

Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report

2023 - 2024

Scrutiny
in Carmarthenshire



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Cyngor **Sir Gâr**
Carmarthenshire
County Council



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Chair's Foreword



I am pleased to present the annual report of the Place, Sustainability and Climate Scrutiny Committee for the 2023/24 municipal scrutiny year.

The report demonstrates the large variety of work that scrutiny committee has undertaken during the period between May 2023 to April 2024.

In July 2023, the Committee completed the Task and Finish review on the management of Fly-Tipping. I would like to thank the Committee for all their work on this investigation.

This year the scrutiny committee has helped to shape the revenue budget. Committee Members expressed concern in regard to the maintenance backlog which is deteriorating at a significant rate. I would like to express my appreciation to the Cabinet Members for presenting the Committee with detailed technical and operational information.

I would also like to thank all officers across the remit of this Scrutiny Committee for their input and professionalism in supporting the work of the Committee who provided detailed technical and operational information upon request.

I wish to thank my Vice Chair, Councillor Karen Davies for her invaluable support throughout the year.

On a final note, my sincere thanks to all the committee members for your attendance, professionalism and for providing excellent scrutiny and on behalf of our communities.

I am looking forward, once again to the privilege of Chairing this Committee in the coming year.

Councillor Kevin Madge

Chair of Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee 2023/2024

1. Introduction

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

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

This report provides an overview of the work of the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee during the reduced six-month committee cycle for 2023/24 municipal year. It aims to highlight the work of the Committee and reflect on the achievements identifying what worked well and where improvements could be made. This analysis is instrumental in developing scrutiny. In addition, this report may aid to facilitate discussions on items which could be identified for inclusion within future work programmes.

The Committee is chaired by the Councillor Kevin Madge and is made up of 13 Elected Members, one Independent Group place has been vacant for the duration of 2023/24. Support is provided to the Committee by the Democratic Services Team 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 Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the scrutiny of the following three Cabinet portfolios and service areas:

Scrutiny Committee remits were updated by Council following the May 2023 elections and each Scrutiny Committee became responsible for the overview and scrutiny of specific Cabinet Portfolios and their respective services. The following Cabinet Portfolios and their respective service areas relevant to this Committee are as follows:-:

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](#)).

The Cabinet Member responsible for Community Safety is Councillor Ann Davies – Rural Affairs, community Cohesion and Planning Policy.

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 some periodic reports in relation to performance and budget monitoring could 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

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 site visits to establishments falling within its remit, together with development sessions and workshops.

2.4 Performance Monitoring

Carmarthenshire Council Annual Report 2022/2023 – the Council’s Annual Report 2022/23 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 focused upon the Well-Being Objectives falling within the Committees remit, namely:

Well-being Objective	Thematic/service Priority	Cabinet Portfolio	Cabinet responsible	Member
Well-being Objective 3	Prosperous Communities, Enabling our communities and environment to be healthy safe and prosperous.			
WBO3	Introduction			
WBO3b	Thematic Priority: Decarbonisation & Nature Emergency	Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability		Cllr. Aled Vaughan Owen
WBO3d	Thematic Priority: Community Safety, Resilience and Cohesion	Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Community Cohesion and Planning Policy		Cllr. Ann Davies
	Food Standards	Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability		Cllr Aled Vaughan Owen
WBO3f	Service Priority: Waste	Cabinet Member for		Cllr Edward Thomas
WBO3g	Service Priority: Highways & Transport	Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services		

The structure of the Annual Report was based on the new Council Well-being Objectives (4) as agreed in the Council’s Corporate Strategy for 2022-27. The Annual Report looked at each of the four Well-being Objectives and Core Business Enablers and assessed the progress that had been made during the year. The report provided information on the following basis for each Well-being Objective and Core Business Enabler:

- Overarching judgement
- Why is this important
- Key overarching indicators and measures
- Outcomes we set ourselves
- How well are we doing and how do we know
- Case studies
- Areas for improvement
- Governance.

Outcome:

Whilst no observations were submitted by members to the e-mail, the Annual Report was considered by the Cabinet on 30th October 2023 where its approval was recommended to Council and subsequently adopted at its meeting on 8th November 2023.

2020/21 Performance Reports relevant to this Scrutiny - One of the principal roles of a scrutiny committee is to monitor the performance of services and functions within its remit. The Committee were afforded the opportunity to scrutinise the performance reports by e-mail.

The reports detailed the progress as at the end of Quarter 2 of the deliverables linked to the Corporate Strategy and the Well-being objectives. No queries were received. Quarter 3 report was considered at the meeting in March 2024. In the main, queries raised were in regard to the deterioration of unclassified roads and the signage in relation to the new legislation - 20mph speed limit. Queries raised were responded to by the relevant Cabinet Member supported by officers.

2.5 Revenue and Capital Budgets

Budget Monitoring Reports – were circulated to Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee members by e-mail in line with the Committee's decision to scrutinise outside of the Committees formal process. However, due to there being a light agenda the Chair agreed to add January and April's reports to the formal Committee agenda.

The Committee, received quarterly reports on the departmental and corporate revenue and capital budgets in

- July 2023 - in respect of the budgetary position as at February 2023
- October 2023 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 30th June 2023 together with the 2022/23 Outturn report
- November 2023 – in respect of the budgetary position as at 31st August 2023.
- January 2024 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 30th October 2024.
- April 2024 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 30th December 2024

The reports enabled members to monitor the level of spend in each area and the progress made in connection with any capital works.

No observations or queries were submitted by members to reports circulated by e-mail, however Members raised pertinent queries on the reports presented at the meetings in January 2024 and April 2024 respectively where the relevant Cabinet Member supported by officers provided responses.

Consultation - Revenue Budget Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27 - In January 2024, the Committee as a statutory consultee received the Revenue Budget Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27 for consideration and comment. The report provided Members with an outlook of the Revenue Budget for 2024/2025 together with indicative figures for 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 financial years based on officers' projections of spending requirements and took account of the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government on the 20th December 2023.

The Committee raised a number of queries and concerns in regard to the proposed budgets on the following issues:

- The proposal to cease routine mechanical sweeping of rural roads
- Surface dressing
- Change in mechanical sweeping of rural roads from routine to a reactive basis
- Deterioration of the road conditions
- The introduction of car parking charges on free car parks
- The proposal to cease free transportation for 16 to 18 year olds attending school/college

The queries were responded to by the respective Cabinet Members supported by Officers. In addition, during the consideration of the saving proposals, the Committee formally proposed that in regard to the introduction of parking charges at the 9 car parks which were currently free to park, be reviewed by the Cabinet Member on a case-by-case basis.

Outcome:

Following the consideration of the proposals within the report the Committee resolved that the proposals for delivery of efficiency savings as identified in Appendix A(i) be received subject to the comments raised by the Committee being considered as part of the consultation with a focus on the following:-

- Increase the funds made available to highway maintenance;
Outcome
- To reconsider and review the introduction of carpark charges based upon the rationale for individual locality free car parking provision;
Outcome
- to reconsider the proposal to cease free school/college transport for 16 to 18 year olds;
Outcome

The comments, concerns and recommendations raised by the Committee helped to shape the Revenue budget strategy for 2024/25 – 2026/27 which was considered and adopted at full Council on 28th February 2024.

2.7 Pre-Decision Scrutiny Reports

Free Parking – July 2023

The Committee received a report on the Free Parking Review for consideration. The report provided members with comprehensive information and graphical data that considered the impact of two schemes that was currently in operation from both an output and revenue perspective.

Following the consideration of the 5 options detailed within the report Members commended officers for providing comprehensive information and inclusion of 7 years of robust data. However, it was commented that the data did not bear any evidence that free car parking made any difference in footfall within the town centres. In addition,

it was noted that there was recognition of the cost of living crises and that the options provided for consideration were sensitive to the needs of the residents of Carmarthenshire.

The Committee had a lengthy discussion on the content of the report making references to the poor air quality areas in Carmarthenshire, the costings, savings and budgeting as well as considering the impact on local businesses.

Outcome
The Committee resolved to recommend Cabinet that options 4 and 5 as detailed in the report be considered.

Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) Annual Statement Report 2023 – November 2023

The Committee received the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) Annual Statement Report 2023. In scrutinising the report members raised concerns in respect of:-

- Carmarthenshire's significant surface maintenance backlog which was growing year on year currently estimated at over £63m
- The standstill investment of £8m required against the realisation of the expected capital funding of £0.6m – not sustainable.
- The reactionary method – not cost effective or sustainable
- No capital funding available for 2023/24 for Footways and Cycleways.

Officers responded to the concerns in an open and honest manner, acknowledging that the deterioration in the asset and the consequential maintenance backlog, members were informed that the department faced an increasing volume of reactive maintenance which was placing a significant impact on highways teams diverting them from other essential planned maintenance works. In essence the department was under significant budgetary constraints.

In expressing frustrations with regard to the current budget situation, the Committee proposed that a letter be sent to the Welsh Government Minister outlining the current situation and conveying the budget concerns of the Committee.

Outcome:
Unanimously resolved that a letter be sent to the Welsh Government Minister outlining the current concerns in relation to the situation of the highway network, conveying the budget concerns as raised by the Committee.
A letter was sent to the Minister for Climate Change in January 2024 which highlighted that the Welsh Government supported the County Council in maintaining our highways through the Highways Refurbishment Grant which was invested in highway resurfacing and surface dressing works to proactively address the deterioration of our roads. Sadly, since the end of this funding, our roads in Carmarthenshire are deteriorating at a significant rate.

A response was received in February 2024 from the Deputy Minister for Climate Change:-

“We recognise the importance of maintaining roads and Welsh Government are investing in maintaining the Strategic Road Network. Local Authorities (LA) are responsible for maintaining highways and are funded to do so through the core Revenue Support Grant.

We recognise the pressures on funding within Local Authorities and the Welsh Government provides additional funding to help LAs in adapting the road network to climate change through the Resilient Roads Fund. This year Carmarthenshire Council was awarded £500,000 through the fund towards improving the resilience of Carmarthenshire’s strategic highway network. However, in the current financial climate we have no plans to reintroduce the Highways Refurbishment Grant. In the future the Welsh Government’s support for local transport will be aligned with the new Regional Transport Plans, including the plan being developed by the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee”.

Highway Asset Management Plan - Maintenance Manual Part 4.8 Highways Adverse Weather & Winter Service Plan – November 2023

The Committee received the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) Maintenance Manual for comment specifically on part 4.8 – Highways Adverse Weather and Winter Service Plan prior to being adopted by Cabinet.

Officers responded to queries in relation to landowners’ responsibilities on clearing roadside ditches. Measures had been taken to inform landowners to avoid potential enforcement routes where possible.

Outcome:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET that the Highway Asset Management Plan – Maintenance Manual Part 4.8 – Highways Adverse Weather and Winter Service Plan be endorsed.

Introduction of Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Llanelli Town Centre – November 2023

The Committee considered a report on the making of a new PSPO for Llanelli Town Centre which sought views on the information contained within the report.

The Committee after consideration of the report were happy with the content of the report and were in support of the introduction of the PSPO in Llanelli for the reasons stated in the report.

Outcome:

The Committee unanimously resolved to recommend to Cabinet that Introduction of Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) – Llanelli Town Centre be approved.

Potential Development of In-House Pest Control Agency – March 2024

The Committee received for consideration and comment a report on the potential development of in-house pest control agency. The Committee was asked by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability, to provide their views on whether officers should prepare a detailed business case as part of the pre-decision process for policy development prior to submission to Cabinet.

Members provided positive feedback in regard to the idea and content of the report. However, it was raised that in developing a business case, the service provided by the Authority needed to be a more responsive holding its own against any commercial provision and agreed that the holistic approach is an important factor.

Outcome:
<p>The Committee unanimously resolved to recommend to Cabinet that a detailed business case for the development of an in-house Pest Control Agency as part of the pre-decision process for policy development be undertaken.</p> <p>The development of the detailed business case be provided to Scrutiny for consideration.</p>

2.8 Additional Reports and Update Reports

Street Cleansing Strategic Management Plan 2023 – May 2023

In accordance with the Committee's Forward Work Plan, the Street Cleansing Strategic Management Plan 2023 was presented by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services. The report presented the way in which the Council would review and improve its cleansing service delivery whilst meeting the legislative requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The Cabinet Member, supported by officers responded to queries in regard to the following:-

- Communications in regard to litter bin receptacles identified for removal
- Public education and awareness
- Staffing costs in respect of the All-Wales Cleanliness Indicator rating

Outcome:
<p>The Committee unanimously resolved to receive the Street Cleansing Strategic Management Plan 2023</p>

Update for the consideration of Additional Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for Carmarthenshire Dog Orders –July 2023

The Committee, at its meeting on the 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. Following this the Committee received an update report which provided Committee Members with the options available to the Authority based upon legal advice given.

Committee Members were enthusiastic in receiving the update as the subject was an issue that impacted all communities within Carmarthenshire. Members were keen to have sight of the proposed toolkit prior to circulation.

Outcome
In receiving the report, the Committee resolved that the draft standard proforma and toolkit for sports groups / town and community councils as recommended in the report be shared with the Committee for comment – this has been included on the Committee's 2024/25 Forward Work Plan

Waste Strategy Update –October 2023

The Committee at its request received an update report in regard to the Waste Strategy 2021-2025, presented by the Cabinet Member for Waste, Transport and Infrastructure Services. The report provided Members with an update on the waste strategy and the interim service change implementation and the outcome of those changes. It set out an overview of the overarching plan and actions that will be required to deliver blueprint kerbside sort collection methodology.

Members enthusiastic in their approach to improve the management of waste in Carmarthenshire, raised a number of queries which were responded to by the Cabinet Member supported by Officers since the introduction of the interim waste service change on 23rd January 2023.

Outcome
RESOLVED progress made during the interim phase of the Waste Strategy January 2023 be noted

Draft Strategy for Grassland Management for Pollinators – October 2023

The Committee received a report which appended a draft strategy for grassland management for pollinators on the Carmarthenshire County Council estate for 2023. The report supported by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability highlighted that the Council had set out its ambition as part of the Cabinet Vision Statement to increase the biodiversity of all Council owned land, and recognise the strong interrelationship between climate change, the loss of biodiversity and human wellbeing.

The report sought the committee's comments during the early stages of its development.

A number of comments were raised that the report had recognised the decline in the species and was applauded for including a strategy which included an increase in wildflowers which aimed to make a difference in increasing bees, butterflies and other species.

Members raised a wide range of queries in respect of biodiversity which was responded to accordingly by the officer.

Outcome
The Committee resolved to receive the draft strategy.

Bulky Waste Review–October 2023

The Committee was presented with the review scope of the bulky waste service for preliminary consideration and comment. The aim was to maximise the reuse, repair and recycling potential of bulky waste items, promoting sustainability, reducing the service’s carbon footprint and to advance the Council’s Circular Economy project ‘Eto’ and other similar community-based initiatives.

The Committee raised queries in respect of the data contained within the report which was responded to by officers.

In consideration of the information contained within the report reference was made to large empty spaces such as Debenhams in Carmarthen. It was raised that these spaces could be utilised as a repair centre and that the online Repair Directory could be enhanced to provide more information to the public on what items could be repaired and where.

Outcome
The opportunity afforded officers to note the Committee’s observations on the potential options for the future Bulky Waste Collections Service during the early engagement stage.

Draft Local Toilet Strategy – November 2023

The Committee considered the Draft Local Toilet Strategy where a number of suggestions were made including:-

- Accessing funding through the Brilliant Basic Fund
- Council to support an initiative ‘Boys need Bins’ by the West Wales Prostate Cancer Support Group
- Link up with colleges who carry out City and Guilds qualifications to encourage young people to get involved and develop business plans to manage facilities,
- New electric charging stations to consider the provision of toilets

Officers responded to queries raised and would seek further funding streams taking on board the suggestions raised by Members.

Outcome:

The Committee resolved to pilot the Boys need Bins Campaign and that planning department consider placing toilet provisions alongside car charging areas of 5 or more points.

Since the meeting, nine unisex facilities now have sanitary bins available for both male and female. In addition, all out disabled toilet facilities are unisex and sanitary bins are provided. The rolling out of signage across Carmarthen has begun and will soon sign post across Ammanford, Llandeilo, Llandovery and Llanelli Public Conveniences.

In consultation with the Planning Department they responded that this would be something we could consider but we would need to fully assess the implications i.e. who would clean and maintain them.

Carmarthenshire County Council Environment Act Forward Plan (January 2023 - December 2025) –January 2024

The Committee considered the Councils Environment Act Forward Plan for January 2023 to December 2025. The plan included actions which would be delivered and reported on by several service areas.

In the main queries were raised in regard to:

- Council farms
- Sustainable farming
- The use of consultants in respect of working in partnership with West Wales Rivers Trust.

Specialist officers were available to respond to the technical queries.

Flood Risk Management Plan – January 2024

The Committee at its Forward Work Plan development session requested to receive this report which was presented by Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability, provided detailed information in regard to the Council's approach to managing flood risk in Carmarthenshire.

Members raised concerns about the flooding issues should the historic intervention methods remain in place and felt that new innovative methods needed to be explored and introduced to reduce further flooding issues.

Comments were raised regarding the minimal funding available for this area.

Outcome:

The Committee resolved send a letter to Welsh Government outlining the Committee's concerns regarding future funding for flooding to allow innovative approaches for areas with a high risk of flooding.

A letter was sent to the Minister for Climate Change in February 2024 requesting that an increase in funding be considered to enable Local Authorities to explore innovative approaches for land use in high risk of flooding.

A response from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs responded recognising the increasing difficulties Climate Changes issues are bringing to catchments and communities. The letter stating that 'Collective partnership and cross policy approach must be key in bringing wider collaborative resilience in the face of the climate emergency we are all facing, reducing the risk of flooding needs to support future generations across Wales.'

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion
Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: HIDCC/05117/24

Cllr. Kevin Madge
Chair
Place Sustainability and Climate Change
KMadge@camarthenshire.gov.uk

11 April 2024

Dear Cllr. Kevin Madge,

Thank you for your letter of 13th February to the Minister for Climate Change regarding flood management funding. As the new Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, flood risk falls within my portfolio.

Given the enormous pressure on public sector resources at this time, this has been one of the most challenging programmes to agree of recent years. Despite this, we have shown we remain committed to investing in our flood and coastal risk management infrastructure. You may be aware that in 2022-23, Welsh Government doubled our revenue funding for local authorities to £225k each, and I am pleased that we have been able to continue offering this higher amount in subsequent years including this year, 2024-25. In terms of the overall 2024-25 Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Programme, we are maintaining record levels of investment and have again made over £75m available to Risk Management Authorities this year to continue to deliver against our Programme for Government commitment to reduce flood risk to over 45,000 properties. A full breakdown of this year's Programme was published on 19 March and is available online at <https://www.gov.wales/flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-programme-2024-2025.html>.

I am grateful to Carmarthenshire County Council, and indeed all our RMAs in Wales, for your ongoing efforts to drive forward flood risk management for our communities. We know it is impossible to prevent all flooding, and my sympathies go out to those affected by the recent storms we experienced this winter – particularly in Ferryside and Llansteffan during Storm Ciaran in November. Nevertheless, I know the impacts of the storms could have been much worse, were it not for existing schemes, warning services and community preparedness arrangements in place.

Canolfan Cyswilt Cymraeg / First Point of Contact Centre:

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CF99 1SN

Rydym yn croeseawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Shoreline Management and Coastal Adoption in Carmarthenshire – March 2024

The Committee received for consideration and comment a report which provided detailed information regarding the Shoreline Management and Coastal Adoption in Carmarthenshire. Members were mindful of the difficult decisions that had to be made to spend money on defences. Balancing the need for hard-engineering or managed realignment was a difficult decision with circa 2300 residential homes at risk from coastal erosion.

Members of the Committee were keen to learn more about the issues and engineering in regard to the defences surrounding Carmarthenshire's coast and requested to undertake a site visit to include areas that were deemed to be dangerous and awaiting work to be undertaken. This would be arranged in the 2024/25 scrutiny year.

Fleet Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) Transition Strategy – April 2024

Following a request by the Committee, an update report providing information in regard to the development of the Fleet Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) Transition Strategy. The Council's Fleet mileage made up for 19% of its carbon footprint which was a significant proportion of the overall carbon impact. The report outlined the current situation together with a comprehensive TEEP analysis followed by the challenges which was being faced by the Council.

Members expressed their gratitude for the informative report and it was felt that the strategy would enable opportunity for public service bodies to save a significant amount of money as well as the environmental and practical advantages. Officers explained that they were currently looking to provide a robust, sustainable and affordable transition plan for the Council which would include both the vehicle and the electric vehicle charging infrastructure around the County.

The Committee were committed and provided suggestions in regard to realising further efficiencies e.g. time of use tariff as overnight charging was the most cost effective time.

There were future concerns regarding insurance costs, disposal of lithium batteries and local garages not being equipped to maintain electric vehicles. Officers responded as best of their knowledge and assured members that continuous research was being undertaken and that they were working in partnership with colleges to ensure the future of mechanics in Carmarthenshire were being educated to a high standard in regard to electric vehicles.

Public Rights of Way Asset Assessments – April 2024

The Committee requested further information in regard to Carmarthenshire's Public Rights of Way. A report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability who stated exceeded 2500km with circa 3176 individually recorded routes across all 72 Town and Community Councils. The completion of an asset assessment would provide a complete record of the local Authority's PROW assets across the whole network.

Scrutiny Members were keen to ensure that the Council worked in partnership with Town and Community Councils. Officers explained the Town and Community Council maintenance programme, the reason why it ended and would be re-introduced in a different format to encourage volunteers to help maintain PROW's across Carmarthenshire.

2.9 Referrals

The Committee at its meeting in October 2023 accepted a referral made from the Community, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, June 2023. The referral related to a review of conservation areas under the planning policy remit. Within the context of the planning policy, the Community, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee also discussed the important issue of energy efficiency measures as they related to listed buildings across Carmarthenshire.

In accepting the referral, the Committee resolved to receive a report providing data and information on the energy efficiency and the generation of energy in relation to the historic housing stock of the County. This was added to the Committee's Forward Work Plan 2024-25.

2.10 Public Engagement and Scrutiny Topic Suggestions

Listening to and giving the public a voice is key to scrutiny's effectiveness. It was important to the Committee to grant the people of Carmarthenshire (and beyond) an opportunity to shape the Forward Work Programme. The Communications department provided active involvement through social media throughout the municipal year picking up on various topics on the Scrutiny's Forward Work Programme.

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.

3. Scrutiny Committee Activity

3.1 Scrutiny Investigations (Task and Finish)

The Committee, at its meeting in July 2023 considered the Task and Finish Groups review on the Management of Fly-tipping within Carmarthenshire which had commenced in November 2022. The seven recommendations contained within the report had been formulated by the Group following the consideration of a range of evidence, over a series of meetings held between December 2022 and June 2023.

Information was gathered on the issues in relation to fly tipping on both private and public land and as part of the process to make sure there were clear findings and recommendations. The following areas were identified as areas of focus under a strategic approach:

- Current approach to data systems and recording.
- Approach to education and prevention.
- Management arrangements and joint working.
- Enforcement approach; and at
- Communication and publicity.

Outcome:

The Scrutiny Committee resolved to refer the report to Cabinet where it was considered at its meeting held on 16th October 2024. Cabinet members unanimously resolved to endorse the 7 recommendations. As part of the Investigations protocol, an implementation report would be considered in 12months.

3.2 Member Development and Site Visits

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 Worthybush 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
- January – Various Budget Consultations
- 23rd/26th February / 7th March – Introduction to Anti-racism Training
- 6th March – Flooding Responsibility
- 8th May – Corporate Safeguarding

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

On 30th June 2023, Scrutiny Committee Members undertook a site visit to Canolfan Eto and Nantycaws Recycling Centre.

Members were met by Paul Wakelin, Operations Manager and Sean Gallagher, Managing Director who showed them around the site and discussed the following topics

1. Canolfan eto re-use shop and workshop
2. Paint re-use facility
3. Household Waste Recycling Centre
4. Waste Processing facility
5. Composting facility - Merlin's Magic
6. Biodiversity - Merlin's Mel
7. Renewable energy production
8. Future aspirations for site

A special thanks to Cwm Environmental for their time and making the visit very informative.



4. Impact – 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 Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee has made a positive impact in a number of ways, including:

- Monitoring of budgets and performance within its remit
- Receiving updates on key areas such as Waste
- Shaping the development of new Strategies
- By undertaking its gatekeeping role in monitoring the work of the Cabinet

5. Challenges

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.

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.

Similar to the previous year, circulating reports for scrutiny by e-mail was not successful and did not have the same level of engagement and quality scrutiny as a formal meeting. With this in mind the Chair and the Committee have agreed to limit the reports circulated by e-mail and monitor the Forward Work Plan effectively by managing the formal agenda.

6. Committee's Future Work

The future work of the Committee will be considered regularly as part of the Forward Work Programme and will continue to be monitored during the course of the year.

As part of the development of the forward work programme, the Gateway Framework will aid Committee members to develop a Forward Work Programme to enable focused Scrutiny to take place ensuring that there is a more equitable distribution of reports, that statutory responsibilities are focussed and are properly aligned with the council's strategic priorities.

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

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

7. 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 programmes, task and finish reports and annual reports, visit the County Council's website at: www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/scrutiny

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

8. Committee Member Attendance

A total of 7 meetings were held by virtual means between May 2023 and April 2024. Attendance by members of the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee during the 2023/24 year is shown in the table below.

The meeting on 11th March 2024 was adjourned due to technical difficulties and was reconvened on 22nd March 2024 – this has been classed as one meeting.

Scrutiny Committee Member	No. of meetings attended	%
Cllr. Sue Allen	7	100
Cllr. Peter Cooper	3	43
Cllr. Arwel Davies	7	100
Cllr. Karen Davies	6	86
Cllr. Colin Evans	6	86
Cllr. Shelly Godfrey-Coles	7	100
Cllr. Tina Higgins	6	86
Cllr. Gary Jones	1	14
Cllr. John James	5	71
Cllr Neil Lewis	6	86
Cllr. Kevin Madge	6	86
Cllr. Dorian Phillips	7	100
Cllr. Gareth Thomas	7	100

Substitutes	No. of meetings attended
Cllr. Deryk Cundy	1
Cllr. Alex Evans	1
Cllr. Hefin Jones	1
Cllr. Michelle Donoghue	1
Cllr. Dai Thomas	1

Cabinet Member	No. of meetings attended
Cllr. Ann Davies	4
Cllr. Alun Lenny	2
Cllr. Edward Thomas	7
Cllr. Aled Vaughan-Owen	6