

**Minutes of the Meeting of OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE
held at the Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via
video conference on Thursday, 7 November 2024**

PRESENT: Councillor Wyn Evans (Chairman), Councillors Keith Evans, Marc Davies, Gwyn Wigley Evans, Chris James, Caryl Roberts, Elaine Evans, Rhodri Evans, Amanda Edwards.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Audrey Somerton-Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer and Statutory Director for Social Services, Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer for Democratic Services, Diana Davies, Corporate Manager, Rob Starr, Performance and Research Manager, Timothy Bray, Partnerships and Civil Contingencies Manager, Lisa Evans, Standards and Scrutiny Officer, Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Officer and Translators.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Raymond Evans, Hugh Hughes and Gareth Lloyd.

(10.00 am - 12.00 pm)

23 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Councillor Ceris Jones apologised for her inability to attend the meeting.
2. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies, apologised for his inability to attend due to other Council business.
3. Councillor Alun Williams, Cabinet Member, apologised for his inability to attend.
4. Hazel Lloyd-Lubran, Chief Executive, CAVO, also apologised for being unable to attend.
5. Elizabeth Upcott, Corporate Manager, apologised for being unable to attend.

24 Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations)

Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

None.

25 Chair Announcements

None.

It was agreed by the Chair that agenda item number 6 CYSUR/CWMPAS Combined Local Operational Group Safeguarding Report Qtr 1 2024/25 was considered next due to Audrey Somerton-Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer's availability to present the item.

26 CYSUR / CWMPAS Combined Local Operational Group Safeguarding Report Qtr 1 2024/2025

Audrey Somerton Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer and Statutory Director of Social Services was welcomed to the meeting to present the report.

Summary of key points were as follows:

There were 274 referrals that proceed to actions needing to be taken under Child Safeguarding Procedures in this quarter, which was an increase on the previous quarters, quarter 4 there being 196 referrals needing to proceed to actions being undertaken under Safeguarding procedures.

- There were 18 Initial Child Protection Conference held in the quarter, regarding 31 children/young people and 20 children were placed on the register during the quarter. 2
- There were 21 Review conferences held in the quarter relating to 33 children/young people, with 17 children/young people remaining on the register and 16 children/young people were removed from the register.
- The largest source of the referrals in this quarter were Education.
- In this quarter, the way that we are collecting and reporting the data has changed. We no longer are collecting the number of contacts that we have on open cases, we are now only collecting the new reports/referrals (MARFS) that are received which could be in relation to new cases or cases that are already open where a new concern has been identified and referred into the service. So of the number of new referrals (MARFs) that we received in this quarter, which was a total of 623, of those there was a Strategy Discussion held on 44% of those referrals, 14.3% progressed to a Section 47 Enquiry and 4.98% progressed to an Initial Child Protection Conference.
- There were 89 Section 47 enquiries undertaken, 72 were of those were undertaken jointly with Police and 17 were single agency.
- Physical abuse was the main category of abuse which led to a Section 47 Enquiry followed by Sexual abuse/exploitation. Then neglect and then emotional abuse.
- The percentage of the Initial Child Protection Conferences held within the 15 day statutory timescale was 61.3% compared to 82.4% in the previous quarter. There was an improvement in the holding of Core Groups within timescales but there were further delays in relation to Review Conference being held in timescales. There were a variety of reasons for the delays in conferences not being held within timescales.

➤ Of the 16 children who were de-registered in this quarter, 5 children became children who were looked after and 11 continued to be in receipt of care and support under a care and support plan.

➤ 32 children were on the child protection register as at the end of Quarter 1 (June 2024) with parental separation, domestic abuse and parental mental health difficulties being the main risk factors for the children/young people who were on the register.

ADULT SAFEGUARDING:

➤ There was an increase in referrals received this quarter (223), 216 from the previous quarter 204 in Quarter 3.

➤ Police were the main source of referrals and then the Local Authority, this quarter.

➤ Neglect is the main category of abuse reported with emotional/psychological abuse following that with physical abuse, financial abuse and then sexual abuse.

➤ Females are the highest number of victims in all categories of abuse, with the number of male victims being low in comparison in all categories of abuse except Neglect where the number of male victims is higher.

➤ People's own home is the place where abuse has most occurred, and a relative/friend is the people most allegedly responsible for abuse.

Main points arising from discussions were:

- In response to a comment that most of the Child Protection referrals the Authority received were from Schools, Audrey Somerton-Edwards stated that this is positive as children are then visible and the appropriate referrals always made.
- It was confirmed that the Authority has 24 hours to respond to a referral.
- In response to a discussion regarding Social Work pay, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee Members that Councillor Ceris Jones, Chair of the Healthier Communities, has sent a letter to Dawn Bowden MS, Minister for Social Care, expressing the Committee's fully support the need for a National Pay Scale, specifically for social work and occupational therapy graduates, raising the profile of the care sector and providing workers with recognition through their pay.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to consider the following recommendation:

Recommendation(s): To note the contents of the report and the levels of activity within the Local Authority

Reasons for decision: So that governance of the Local Authority activity and its partner agencies are monitored.

Committee Members agreed to note the contents of the report and the level of activity within the Local Authority.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for presenting the information and for the excellent work undertaken by the Service.

27 Ceredigion Public Services Board (PSB) meeting held on the 16th of September 2024

Diana Davies, Corporate Manager, and Timothy Bray, Partnerships and Civil Contingencies Manager, were welcomed to the meeting. Hazel Lloyd-Lubran, Chair of the PSB apologised for being unable to attend to present the report. Timothy Bray therefore presented the information in her absence.

Under Section 35 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Local Authorities are required to ensure their Overview and Scrutiny Committees have the power to scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, by the Public Services Board for the Local Authority area in the exercise of its functions.

Main points arising from discussion as follows:

- The Chair extended his congratulations to the Team for an excellent Local Well-being Plan Annual Report in video format.
- The Chair congratulated the ARFOR project for its continued work.
- It was confirmed that the comments made at the meeting regarding winter fuel payments will be passed on to the PSB Poverty Sub-group. It was confirmed by officers that the group actively consider and respond to changes such as this on an ongoing basis. It was also noted that the Poverty Sub-group has recently been congratulated on its work and especially how the hardship dashboard has been identified as good practice across Wales.
- Members were disappointed to note that the number of responses received to the recent Police and Crime Commissioner consultation were low. Members re-emphasised their concern that consultations cost a lot of money for Public Sector Organisations.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to consider the following recommendation:

Recommendation/s:

To receive the draft minutes of the Ceredigion PSB meeting held on 16th September 2024.

Reason for Recommendation(s):

As the designated Scrutiny Committee for taking an overview of the overall effectiveness of the PSB.

Committee Members agreed to receive the draft minutes of the Ceredigion PSB meeting held on the 2024 and the Chair thanked Officers for their continued hard work.

28 Draft Self-Assessment Report and Annual Review of Performance and Well-being Objectives 2023/24

Rob Starr, Performance and Research Manager, and Diana Davies, Corporate Manager were welcomed to the meeting to present the report.

Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced a new Self-Assessment based performance regime for Principal Councils. The new performance regime is intended to build and support a culture in which councils continuously seek to improve and do better in everything they do, regardless of how well they are performing already. It is the expectation of the Act that councils will always be striving to achieve more and seek to ensure best outcomes for local people and communities. One way of doing this is to continuously challenge the status quo and ask questions about how they are operating.

There are 5 specific duties for Councils introduced by the Act:

- Duty to keep performance under review
- Duty to consult on performance
- Duty to report on performance
- Duty to arrange a Panel Performance Assessment
- Duty to respond to a Panel Performance Assessment.

The focus of self-assessment is on outcomes rather than process and requires local authorities to take a different approach to assessing their performance than previously. The Officer explained that this will require greater self-reflection.

Since April 2024, Ceredigion County Council has been undertaking the third round of Self-Assessment, in which the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee has 2 played an integral part. A workshop was held with the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee on 25 April to record Member's perspectives on Council performance and opportunities for improvement. A full timetable of the activities undertaken in support of Self-Assessment in 2023/24 Rob Starr referred to at Appendix 1 of the agenda papers.

Since then, the evidence collected has been used to produce the Draft Self-Assessment Report which Rob Starr referred to as Appendix 2 of the agenda papers. This is the main output from the Self-Assessment process and sets out how the Council is currently performing and the actions it intends to take going forward.

The Self-Assessment Report for 2023/24 discharges the requirements of both:

- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – to set and review progress against our Corporate Well-being Objectives
- The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 – the duty to keep performance under review, consult on performance, report on performance, arrange a Panel Performance Assessment and respond to a Panel Performance Assessment.

Following positive feedback from Welsh Government and peers, a similar format has been retained for this year to help in disseminating key messages and keeping it succinct, as requested by Welsh Government. Several improvements have been made this year to strengthen the report.

Rob Starr then explained that the Self-Assessment Report is scheduled to proceed to Cabinet on 3 December, before being submitted to Ministers, Estyn, the Auditor General for Wales and the Governance and Audit Committee.

The main points arising from the discussion are:

- A Member made a request to Officers to consider persons who are colour blind when publishing documents in future. The Officer suggested meeting outside of the meeting to discuss this further.
- A Member suggested that the Clic system should have a section to leave comments/compliments following completion of a request/task.
- A Member referred to part 6 of the Local Government and Elections Act, “Open and Transparent”. He stated that the Authority needs to be open and transparent with the public at all times. The officer confirmed that the process is followed carefully.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to receive the Self-Assessment Report 2023/24 including the Annual Review of Performance and Well-being Objectives.

Committee Members agreed to receive the Self-Assessment Report 2023/24 including the Annual Review of Performance and Well-being Objectives.

The Chair thanked the Officers for presenting at the meeting and for their continued hard work.

29 Scrutiny Self Evaluation

In 2018 it was agreed that the Scrutiny Officers would undertake a review of the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny in Ceredigion County Council, and that this would be undertaken annually thereafter.

The process was reviewed in 2020 and it was agreed to: a) Continue to carry out the survey on an annual basis; b) To reduce the number of questions

with an aim to increase participation; c) To review the format of the report, combining the Welsh and English responses, and translating the document as a whole.

For the 2023-24 review Cabinet Members Scrutiny Members responses were separated. Scrutiny member responses to the questions asked are shown in Appendix A of the agenda papers (11 responses). Cabinet members responses are shown in Appendix B of the agenda papers (8 responses). There were 19 responses in total, which is an increase from 2023 and 2021. A total of 15 responses were received in 2023, this is equal to the 15 responses received in 2021, but a reduction in comparison to the 25 responses received in 2020. A review was not undertaken in 2022 due to the elections. Members' names are not disclosed.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to consider the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION (S):

1. To consider the responses received from the self-evaluation questionnaire (appendix A and B) and identify any areas for improvement if necessary.
2. Scrutiny refresher training is arranged for Members during November/December 2024

It was suggested and agreed that Group Leaders should encourage their members to complete the self-evaluation questionnaire in future.

Committee Members agreed to note the content of the report. The Chair thanked Lisa Evans for presenting the information.

30 To confirm minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising from those minutes

It was **AGREED** to confirm the minutes of the 12th of September 2024 Committee meeting as a true record. There were no matters arising from those minutes.

31 To receive a update from the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and to consider the draft Forward Work Programmes

Each Chair/vice Chair/Overview and Scrutiny Officer in turn gave an update on their respective Committee's Forward Work Plans.

During discussion, it was agreed to add the following to a Forward Work Plan:

1. Agency Workers and Recruitment.

The Chair thanked Members for attending, Officers and Cabinet Members for presenting, Translators, and Lisa Evans and Dwynwen Jones for their support during the meeting.

32 Any other matter that the Chairman decides is for the urgent attention of the Committee
None

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 16 January 2025

Chairman: _____

Date: _____