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## Chair's Foreword



We are at the end of another municipal year and as Chair of the Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee it is my privilege to present the Committee's Annual Report for the year 2023 – 2024 which provides an overview of the significant amount of work undertaken by Committee members over the year.

There have been a number of changes to the membership over the last twelve months, including myself receiving the honour of becoming Chair on the 13th September 2023. Other changes are noted on page 19 of the report and I would like to thank all members, former and present, for their commitment and participation at all meetings attended.

Committee continues to hold pre-meetings prior to the formal committee meeting which members find valuable in enabling thorough understanding of subject matters in advance of detailed scrutiny of agenda items during the meeting itself. These are normally held a day prior to the formal meeting.

Every committee member has an opportunity to input into an agreed Forward Work Plan which is regularly reviewed throughout the year and additional items added as required. In consultation with officers, reviewing and monitoring the Forward Work Plan has become an important aspect of the Committee's remit.

The report highlights the wide range of service delivery areas that were presented and duly considered during the year together with budget monitoring, performance data, quality assurance arrangements and progress updates specifically requested on key issues such as integration with Health and actions being undertaken to address Children Services' budget position.

I, and committee members recognise that the service areas within Committees remit operate within an extremely challenging and demanding environment, relentlessly facing what is often described as "a perfect storm" of increasing need, staff shortages, difficulties in recruitment and hostage to inflated charges demanded by certain private sector providers operating within a nationally broken market. Add the problems faced by Health then despite everyone's best efforts, services inevitably face the unenviable challenge of trying to balance the requirement of addressing increased demand within their allocated budgets as against the dangers associated with unmet need.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act, our Corporate Strategy and Wellbeing Objectives all emphasise the need for increased collaboration with partners and our communities in developing new ways of working in addressing ever increasing demand. This has always been the case with the provision of Community Care and given the post covid challenges described in the previous paragraph, Committee have, via the Forward Work Plan, endeavoured to ensure that regular progress reports on these collaborative aims are reported upon and scrutinised.

On a similar multi – agency theme, the publication of alarming data that Carmarthenshire had the highest levels of overweight children in Wales, led to Committee establishing a

specific Task and Finish Group to research and highlight what realistically could be undertaken directly within and by the authority to begin to address this issue. A cross party group of seven Councillors undertook out a scoping exercise and over six meetings received research evidence and input from a range of professionals within Public Health, Hywel Dda University Health Board, the Institute of Management and Health University of Wales Trinity St Davids and officers from Education, Children Services, Regeneration and Leisure services. Members also reviewed numerous relevant literature and also linked to several existing and developing strategies ( Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales, Local Food Strategy and Prevention Strategy).

The resulting Task and Finish report makes 7 recommendations with 37 sub actions which were agreed by Scrutiny Committee in May. The recommendations will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in Late Summer/early Autumn 2024.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Cllr Tremlett, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Services and all the Officers who have been in attendance, and provided explanation, expert advice and generally inputted at our Scrutiny meetings throughout the year. A particular thank you and appreciation to our valued Democratic Support Officer, Emma Bryer, for her professional guidance and general support in ensuring that meetings run smoothly.

Finally, it may be an understatement to express that these are challenging times for everyone associated with Health and Social Care. As a committee we would like to thank every single member of staff for their unstinting dedication, commitment and tireless hard work in trying to ensure that everything possible is being done to provide those in need of support with the most appropriate level of care to which they are entitled.

Diolch yn fawr I chi gyd.

**Councillor Gareth John**  
**Chair of the Health & Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

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

The Committee is chaired by Councillor Gareth John 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.

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## 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 Health & Social Services Committee is responsible for the scrutiny of Cabinet's Health and Social Services portfolio and the respective service areas as detailed below:-

Adult Social Services	Ageing Well
Residential Care including in-house residential homes	Assessment and Care Management
Home Care including in-house home care and reablement services	Older People and frailty
Learning Disabilities	Integrated Services to include NHS liaison and collaboration between health and social care
Mental Health	Physical Disability and Sensory Impairments
Direct Payments	CYP Board Member
Carers	CAHMS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Dementia Care	Corporate Parenting Lead
Children's Social Services	Community Support Services
Adult Safeguarding	Fostering Services
Adoption Services	Respite
Care Inspectorate Wales	Prevention Strategy
Older Peoples Commissioner	Supporting Families
Commissioned Services	Safeguarding Children
Early Years, Family Support and Prevention	Complex Needs Transition
Parenting and Child Welfare	Child Protection Coordinator
Safeguarding West and Adoption	Safeguarding East and Service Improvement
Age Friendly Champion	Corporate Safeguarding (since 13/11/23)

In accordance with its areas of responsibilities, the Health & Social Services Scrutiny Committee will seek to:-

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

## 2.2 The Forward Work Plan

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

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

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



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

## **2.3 Meetings of the Health & Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

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

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

## **2.4 Performance Monitoring / Strategic Issues**

One of the principal roles of the Health & Social Services 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 Statutory Director of Social Services' Annual Report 2022/23**

In accordance with the statutory requirement for the Director of Social Services to provide an annual report on delivery, performance and improvement plans for Social Services, a report was circulated by email for consideration by the Committee in October 2023.

It was highlighted to the Committee that the adult services area was recovering from the pandemic and had been under severe stress primarily due to lack of resources. It was noted that the source of the recruitment difficulties was due to the overall state of the employment market as there weren't enough working age people to do the jobs across all sectors.

One key area of concern was in relation to children with disabilities where the service had seen an increase in demand from families and the number of children on the child protection register had also increased.

#### **Outcome:**

The Committee recommended to the Cabinet that the report be received.

### **2.4.2 2023/24 Performance Reports relevant to the Committee**

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

- December 2023 – Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring 2023/24



- March 2024 – Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring 2023/24

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

### **2.4.3 Actions and Referrals**

During the course of the municipal year, requests for additional items were made by members of the Committee to assist them in discharging their scrutiny role.

## **2.5 Revenue & Capital Budgets**

### **2.5.1 Budget Monitoring Reports**

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

- October 2023 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 30<sup>th</sup> February 2023;
- November 2023 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023.
- January 2024 – in respect of the budgetary position as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023
- March 2024 – in respect of the budgetary position as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and
- May 2024 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 29<sup>th</sup> February 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.

### **2.5.2 Revenue Budget Outturn Report 2022/23**

In addition to monitoring the current revenue and capital budgets, the Committee considered the Revenue Budget Outturn Report 2022/23 which provided the Committee with an end of year financial position. It was noted that the Health and Social Service showed a net variance of -£6,254K against the 2022/23 approved budget.

### **2.5.3 Revenue Budget Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27**

In addition to monitoring the current revenue and capital budgets, the Committee was also consulted on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27 at its meeting in January 2024. The report provided the Committee with the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2024/25, together with indicative figures for the 2025/2026 and 2026/27 financial years.

### **Outcome:**

As part of the Authority's widespread consultation undertaken on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24, the Committee considered and endorsed the Strategy and the Charging Digest at its meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

## **2.6 Health & Social Care**

### **2.6.1 Health and Care System for West Wales: How Far, How Fast?**

In June 2023 the Committee reviewed the report detailing the opportunities in Carmarthenshire to develop and implement a health and care system for older people based on 'what matters' to this population and would be fit for purpose both now and into the future. The report was presented by Rhian Matthews (Hywel Dda UHB / Carmarthenshire County Council – Integrated System Director).

The Committee noted that there was a Section 33 Agreement between Carmarthenshire County Council and Hywel Dda UHB which supported an integrated management structure across community health and social care for older adults and the development of integrated care pathways (home First).

### **Outcome:-**

The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet the approval of the proposal and the accompanying high level plan.

### **2.6.2 Domiciliary Care Performance Update**

In June, November 2023 & May 2024 the Committee reviewed the performance update report that they had requested surrounding the current pressure on domiciliary care and the impact that this was having on hospital discharges. The report was to provide assurance that patients were being safely supported to leave hospital and outlined the pressures and how Carmarthenshire County Council was responding to those pressures.

### **Outcome:**

The report was received in June and future updates to be provided for on-going monitoring – these additional reports were considered in November 2023 and May 2024.

### **2.6.3 10 Year Social Services Strategy**

The 10 year Social Services Strategy provides members with a vision on how the Council would provide the statutory social services functions over the next decade. The document details the Vision Statement, the services people receive, Social Work Models of care, Safeguarding, Integration and Partnerships, Workforce and an Action Plan. This report was initially planned to be received by Committee in June 2023 and subsequently in October 2023, December 2023, January 2024 and March 2024.

The Committee recognised that the development of a 10 year strategy would be difficult to develop in the current climate and agreed that the report be received next municipal year.

**Outcome:**

Resolved that the strategy be delayed until the next municipal year.

#### **2.6.4 Performance Report against the Cabinet Vision Action & Measures**

The Committee scrutinised the performance report against the Cabinet Vision Action and Measures which detailed the progress of the deliverables for the Cabinet Vision. Reports were received in October 2023 (via email), December 2023 and March 2024.

**Outcome:**

The Committee received the reports. Additional information was requested regarding the issues with the percentage of people referred to the National Exercise Referral Scheme. Published data showing the rates of death by suspected suicide was circulated to the committee for information.

#### **2.6.5 Integration in Carmarthenshire - Position Update On Delivery Against Priorities**

In January 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report which set out the position statement on Integration of Health & Social Care in Carmarthenshire and specifically, provided an update with regards to specific priorities which were set out to deliver on a community care system for Carmarthenshire.

The Committee noted that work in Integration between Health and Social Care had been focussed on delivery on the frontline of seamless services to the public. Progress on the wider strategic integration had not been what was envisaged last year due to significant financial pressures and executive level reorganisation with the Health Board.

**Outcome:**

Following a presentation by Dr Sioned Richards (GP Lead, Carmarthenshire Intermediate Care) and Indeg Jameson (Acute Response Team Physiotherapist) from Hywel Dda UHB, the Committee considered and noted the report.

#### **2.6.5 Annual Report on Adult Safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) 2022/23**

In March 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report which set out the role, functions and activities undertaken by the Authority in relation to Adult Safeguarding and Deprivation of liberty Safeguards during the 2022/23 financial year. The report detailed the current context of Safeguarding/DoLS and the arrangements the Local Authority had established.

**Outcome:**

The Committee received the report.

## 2.6.6 The Mid & West Wales Safeguarding Children & Adults Boards Annual Report 2022-2023

In March 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report which provided an overview of the objectives and achievements of the Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Children & Adults Board and outlined the progress made against the outcomes set by CYSUR and CWMPAS as part of the joint Annual Strategic Plan.

### **Outcome:**

The Committee received the report.

## 2.6.7 Corporate Safeguarding Policy

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy which set out the individual and collective responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and protecting children and adults at risk and established a governance structure which had oversight of the arrangements to safeguard children and adults at risk.

It set out the methods by which the Council would be assured that it was fulfilling its duties and that effective practices were in place to support individuals to live their life free from harm, abuse and neglect in a wide range of settings including home, hospital, school, learning environments, peer/friendship groups, neighbourhoods, communities and online spaces.

### **Outcome:**

The Committee received the report and undertook an all member awareness and briefing development session on the 8<sup>th</sup> May.

## 2.6.8 Prevention Strategy for Carmarthenshire

In March 2024, the Committee received for consideration a report they had requested on the current position of the development of the Prevention Strategy for Carmarthenshire.

The Committee noted that there was currently no prevention strategy in place for Carmarthenshire or for the Hywel Dda Region and that the closest report of a similar nature was the 'Prevention, Early Intervention, Promoting Independent Living Carmarthenshire: A Resilient Community' developed in 2016. Therefore, it was acknowledged that an updated prevention strategy which took into account the current position and set out the prevention vision for the future was required.

### **Outcome:**

The Committee received the report.

## 2.7 Children's Services

### 2.7.1 Public Request for Topic Review

Under SPR10 (3) Any member of the public may request that an item relevant to the remit of a Scrutiny Committee may be placed on its agenda. In November 2023 the Committee considered a submission received from Mr Alex Williamson of the WAVE Trust requesting that the committee explore whether:

- there were any gaps in the existing provisions that were in place within Carmarthenshire around the area of preconception and early years support.
- there were any gaps in the existing provisions that were in place within Carmarthenshire pertaining to front facing services such as housing, revenue and benefits and linked services such as Job Centre Plus regarding the implementation of trauma informed practices and/or trauma informed approaches.

Mr Williamsons advised the Committee that since 2010 the VAVE Trust had been campaigning to reduce the reported level of children who had experienced abuse and neglect across the UK by at least 70% by 2030.

To assist the committee when considering the request, a report had been produced detailing the summary of the current provision.

#### **Outcome:**

The Committee agreed that partnership working was outside the brief of the Scrutiny Committee but that it may be something to be considered by the Commissioning Team. In addition, the Committee agreed to review the Family Support Strategy to assist in ensuring that progress is being made in addressing the gaps identified in the current provision.

### 2.7.2 Annual Youth Justice Plan 2023/24

In December 2023, the Committee reviewed the Authority's Youth Justice Plan for 2023/24. The Plan outlined the provision of the Youth Support Service and the Youth Justice Team under a single management structure which provided a holistic approach to the delivery of youth support services across Carmarthenshire. The Youth Justice Plan also detailed the performance of the partnership during 2023/24 and also set out the priorities and improvement planning objectives in accordance with the overarching 'child first' principles and an ethos of continuous improvement.

The Committee noted their concerns that almost 70% of the service was reliant on grant funding.

#### **Outcome:**

The Committee agreed that the report be received.

### 2.7.3 Community Support and Short Breaks for Disabled Children

In March 2024 the Committee reviewed and assess the report that set out the current service model, demand for services and how resources were allocated.

It was highlighted that there had been a significant increase in demand for assessment and support from families with disabled children since the COVID19 pandemic. This has resulted in long waiting lists for our residential short breaks provision at Llys Caradog and Blaenau and a sharp increase in expenditure on direct payments and community support.

#### **Outcome:**

The Committee agreed that the report be received.

### 2.7.4 Children's Service Budget Position

In March 2024 the Committee considered a report they had requested following concerns regarding the current position within Children's service. The report set out the background and context of the budget position.

It was noted that in the first quarter of 2023-2024 Children's services reported a projected overspend of £5.3 million against an overall budget of £23 million. As a result of this, a review was commissioned and led by the Statutory Director of Social Services to undertake an analysis in relation to the drivers of the demand and focus on areas where there had been significant overspend. The Committee noted that a Transformation Plan had been developed from that analysis which aimed to manage future demand and achieve a balanced budget.

#### **Outcome:**

The Committee agreed that the report be received and requested update reports be submitted to each scrutiny committee.

### 2.7.5 Family Support Strategy

In May 2024 the Committee considered a report they had requested following representation from the WAVE Trust requesting that the Committee explore whether there were any gaps in the existing provision and support within preconception and early years support.

The report stated that the current Family Support Strategy was due to be updated. As part of the wider transformation of Children and Families Services an Early Help Approach system would be implemented. The report received detailed the purpose, approach and timeline for development of the Early Help Strategy.

#### **Outcome:**

The Committee requested that further updates be provided and included on the Forward Work Plan for 2024/25.

## 2. Other Scrutiny Activity

### 3.1 Task & Finish

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

During the municipal year, as part of its investigative role, the Committee undertook a Task and Finish Group to undertake a review into the increase in childhood obesity in Carmarthenshire. The title for the project was 'An Active and Healthy Start – 0 -11 year old age group'. The planning and scoping document was approved by the Committee at its meeting in July 2023.

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

- Review the issues surrounding the increase in childhood obesity in Carmarthenshire.
- Key aims
  - Review existing resources
  - Establish how effectively partners work together to achieve outcomes
  - Understand the extent of the problem and identify the root cause of the issues in Carmarthenshire
  - Develop a coordinated approach to tackling the issue of obesity to improve the health and well-being of children in Carmarthenshire
- Formulate recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet.

The membership of the Task & Finish Group comprised 7 elected members appointed to reflect the political balance of the Council as a whole, as far as possible:-

Group	Councillor
<b>Plaid Cymru:</b>	Hazel Evans (Chair until 13/09/23) Meinir James Gareth John (Chair from 13/09/23) Hefin Jones
<b>Independent Unaffiliated:</b>	John Jenkins (resigned 18/01/24)
<b>Labour Group:</b>	Michelle Donoghue Rob Evans (resigned 08/11/23)
<b>Independent Group:</b>	Louvain Roberts

The Group met on 9 occasions between May 2023 and March 2024 which culminated in the formation of 7 recommendations.

The report was approved by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in May. The recommendations will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in late Summer 2024.



## 3.2 Development Sessions

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

Date	Development Session / Seminar
21/06/23	Housing Repairs
07/08/23	Hywel Dda University Health Board – Consultation on Urgent and Emergency Children and Young People Services at Withybush and Glangwili Hospitals
13/09/23	Tackling Poverty Support
08/11/23	Treasury Management
22/11/23	I.T. Digital Strategy and Artificial Intelligence
30/11/23	Geodiscoverer Training
06/12/23	Place and Infrastructure – Service Updates
07/12/23	Geodiscoverer Training
08/12/23	Digital Transformation
09/01/24	Artificial Intelligence and Digital Strategy
January 24	Various Budget Consultations
23/02/24	Anti Racism Training (also 26/04 & 07/03)
06/03/24	Flooding Responsibility
08/05/24	Corporate Safeguarding

In addition to the above Corporate Development sessions / seminars, the Committee also held the following bespoke sessions:

Date	Development Session / Seminar
07/06/23	Autism
04/10/23	Children’s Services Overview
28/11/23	Future Development of Scrutiny and the Forward Plan
08/02/23	Mental Health including Suicide and Self Harm [ <b>postponed to 13/06/24</b> ]
02/05/24	Forward Plan

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## 4. Impact

### 3.1 How has Scrutiny Made a Difference This Year?

The majority of decisions made by the Authority are made by the Cabinet. Scrutiny offers the other 65 non-executive Councillors an opportunity to influence those decisions and act as a “critical friend”. Pre-decision Scrutiny is particularly influential in this regard as it provides Scrutiny Committees with the opportunity to consider and comment upon policies

and emerging issues before they are considered by Cabinet. Scrutiny also assists in ensuring that Council policies reflect current priorities, as well as promoting efficiency and encouraging effective partnership working with external bodies.

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

Pre-decision Scrutiny affords all Scrutiny Committees the opportunity of providing input before the reports are considered by Cabinet and this is the voice of the people. During the 2023/24 municipal year, the Health & Social Services Scrutiny Committee has made a positive impact in many ways, including:-

- Ensuring updated policies are in place to protect the elderly and vulnerable in the county.
- Undertaking their role as "gatekeepers" and ensuring that the budgetary issues are being addressed and managed effectively.

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## 5. Public Engagement

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

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

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

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

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

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## 6. Challenges

Both Communities and Children's Services continued 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.

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## 7. Future Work

As the Authority is still in a period of recovery following the coronavirus pandemic, it is evident that 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 work of the Committee during the 2024/25 municipal year will be considered by the Committee at a development planning session and will be regularly reviewed as part of the monitoring of the Forward Work Plan during the course of the year.

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

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## 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](http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/scrutiny).

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

## 9. Attendance

Attendance by members of the Health & Social Services Scrutiny Committee during the 2023/24 municipal year is shown in the table below. A total of 8 meetings were held during the 2023/24 municipal year.

Scrutiny Committee Member	Meetings Attended	%
Cllr. Bryan Davies	2	25
Cllr. Crish Davies (from 08/11/23)	2 (out of 5)	40
Cllr. Karen Davies	5	63
Cllr. Michelle Donoghue	8	100
Cllr. Rob Evans (up to 08/11/23)	1 (of 3)	30
Cllr. Alex Evans	8	100
Cllr. Hazel Evans (up to 13/09/23)	2	100
Cllr. Meinir James	7	88
Cllr. John Jenkins (up to 18/01/24)	1 (of 5)	20
Cllr. Gareth John (from 13/09/23)	6 (of 6)	100
Cllr. Hefin Jones	7	88
Cllr. Denise Owen	7	88
Cllr. Louvain Roberts	6	75
Cllr. Fiona Walters	7	88
Cllr. Phil Warlow	8	100
Cllr. Janet Williams	8	100

Substitutes	Meetings Attended
Cllr. Peter Hughes-Griffiths	2
Cllr. Kim Broom	1
Cllr. Tyssul Evans	4
Cllr. Michael Thomas	1
Cabinet Member	Meetings Attended
Cllr. Jane Tremlett (Health & Social Services)	7
Cllr. Alun Lenny (Resources)	4

## Taks & Finish

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<b>Scrutiny Committee Member</b>	<b>Meetings Attended</b>
Cllr. Michelle Donoghue	5
Cllr. Rob Evans (up to 08/11/23)	2
Cllr. Hazel Evans (up to 13/09/23)	2
Cllr. Meinir James	5
Cllr. John Jenkins (up to 18/01/23)	1
Cllr. Gareth John (from 13/09/23)	5 (of 6)
Cllr. Hefin Jones	3
Cllr. Louvain Roberts	3