleansing £70k

2.6 Pre-decision reports

2.6.1 Equestrian Strategy

In July 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report which provided an update on the development of the forthcoming Equestrian Strategy and included a suite of proposed actions to be included in the final document.

Members noted that equestrian provisions were uneven across the County, with few safe areas for horse riding. The concerns of the horse riding community regarding safe passageways were acknowledged.

Concerns were expressed in regard to the financial aspect in implementing a strategy which would need to be considered and budgeted.

Officers responded agreeing with Members sentiments wholeheartedly but assured that they would do their utmost to support equestrianism throughout the County with the budget that was available.

Outcome:

The Committee noted the progress made on the development of the Equestrian Strategy.

2.6.2 Carmarthenshire Waste Strategy – Blueprint Implementation

In July 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report which outlined the proposed transition of the Welsh Governments recycling blueprint collection methodology.

In order to achieve the anticipated 80% target by 2030, address contamination issues and provide a cost-effective service, the Council was required to implement the second phase

of its Waste Strategy which would introduce a new collection system to increase recycling rates, reduce waste, and align with Welsh Government objectives.

Members gave consideration to the rationale and a suite of options which was detailed within the report.

Questions raised were responded to by officers present, with the main queries being:-

- Lessons learned from Phase 1
- The access/egress to the Nantycaws recycling plant from the A48.
- Financial risk register
- Centralisation of service to Nantycaws
- Concerns regarding the proposed 4 weekly collection for black bags

Outcome:

The Committee received the Blueprint Implementation Plan and recommended to Cabinet that the recommendations provided in the report be adopted.

2.6.3 Tree Strategy and Woodland Strategy for Carmarthenshire County Council

In November 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report which appended the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy.

The report highlighted that the strategy sets out the Council's responsibilities for trees and woodlands, how trees and woodlands are managed, and why, how, and where the Council could establish more trees and woodlands on the land it manages.

Members considered the report with interest providing a number of suggestions. Officers provided explanations to the Committee to provide reasons. Ash Dieback was a significant concern particularly the cost impact on the Council's estate. Officers provided a comprehensive explanation on the how this was managed.

Queries and responses were provided in regard to the following:

- Climate Change and the options to consider species that can withstand highwinds etc
- Deforestation
- Responsibility of private landowners and how this was managed

Outcome:

The Committee noted the report and recommended to Cabinet that the Tree and Woodland Strategy for Carmarthenshire County Council be adopted.

2.7 Additional Reports and Update Reports

2.7.1 Update for the Consideration of Additional Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for Carmarthenshire Dog Orders

In July 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report which updated Members on matters relating to the PSPO Carmarthenshire Dog Orders. The Committee at its meeting held on 24th November 2022 recommended to introduce a County wide ban of dog's entering a marked-up sports pitch and the introduction a Fixed Penalty Notice for the offence of not having the means of cleaning up after their dog. The report provided members with an update and the options available to the Authority based upon legal advice given.

The Committee reviewed the report with enthusiasm, enquiring about fixed penalty notices and PSPO enforcement. Officers emphasised the reliance on the public to accurately report irresponsible dog owners to the Council.

Outcome:

The Committee in receiving the report suggested that Officers work with Town and Community Councils to design standard signage for use across the County to inform the public about the PSPO areas and what is required.

The Committee recommended to Cabinet that the recommended option to tackle Dog Related ASB issues as detailed within the report be approved.

2.7.2 Parking Strategy Review

In October 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report which advised Scrutiny Members on the forthcoming review of Carmarthenshire's Parking Strategy

Members raised queries in respect of enforcement of parking on double yellow lines. Officers responded accordingly. In addition, it was asked if consideration could be given to the parking areas for HGV's. Officers agreed and stated that this could be included and would form part of the Parking Strategy Review.

Outcome:

Following a query regarding parking areas for HGV's, Officers stated that this would be included and would form part of the Parking Strategy Review.

The Committee received the report.

2.7.3 What the Council is Doing to Accelerate the Uptake of Renewable Energy Across its Asset Base

In November 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report which provided detailed information on what the Council is doing to accelerate the uptake of renewable energy across its asset base. The report included the current barriers and provided future potential development of the installation of renewable energy technologies.

Outcome:

Committee Members in considering the report provided several suggestions to officers highlighting a number of various initiatives which could be considered by the Council for potential development of renewable energy within its estate. Officers took on board the suggestions for consideration.

Members thanked officers for the comprehensive presentation and their work towards engaging in renewable energy and duly noted the report.

2.7.4 Progress report – Task and Finish review on Flytipping

In November 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report which provided an update on the Implementation of the seven recommendations of the Fly Tipping Task and Finish Group Report.

In accordance with the Investigations Protocol the Committee received the report to provide an update on the progress of the recommendations as identified by the Task and Finish Group and accepted by Cabinet.

The report stated that prior to the Task and Finish Review in 2021/22, fly tipping incidents had peaked at 4,800, since the Review a number of actions had been undertaken by way of enforcement activity and improved communication and at the end of last year the fly tipping incident rate had significantly reduced to just over 3,000 incidents. Members were pleased to note that these figures denote a marked reduction in fly tipping incidents in the last 12-18 months.

Outcome:

The Committee noted the report.

2.7.5 Highway Asset Management Plan – Annual Statement Report 2024

In January 2025, the Committee received for consideration the Annual Statement Report for 2024 of the Highway Asset Management Plan. The Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) Annual Statement Reports are presented to Members each Autumn to set out the condition and performance of the highway network, how it has changed from previous years, and it includes a discussion of investment levels and options.

This Annual Report covered the following asset groups:

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

The Committee expressed serious concerns about the worsening conditions of highways in Carmarthenshire, especially in rural areas. They reviewed the report and raised several questions. In response, it was noted that teams were working hard to maintain and repair the road network, but limited funding posed significant challenges.

Members applauded the recycled nappy initiative which aimed at revolutionising an area of waste management practices while improving sustainable infrastructure maintenance and development.

Concerns were raised about the Drainage Management section of the report, particularly whether the drainage network could handle climate change's worsening effects. The condition of the network beneath the roads was troubling, with some structures failing.

Outcome:

The Committee received the Highway Asset management Plan – Annual Statement 2024

2.7.6 Draft Regional Transport Plan for South West Wales

In March 2025, the Committee received for consideration the Draft Regional Transport Plan for South West Wales which covered the period 2025-2030 and had been developed on behalf of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) incorporating a detailed policy framework and investment delivery plan for the Carmarthenshire CC, Neath Port Talbot CBC, Pembrokeshire CC and the City and County of Swansea areas.

Members noted that a public consultation on the draft Regional Transport Plan for South West Wales RTP was currently live and would run until 6th April 2025. The consultation documents were appended to the report.

Members raised a number of observations, the main points were:

- little emphasis on the protection of old railway routes,
- A very aspirational plan, concerns regard the funding of all the proposals
- Regional bus services

Members, in acknowledging that limited funds would challenge the delivery of the plan, and in respect of the terminated HS2 project, it was proposed that the Committee send a letter to the Welsh Government expressing the importance of securing consequential funding from the HS2 project and that fair apportionment should be made with respect to investment in Carmarthenshire. This was duly seconded. It was felt that should the funding due from the HS2 be received the projects within the Regional Transport Plan would be far more achievable financially.

Outcome:

The Committee noted the draft regional transport plan for South West Wales and resolved to write to the Welsh Government expressing the importance of securing consequential funding from the HS2 project and that fair apportionment should be made with respect to investment in Carmarthenshire.

The Chair sent a letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales on the 11th April.

Mr K. Skates MS,
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales
Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales
(By e-mail only)

Dear Mr Skates MS,

RE: HS2 CONSEQUENTIAL FUNDING

I write to you as Chair of Carmarthenshire County Council's Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Committee.

At its meeting on 14th March 2025, the Committee considered the Draft Regional Transport Plan for South West Wales, during the debate Members raised that following the UK Governments decision to cease the development of the HS2 rail scheme, it appears that there have yet to be any commitments from the UK Government to allocate monies to Wales as required under the Barnett consequential funding formula.

I am kindly requesting that this matter is vigorously pursued, in order that the historically underfunded rail network in West Wales is able to experience much needed investment in order to address this significant inequity and in doing so catalyse economic regeneration, carbon reduction and social inclusion to, from and within the County.

I would further urge, that whilst there is an inequitable disparity between rail funding in England and Wales, this impact is magnified in our County, particularly when compared to the circa £1bn investment being made on the South East Wales Metro and Valleys Lines programme. This presents a real opportunity to equalise considerable inequity by delivering on a number of priorities for rail investment that will significantly improve the lives of people within Carmarthenshire.

Your attention on this matter is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

K. Madge

Councillor Kevin Madge
Chair of Place, Sustainability and Climate Change

A response is currently pending.

2.7.7 Work undertaken in relation to the sale of illicit vapes and underage sale of vapes

In March 2025, the Committee received for consideration a report which provided an update on the work undertaken by Trading Standards in response to increasing concerns over the proliferation of illegal vaping products and their accessibility to minors. This project was undertaken by Trading Standards to address the health risks associated with vaping, ensure regulatory compliance, raise public awareness, with the aim of protecting the health and well-being of the Carmarthen population, particularly its youth.

Members concerned about this matter were grateful for the report which was insightful and as it contained information regarding the safeguarding provisions in place found it reassuring. However, as vaping was on the increase, it was an area that needed to be monitored. Officers explained that a Neighbourhood Action Plan was in place and that a social media drive had recently taken place that highlighted the matter of the illegal disposal of vapes. The Action Plan included areas of CCTV, litter hotspots/challenging areas as well as the ongoing work with 'Pride in our Patch' teams to assist in litter picks. As a last resort, those who were witnessed littering could be at risk in receiving a fixed penalty notice and be fined up to £125.

Outcome:

The Committee noted the report

2.7.8 Waste Service Review

In March 2025, at the request of the Committee at its meeting in January 2025, the Committee received for consideration a report which provided an update on the Waste Service Review and included the reasons behind the challenges that had been experienced during the collections of waste during the recent bank holidays.

Members were aware that that Carmarthenshire Council was preparing and planning for a major waste service change in 2026. The service change would involve changing the residual collection frequency from a 3-weekly to 4-weekly collection. The recycling service would depart from a commingled collection, with a separate glass and food to the Welsh Government Blueprint collection methodology of kerbside sort together with the development and transition to a new Centralised Depot.

Members stated that improved communication to residents would help alleviate frustrations caused by missed collections. Officers explained that the Council's 'waste disruption' web page was the best method to broadcast up to date information, as communicating with each affected County Councillor on a daily basis would prove to be a challenge and resource heavy.

It was raised that many Councillors had received a significant amount of collection complaints over the Christmas period 2024 and therefore sought assurances that the difficulties experienced would not be repeated during Easter 2025. The Head of Environmental Infrastructure stated that whilst it would be remiss of him to provide assurances that there wouldn't be any difficulties collecting waste from the 91,000 households over the bank holiday, however he did report that a number of actions had been undertaken with the aim to improve the Easter bank holiday collections. The main challenges being that there was no contractual obligation to work either on a bank holiday or the weekend.

Assurances were provided to Members that the Bank Holiday service provision was being reviewed and that the team was working closely with Trade Union colleagues in order to find a solution in the shorter and longer term to provide certainty of service.

- Concerns regarding an increase in flytipping which had been visibly noticed over the recent period.
- Queries were raised regarding the management of households how did not comply with the recycling requirements and/or placing a high number of bags out for collection.
- Advice was sought on how households dispose of pet waste.

Outcome:

The Committee noted the report.

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.

Following a deferment of the review, the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 14th December 2023 considered and approved the Planning and Scoping document for a Task and Finish Group's review of the dog breeding licensing function of the Consumer and Business Affairs Animal Health team. The Committee unanimously accepted the document and officially commissioned a task and finish group to undertake a focused review, which commenced in February 2024 and comprised the following cross-party membership

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 Arwel Davies Councillor Gareth Thomas Councillor Karen Davies (Vice Chair)
Independent Group:	Councillor Sue Allen
Labour Group:	Councillor Tina Higgins Councillor Kevin Madge (Chair)

The Group convened 7 times from February 2024 to March 2025, conducting interviews with key witnesses both in person and via Teams as well as carrying out site visits. This led to the development of 5 local recommendations and 7 national recommendations.

The recommendations will be presented to Scrutiny Committee for consideration in July 2025 with a view to be considered by Cabinet in September 2025.

3.2 Site Visits

The Committee went on 1 site visits during the year

- Coastal Erosion Inspection – 15th October 2024

At the Scrutiny Committee held on 22nd March, 2024 it was resolved to undertake site visits to view coastal defence work undertaken within Carmarthenshire and areas deemed to be at risk and requiring works (Minute 3 refers).

The following itinerary was carried out:-

9:45am meet at County Hall – bus to leave County Hall at 10:00am

Locations:-

- ***Bynea in Llanelli to view the eroding coastal path.***
- ***Burry Port***
- ***Location just outside Kidwelly, to view the sea defences that protect Pembrey's hinterland.***
- ***Bus to return to County Hall by 1pm***

Five out of the twelve members attended the scheduled site visit. The feedback received from the attending members indicated that it was insightful, and they gained more knowledge regarding the work that needs to be undertaken.

3.3 Development Sessions

During the 2024/25 municipal year, Committee Members were invited to the following development sessions/seminars facilitated by the Authority:-

Date	Development Session / Seminar
22/05/2024	Introduction to the work of the Pembrokeshire & Carmarthenshire Coroner
14/06/2024	Introduction to Thinqi – New Learning Management System
10/07/2024	Highway Surfacing & Maintenance
25/07/2024	S106 Agreements
11/09/2024	Environmental Protection – Food Standards & Public Health
26/09/2024	Corporate Safeguarding
09/10/2024	Pentre Awel Update
21/10/2024	Transport for Wales – Bus Franchising Briefing – Key priorities
29/10/2024 & 30/10	Dementia Friends Awareness
12/11/2024	Building Cyber Resilience: Safeguarding Our Council's Digital Future
20/11/2024	Winter Preparedness
10/12/2024	WLGA Role & Key Responsibilities
11/12/2024	Chief Fire Officer Annual Update
29/01/2025	Nutrient Management – National Guidance & Challenges
05/02/2025	Regional Transport Plan
12/02/2025	Elected Officials – Personal Security Briefing
12/02/2025	One Planet Development
18/02/2025	WLGA Scrutiny Self Assessment Workshop – Session 1
24/02/2025	WLGA Scrutiny Self Assessment Workshop – Session 2

In addition to the above Corporate Development sessions / seminars, members attended several budget seminars held during January as part of the Council's consultation process on the 2025-26 Revenue Budget and the five-year capital programme.

4. Impact

4.1 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 2024/25 municipal year, the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee has made a positive impact in many ways, including:-

- Highlighting the issues in regard to the conditions of the roads and subsequently, amending the proposed efficiency savings for the next year’s budget in regard to highways
- Continuous scrutinising on the changes relating to the waste regime.
- Transportation

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 2024/25, 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

The Cleansing Team and the Highways team continue to be under pressure throughout the municipal year due to demand on services. Nevertheless, the departments have adapted and developed innovative solutions during unprecedented circumstances to meet the needs of the services user in Carmarthenshire.

The Committee has continued to be constructive in its role in scrutinising performance which has facilitated the department and positively contributed to policies and decisions. It has been a balancing act for the Committee in undertaking its scrutiny duty without impacting on the resourcing of front-line services.

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. To ensure that the best use is being made of meeting time, the Committee is keen to continue implementing the principles of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny in order to achieve a streamlined and focused scrutiny process.

The Committee will develop its Forward Work plan for the 2025/26 municipal year drawing on the pre-decision reports from the Cabinet Forward Work Plan as well as considering pertinent issues within the remit of the Committee.

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 Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee during the 2024/25 municipal year is shown in the table below. A total of seven meetings were held during the municipal year.

Scrutiny Committee Member	Meetings Attended	%
Councillor Karen Davies	5	71%
Councillor Arwel Davies	7	100%
Councillor Colin Evans	5	71%
Councillor Neil Lewis	6	86%
Councillor Dorian Phillips	4	57%
Councillor Gareth Thomas	4	57%
Councillor Kevin Madge	7	100%
Councillor Peter Cooper	1	14%
Councillor Tina Higgins	7	100%
Councillor Shelly Godfrey-Coles	2	29%
Councillor Sue Allen	7	100%
Councillor John James (left July 2025)	1	14%
Vacancy - Independent		
Vacancy - Independent		
Vacancy – Unaffiliated (from July 2025)		

Substitutes	Meetings Attended
Cllr. Kim Broom	1
Cllr. Lewis Davis	1
Cllr. Mansel Charles	1
Cllr. Meinir James	2
Cllr. Phillip Warlow	1
Cabinet Member	Meetings Attended
Cllr. Aled Vaughan Owen (Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability)	5
Cllr. Edward Thomas (Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services)	6
Cllr. Alun Lenny (Resources)	3
Cllr. Carys Jones (Rural Affairs, Community Cohesion and Planning Policy)	3