

# Scrutiny Function Annual Report 2024-2025

## Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire

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## Chair's Foreword



Cllr. Giles  
Morgan  
Chair of the  
Scrutiny Chairs  
and Vice-  
Chairs Forum  
and Corporate  
Policy and  
Resources  
Scrutiny  
Committee

Welcome to this year's annual Scrutiny function report. This report provides an overview of activity during the year and is in addition to the individual Annual reports each Scrutiny Committee has produced.

The Authority's five committees have worked diligently to maximise the impact Scrutiny has across the authority. As a collective we have considered a wide and varied selection of topics under our work programmes, including annual reports such as budget and performance monitoring. We are also proactive in undertaking pre decision scrutiny. All Scrutiny members receive a copy of the Cabinet Forward Plan as soon as it is published and updated, this means we can request reports on those topics to allow us to feed in and contribute at an early stage to decisions made by the Cabinet.

Local authorities continue to face significant financial pressures. I know that Scrutiny will contribute to meeting these challenges by acting as a 'critical friend' to decision-makers, by supporting innovation in how the council and its partners deliver services, and by acting as the voice of the people when important decisions are being made.

I would like to thank all Scrutiny Chairs, Members and Co-opted Members for their dedication and support throughout this last year in ensuring our committees have continued to positively influence the decision-making process of the Council. Thank you also to the Cabinet Members for regularly attending their respective Scrutiny Committee meetings to present and answer questions on the reports. Finally my thanks to departmental officers for their work and the democratic team for their support and guidance throughout the year.

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## Introduction

Scrutiny plays a key role in improving the services that the people and children of Carmarthenshire use. The majority of decisions are made by the Cabinet of 10 County Councillors. Scrutiny offers the other 65 Councillors an opportunity to influence those decisions and act as a “critical friend”. It is also useful in ensuring that Council policies reflect current priorities, as well as promoting efficiency and encouraging effective partnership working with external bodies.

Committees' main roles and responsibilities are 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;
- Input into key decisions through Pre-decision Scrutiny and Call-in.

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## The Scrutiny Committees

Carmarthenshire County Council has 5 Scrutiny Committees:

- [Communities, Homes & Regeneration](#)
- [Corporate Performance & Resources](#)
- [Education, Young People & the Welsh Language](#)
- [Health & Social Services](#)
- [Place, Sustainability & Climate Change](#)

All non-executive Councillors can be appointed to at least one Scrutiny Committee, depending on their specialist interests or expertise.

Each Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the scrutiny of Cabinet and specific Cabinet Portfolios and their respective service areas. More information on Scrutiny responsibilities and terms of reference can be found [here](#).

The Committees normally meet 8 times a year on a 6 weekly basis to consider issues and reports included in a Scrutiny Forward Work Plan, which is developed at the beginning of the municipal year and updated regularly. Additional meetings are sometimes arranged if required and special or joint meetings may be held to consider urgent or cross-cutting issues.

The Scrutiny Committees are politically balanced to reflect, as far as possible, the political composition of the Council as a whole. The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees are appointed by Council at the beginning of each municipal year for a period of one year (e.g. May 2024 to April 2025). They also participate in the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum, which normally meets on a quarterly basis if required to oversee the strategic direction of Scrutiny.

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## Scrutiny Committee Annual Reports

Each Scrutiny Committee produced an annual report of its activities and outcomes and /or impact and these can be found below:

- [Communities, Homes & Regeneration](#)
- [Corporate Performance & Resources](#)
- [Education, Young People & the Welsh Language](#)
- [Health & Social Services](#)
- [Place, Sustainability & Climate Change](#)

Each report includes information on development sessions requested by each Committee which assists in ensuring members have the knowledge and skills to equip themselves to undertake their roles successfully. These sessions are in addition to those provided as part of the Authority's Member Development Programme.

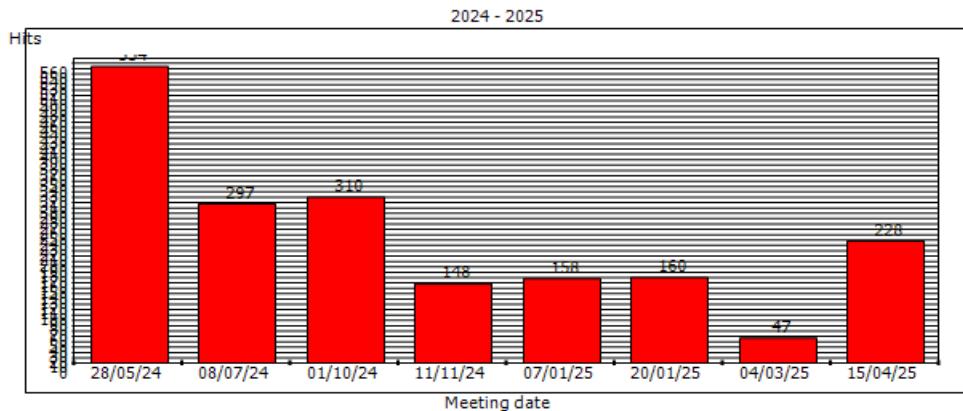
## Scrutiny Facts

Number of formal Committee Meetings	32
Number of Task and Finish Reviews	4*
Meetings of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Forum	1
Public Questions/Topics for discussion	0
Call In requests	0
<b>Webcasting of meetings 2024/2025 municipal year:</b>	
Total number of live and archived views per committee:	
• Communities, Homes & Regeneration	778
• Corporate Performance & Resources	526
• Education, Young People & the Welsh Language	568
• Health & Social Services	691
• Place, Sustainability & Climate Change	615
Visits to the Scrutiny Committee landing page	<b>1,266</b> (1026 – 23/24)

\*ongoing and completed.

## Visits to the Scrutiny meeting pages to view agendas, minutes and attendees:

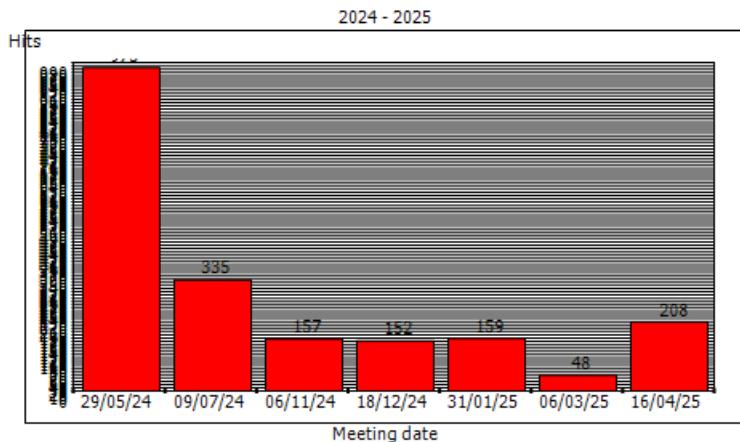
Communities, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee



### Meeting page statistics

#### Meeting date Page hits

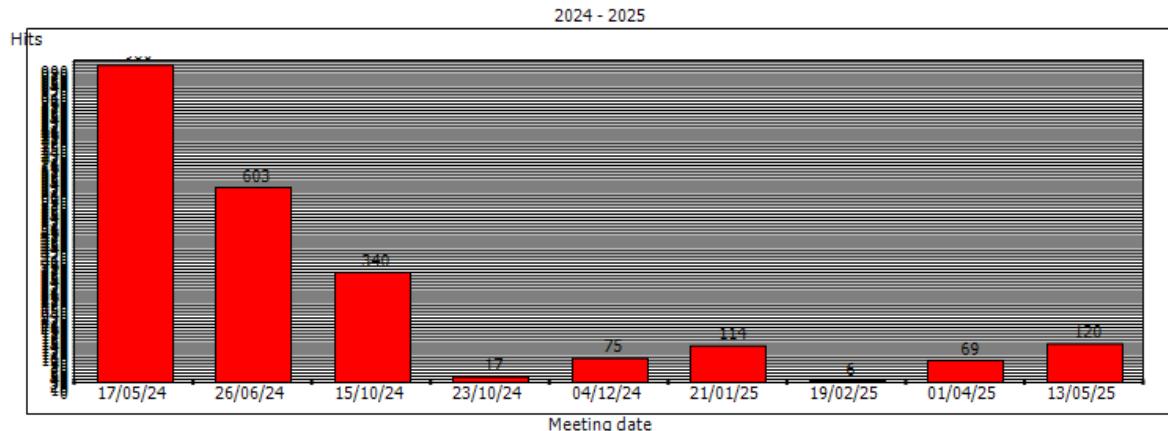
28/05/2024	554
08/07/2024	297
01/10/2024	310
11/11/2024	148
07/01/2025	158
20/01/2025	160
04/03/2025	47
15/04/2025	228



**Meeting page  
statistics**

**Meeting date Page hits**

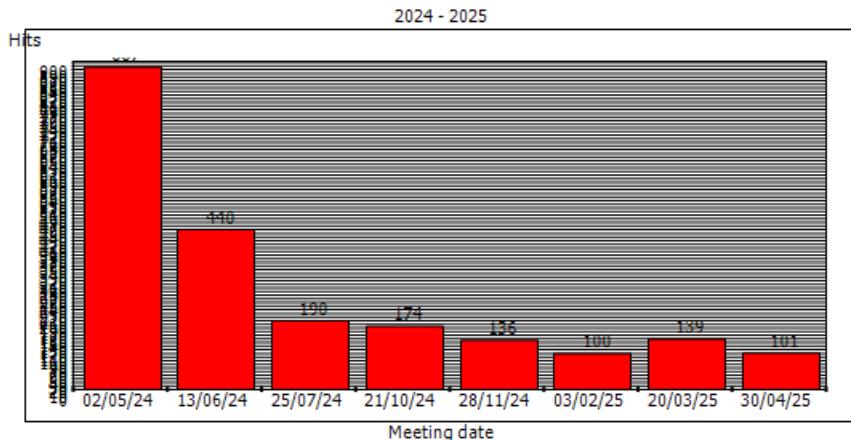
29/05/2024	975
09/07/2024	335
06/11/2024	157
18/12/2024	152
31/01/2025	159
06/03/2025	48
16/04/2025	208



**Meeting page statistics**

**Meeting date Page hits**

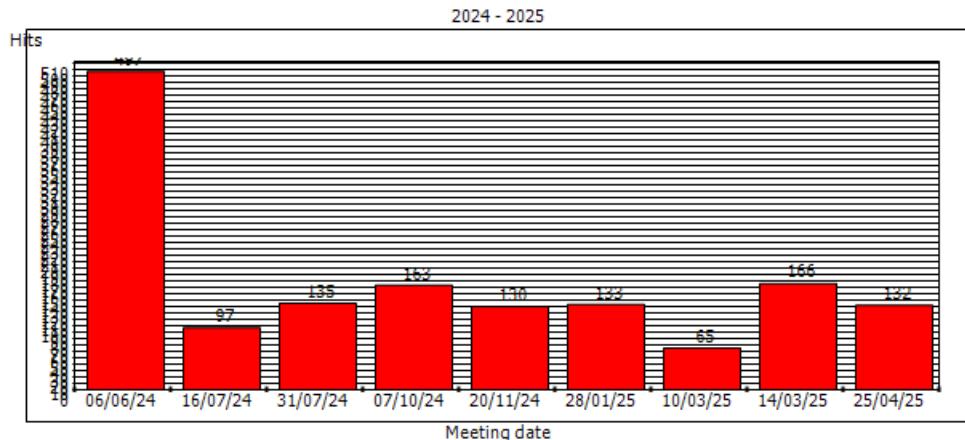
17/05/2024	980
26/06/2024	603
15/10/2024	340
23/10/2024	17
04/12/2024	75
21/01/2025	114
19/02/2025	6
01/04/2025	69
13/05/2025	120



**Meeting page statistics**

**Meeting date Page hits**

02/05/2024	887
13/06/2024	440
25/07/2024	190
21/10/2024	174
28/11/2024	136
03/02/2025	100
20/03/2025	139
30/04/2025	101



**Meeting page statistics**

**Meeting date Page hits**

06/06/2024 497

16/07/2024 97

31/07/2024 135

07/10/2024 163

20/11/2024 130

28/01/2025 133

10/03/2025 65

14/03/2025 166

25/04/2025 132

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## Scrutiny Monitoring Reports

All Scrutiny Committees receive the following monitoring reports as standard and have previously agreed the frequency, format of reports and how these are received:

- Performance Monitoring Reports - One of the principal roles of a Scrutiny Committee is to monitor the performance of services and functions under its remit. They undertake this work mainly through the consideration of performance monitoring reports, which provide a balanced picture of performance. Each Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to consider the Council's Annual Report which was 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 and the Annual Report is based on our four Well-being Objectives as outlined in the Council's Corporate Strategy for 2022-27. The 2023-24 report took a slightly different structure to its predecessors, in that progress had been noted under the 'outcomes we hope to achieve' which formed our well-being objectives. This ensured a greater and more seamless alignment between our Corporate Strategy and how the Authority reports on its progress.
- Revenue & Capital Budget Monitoring Reports – Each Scrutiny Committee receives reports on the revenue and capital budgets for the services within their remit.
- Actions & Referrals Updates – During the course of the municipal year several recommendations and requests for additional information are made by Scrutiny Committees to assist them in discharging their scrutiny role.

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## Pre Decision Scrutiny and holding the Executive to account

### Pre Decision Scrutiny

Carmarthenshire operates a Pre Decision Scrutiny process which means that Scrutiny Committees can ask to see reports from the Cabinet Forward Plan at an early stage, allowing each Committee to feed and input into policy development as the report is developed.

All Councillors receive a copy of the Cabinet Plan as and when updated versions are published and can then ask Democratic support officers to schedule Cabinet reports at Scrutiny Committees so that Scrutiny can contribute to the final report.

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny receive an advanced copy of the Revenue and Capital budget monitoring reports which allows them to ask for specific information to be made available for discussion at Scrutiny Committee.

### Cabinet Member Involvement

Cabinet Members are expected to attend meetings of the Scrutiny Committee to allow scrutiny of their respective portfolios in relation to decisions taken. Cabinet Members present reports and answer questions in relation to proposed decisions that have been included within the Forward Work Plan/included on the agenda.

## Task and Finish Reviews

### Complete:-

The Cabinet considered a task and finish report from the Communities, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the Authority's Adaptations Policy at its meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

The Task and Finish review put forward 5 recommendations and these were agreed by the Cabinet. A copy of the review and Cabinet minute can be found [here](#).

### Ongoing:-

A Health and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish review on an 'Active and Healthy Start' is currently being finalised and will be considered by the Cabinet in June 2025.

A Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group is currently undertaking 'a review of the dog breeding licensing function of the Consumer and Business Affairs' Animal Health Team', and the final report is expected to be presented to Cabinet in the Autumn of 2025.

A Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group is currently ongoing on the performance and development of the Corporate Contact Centre.

## Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Forum

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees are the members of the Scrutiny Forum. The Forum takes an overview of all the Council's scrutiny work, with members challenging each other to ensure that the right matters are prioritised. The role of the Scrutiny Forum is

- To discuss and propose improvements to the scrutiny function for consideration by the Council's Constitutional Review Working Group;
- To discuss and propose items for discussion at the biannual meetings with the Cabinet;
- To act as a forum for sharing and disseminating scrutiny good practice;
- To receive feedback on Scrutiny Network Events and other relevant meetings;
- To assist in the identification of learning and development needs for the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the scrutiny committees and Committee members.

There is an opportunity for the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs to meet with the Cabinet twice per year, should they so wish.

The Forum met on one occasion during the period of this report.

## OUTCOME

Content and scope of the WLGA Scrutiny Self Assessment 2 day workshop agreed.

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### Scrutiny of Joint Committees

#### Partneriaeth Scrutiny Councillor Group

The Partneriaeth Scrutiny Councillor Group is a regional group that consists of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all the Education Scrutiny Committees from across the Partneriaeth Consortium. The meetings are administered by the City & County of Swansea's Scrutiny Team. The aim of the Group is to ensure there is consistent scrutiny across the region on matters within the remit of Partneriaeth. It meets twice a year to discuss Partneriaeth items and the opportunity is also taken to consider other education items of common interest. The meetings take place on a rota basis between the Local Authorities that form the Partneriaeth Consortium. The Chair of the Group is also rotated and is normally the Chair of the hosting Local Authority. 3 meetings were held during the Carmarthenshire municipal year. A decision was made to disband the Partneriaeth Joint Committee in April 2025 and transfer to a collaborative agreement, therefore the Scrutiny Councillor Group has been discontinued.

#### Swansea Bay City Deal Joint Scrutiny Committee

The Swansea Bay City Deal Joint Scrutiny Committee is a regional scrutiny committee consisting of 12 non-executive members of the four Swansea Bay City Deal Constituent Authorities. The Joint Scrutiny Committee was established in July 2018 to review and scrutinise the Swansea Bay City Deal Joint Committee. It aims to ensure greater public accountability over decisions made by the Joint Committee and any of its sub-committees and related entities. This complements Local Authority scrutiny work on individual projects of the City Deal that fall within their remit. The Joint Scrutiny Committee is hosted by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. The Joint Scrutiny Committee meets on a quarterly basis. Three members of Carmarthenshire County Council sit on the Joint Scrutiny Committee, including the Scrutiny Champion. 4 meetings were held during the municipal year. Further information can be found [here](#).

#### South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee

Formally constituted in January 2022, the Corporate Joint Committee for South West Wales covers the Local Authority areas of Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Swansea. The Committee will improve the regional planning, co-ordination and delivery of transport, land use planning, economic development and energy. The Corporate Joint Committee has established a Governance and Audit Sub-Committee and an Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Three non-executive members of Carmarthenshire County Council have been appointed to both Sub-Committees. The Governance and Audit Sub-Committee did not meet during the period of this report and the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee met on 6 occasions. The Scrutiny Sub-Committee is hosted by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (further information can be found [here](#)) and the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee is hosted by Pembrokeshire County Council (further information can be found [here](#)).

## Improvement / Self-Assessment

As part of its Follow Up Review on Overview and Scrutiny “Fit for the Future”, Audit Wales found that the Authority had not yet met one of their proposals for improvement and put in place arrangements for assessing the effectiveness and impact of scrutiny. In addition, Audit Wales felt that the Scrutiny Committee annual reports were largely an account of work undertaken rather than an assessment of effectiveness or impact.

Whilst a self-assessment questionnaire had been undertaken in late 2023, it was agreed that further work needed to be done. During the year the WLGA was commissioned to hold a two day self-assessment workshop. The Workshops, specifically for Scrutiny Committee members took place virtually on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025 and in person on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

29 Scrutiny Members attended the first day and this reduced to 12 Scrutiny Members for Part 2.

The two day workshop was split as follows:-

### Part One: Effective Scrutiny workshop

- Understand and agree the role and purpose of the scrutiny function
- Review the characteristics of effective scrutiny
- Review your approaches to scrutiny
- 

### Part Two: Self evaluation

- Assess overall scrutiny performance
- Reflect on individual and committee practices
- Identify any improvements that could be made personally and locally.

## Outcome:

Members who attended the session were positive, attendees felt they had a clear and shared understanding and application of scrutiny’s role and purpose. There was a sense that scrutiny is generally respected both within the council and externally and that there is an effective relationship between scrutiny and the Cabinet. Scrutiny was felt to operate independently from the Cabinet and to challenge apolitically. Attendance by Cabinet Members who presented reports and answered questions was welcomed.

## Areas for development:-

1. Pre-Meetings : Allow more time for preparation and challenge.
2. Streamline Agendas: Focus on fewer, high-impact items per meeting.
3. Enhance Report Quality and Timeliness: Set clear expectations for officer submissions.
4. Review and Refresh the forward plan regularly : Ensure flexibility and responsiveness.
5. Invest in Member Development: Through training, e-learning and cross-committee learning.
6. Strengthen Public Engagement: Explore new methods to increase visibility and participation.

## External Auditors / Inspections

No direct involvement for Scrutiny during 2024/25

## Public Participation and Engagement

Scrutiny meetings are held on a multi-location basis, this means a mix of physical and remote attendance and all formal meetings are webcast live. This way our residents and stakeholders can attend our Scrutiny Committees, and view the work and discussions of elected members. Access to our webcasts are available on our website for 6 months after the date of the meeting. In line with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Council has a published [Public Participation Strategy](#) which sets out the ways in which local people are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process of the Council.

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

- Asking a question or attending a Scrutiny meeting
- [Suggesting a topic for review](#)
- Contribute evidence for scrutiny reviews
- Keeping up-to-date with what's happening in Scrutiny through our dedicated [Scrutiny webpages](#), promotion and engagement through the publication of Scrutiny information, agendas, and Committee terms of reference
- Town & Community Council are contacted annually to inform of the Scrutiny function and welcoming any topic suggestions that they wish to put forward
- [Forward Plans](#) provide early sight of information, Committee schedules and those matters for consideration
- Scrutiny Annual Reports – each Scrutiny Committee publishes an annual report providing an overview of the work undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee
- Committee meetings are broadcast live and archived for up to 6 months
- Stakeholders and external representatives are invited to contribute to broaden the committees' understanding and inform discussions. Some of the representatives that have attended this year include: Schools, Hywel Dda Community Health Board
- We have co-optees on our Education, Young People and Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee, representing parent governors, the Church in Wales and the Catholic Church.

Whilst public engagement remains disappointing, our webcasting viewing figures are positive.

The Council at its Annual meeting on in May 2025 agreed that petitions should now be considered by Scrutiny in the first instance with any recommendations being passed to the appropriate body. This will provide Scrutiny members more responsibility on how petitions are managed.

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## Challenges

- Ensuring the Cabinet forward work programme is complete and robust.
- Improving Member engagement and commitment to the work of the Scrutiny Committees.
- Increasing public participation and promotion of Scrutiny.
- Ensure that Scrutiny complies with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and continues its focus on the need to reduce the inequalities of outcomes that result from socio-economic disadvantage. The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 requires councils to consider the impact of doing something now and the long-term effect for the future. Scrutiny play a part by working in partnership, making effective use of time in committees, by questioning and making achievable recommendations.

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## Forward Work Plans

Scrutiny Committees meet in March and April of each year to develop their forward work plans. Forward Plans are flexible and developed to account for shifts in priority and topic over the course of the year. Potential items for Scrutiny are discussed at forward plan development sessions and each Scrutiny Committee encouraged to make use of a prioritisation tool based on a model developed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

To ensure Scrutiny Committees can input into policy development at an early stage, through Pre Decision Scrutiny. Scrutiny Committees are provided with copies of the Cabinet plan upon publication and can ask to see reports weeks/months before a report is scheduled to be considered by Cabinet.

Looking at decisions before they are made provides an important means to influence those decisions, and to improve them. It gives scrutineers an opportunity to challenge assumptions that may have been made as the decision was developed; it also gives them the chance to consider how decision-makers have considered what risks might arise from the implementation of the decision, and how those risks might be mitigated.

Scrutiny councillors bring a different perspective to the decision-making process than that provided by Cabinet members or officers, which can help decisions to be more robust. Looking at a decision before it is made can often be seen as a more effective means of scrutiny than looking at a decision after it is made (for example, through the call in process), when the opportunity to influence and change that decision is quite limited.

Each Scrutiny Committee agenda includes a standard item titled 'Forthcoming Items', which allows members to review and manage the Forward Work Plan by examining a list of proposed topics for the next meeting. This process enables committee members to suggest items for officers to include in their reports, facilitating comprehensive scrutiny that addresses issues relevant to Carmarthenshire communities.

All forward work plans are available on the Authority's [website](#).

## Support for the Scrutiny Function

Support for Carmarthenshire County Council's Scrutiny function is provided by the Democratic Services Unit, based within the Law, Governance and Civil Services 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.

Information on [Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire.](#)

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