

**Minutes of the Meeting of OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE
held Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via video
conference on Monday, 4 March 2024**

(10.00 am - 12.15 pm)

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Alun Williams, Catrin M S Davies and Wyn Thomas (Cabinet Members).
Councillors Raymond Evans, Hugh Hughes, Euros Davies, Gareth Lloyd and Amanda Edwards.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer and Monitoring Officer, Audrey Somerton-Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer and Statutory Director for Social Services, Diana Davies, Corporate Manager, Elizabeth Upcott, Corporate Manager, Cathryn Morgan, Equalities and Inclusion Manager, Timothy Bray, Partnerships and Civil Contingencies Manager, Lisa Evans, Standards and Scrutiny Officer, Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Officer and Carol Thomas and Llinos Williams (Translators).

ALSO PRESENT: Hazel Lloyd-Lubran, Chief Executive of CAVO and Chair of the Public Services Board (PSB).

34 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Councillor Endaf Edwards apologised for being unable to attend the meeting.

**35 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.

36 Ceredigion Public Services Board (PSB) meeting held on the 4th of December 2023

The Chair welcomed Hazel Lloyd Lubran, CAVO Chief Executive and Chair of the PSB, Diana Davies and Timothy Bray, Officers, to the meeting to present the Minutes of the Public Services Board meeting.

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:

- Following a question regarding the Refugee Resettlement sub-group and the funding Ceredigion County Council receives by UK Government to actively support Ukrainians for 12 months, Afghans for 3 years and Syrians for 5 years, Diana Davies confirmed she would share the full report that was presented to the last PSB meeting that will provide more detail for Committee Members.
- Following a question, Hazel Lloyd-Lubran confirmed that the PSB had responded through Cynnal y Cardi, on the Welsh Government Sustainable Farming Scheme.
- Following a question, it was confirmed that the PSB do work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities, and this is likely to increase during the coming months.
- With reference to the Gorwel Dashboard (Gorwel is a web-based platform funded by a WG regional grant to PSB in the region to aid not only in the production of the local Well-being Assessments, but to allow users to collaborate and share information regarding projects and more localised information gathering such as the results from focus groups and surveys). A Committee Member enquired how flexible the PSB are with amending objectives if the dashboard was to highlight a certain issue. The PSB Chair stated that the PSB have to be flexible and the Corporate Manager reiterated the importance of working collaboratively with other areas in the future.

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

Recommendation(s):

- i. To receive the draft minutes of the Ceredigion PSB meeting held on 4th December 2023.

Reasons for decision:

In order for the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee to carry out their role of 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 4th of December 2023.

The Chair thanked Chair of the Public Services Board, and Officers for attending and presenting the information.

37 **Whistleblowing update**

Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer and Monitoring Officer was welcomed to the meeting to present the report.

The current situation was explained as follows:

Between April 2019 and December 2023 there were 6 whistleblowing disclosure referrals to the Monitoring Officer.

As at 20/12/23:

5 x are concluded,

Of these: no formal investigation. Resolved by:

- internal actions
- training
- other investigative processes

1 x subject to ongoing investigation.

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

Recommendation/s:

1. To note the contents of the report

Reason for Recommendation(s):

Ensure strengthening and improvement of the whistleblowing regime.

Committee Members agreed to note the contents of the report. It was agreed that a report would be presented annually in future. It was also suggested that Corporate Lead Officers ensure that all Officers undertake a refresher training course every three years as stated in the report. Also, to obtain more detail around the number of officers who have not undertaken the training, and how many were Refresher training.

38 **Report on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)**

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee is responsible for reviewing the Council's use of RIPA.

Reports are usually presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on a 6 monthly basis; however, this report is presented 9 months following the previous due to a lack of RIPA activity.

Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer and Monitoring Officer, presented the report, main points arising were as follows:

1) RIPA Activity

There has been no RIPA activity by any service of the Council during the period between the 22 of May 2023 and 31st March 2024.

Authorising Officers have confirmed that they have not considered any RIPA applications during this time.

The Annual return to the IPCO reflects this.

2) Training

On the 18th of April 2024, a full day training workshop has been arranged which will be carried out by an external provider to relevant Officers on RIPA.

This training and previous sessions should ensure that relevant Officers have the necessary knowledge to comply with RIPA requirements.

3) Authorising Officers

The current Authorising Officers for Directed Surveillance, CHIS authorisations and non-RIPA authorisations are:

The Corporate Lead Officer: Policy, Performance and Public Protection;

The Corporate Lead Officer: People and organisation; and

The Statutory Director of Social Services & Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cynnal.

The Chief Executive is the Authorising Officer to grant authorisations in respect of confidential or privileged information, relating to the covert filming of any Elected Member, Corporate Director or Corporate Lead Officer, or relating to surveillance of juveniles or vulnerable people.

The current Approved Rank Officer for Communications Data is: Corporate Lead Officer: Policy, Performance & Public Protection Alternative substitutes (if Approved Rank Officer at 1. above unavailable) are:

Corporate Lead Officer: People and Organisation; and

Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cynnal.

Following discussion, Committee Members considered the following recommendation:

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee notes the content of the report.

Reason for Recommendation(s):

To ensure the committee is kept up to date with the Council's use of RIPA and implementation of policies.

Committee Members agreed to note the content of the report and the Chair thanked Elin Prysor for attending and presenting the information.

39 Corporate Safeguarding Policy

The Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been updated to reflect the revised Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Councillor Alun Williams, Cabinet Member, presented the report supported by Audrey Somerton-Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer and Statutory Director for Social Services.

The Corporate Safeguarding Group has now been re-established after a hiatus during the Covid pandemic. The Group has overseen the drafting of the new revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy in readiness for its implementation and passage through the democratic process.

The last version of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy was drafted in 2017 and were underpinned by the All-Wales Child Protection Procedures including vulnerable adults (2008). The Wales Safeguarding Procedures were implemented in 2019 and are now incorporated into the policy. The policy applies to staff, Councillors, volunteers, and people carrying out work on behalf of the council.

Following consideration, Committee Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

1. agree the Corporate Safeguarding Policy as the definitive document to ensure Ceredigion is a safe organisation and recognises its responsibilities to safeguard children and adults at risk.

Reason for recommendation(s):

It is essential that the Council provides a policy framework to safeguard people delivering services on behalf of the Local Authority. The revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy utilises the up-to-date relevant guidance and legislation.

40 Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Children and Adults Board Annual Report 2022-2023

Councillor Alun Williams, Cabinet Member, and Audrey Somerton-Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer and Statutory Director of Social Services, presented the Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Children and Adults Board Annual Report 2022-2023.

Ceredigion continues to be a fully contributing partner to the Regional Safeguarding Board activities and takes seriously the duties conferred on us to be active participants.

The next Annual report covering 2023-24 will be published in August 2024.

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

RECOMMENDATION/S:

The Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee take note of the content of the report.

Committee Members agreed to note the content of the report.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member, Councillor Williams, and Audrey Somerton-Edwards for attending and presenting both reports.

41 CYSUR/CWMPAS Combined Local Operational Group Safeguarding Report Qtr 2 2023/24

Councillor Alun Williams, Cabinet Member and Elizabeth Upcott, Corporate Manager, were welcomed to the meeting to present the CYSUR/CWMPAS quarter 2 report.

Summary of key points were as follows:

- In Quarter 2, there was an increase in the number of contacts/reports received regarding children/young people compared to Quarter 1-with there being 928 contacts/reports received in Q2 compared to 888 contacts/reports received in Q1.
- However, although there was an increase in the number of contacts/reports received in Quarter 2, there was a decrease in the overall number of contacts/reports which proceeded to actions needing to be taken under Child Protection Procedures, from 172 in Q1 to 132 in Quarter 2. This is reflective of the fact that more contacts/reports are being referred to Early Intervention/Prevention Services or referred for an assessment for care and support and hence is not being escalated to the need for Safeguarding interventions. This is because of the continued development of the Through Age Well-Being model and in particular, the development of Porth Gofal Triage for Children.
- The percentage of referrals that proceeded to a Strategy Discussion was 14.2% in Quarter 2 compared to 19.4% in Q1. In Q2 5.9% of the reports proceeded to a Section 47 Enquiry, compared to 8.8% in Q1 and then in relation to those that proceeded to an Initial Child Protection Conference, 0.9% proceeded to that stage in Q2, compared to 0.7% in Q1.
- The total number of children subject to an Initial Child Protection Conference in this quarter has decreased further to 16, compared to 23 in quarter 1, and 35 in Q4.
- The total number of children placed on the Child Protection Register in this quarter following the Initial Child Protection Conference was 10 compared to 20 in Q1.
- The total number of children removed after Review Child Protection Conferences in this quarter were 22.
- There has been a decrease in the number of reports that have been received from the Police in this quarter and Social Services and Education seem to be the main sources of reporting in this quarter.
- The total number of Section 47 enquiries undertaken has decreased in this quarter also, with 55 undertaken in this quarter compared to 78 in Quarter 1; 41 of those enquiries were undertaken jointly with the Police in this quarter and 14 were undertaken as a Social Services Single Agency.
- The main category of abuse which led to a Section 47 enquiry being undertaken in quarter 2 was Physical Abuse and sexual abuse/exploitation as was the case in Quarter 1.
- There were 40 children on the Child Protection Register as at the end of this quarter, compared to 52 as at the end of Quarter 1. This quarter, 21 children were registered under the category of neglect, 14 under the category of emotional/psychological abuse, 4 under the category of emotional/psychological abuse and neglect and then 1 under the category of sexual abuse and emotional/psychological abuse.

- The main area of concern in relation to this quarter was the significant decrease in the percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences that were held within the statutory timescale of 15 working days after it had been agreed that an ICPC was needed. The percentage in Quarter 2 fell to 43.7% compared to Quarter 1 which was at 80%. The decrease was due to staffing issues. However, the Review Conferences and Core Groups were held mainly in timescales, with 91.7% of Review Conferences being held in timescale and 90% of core groups held within the statutory timescale.
- In terms of **Adult Safeguarding**, there has been a decrease in the number of adults suspected of being at risk of abuse and/or neglect reported, with there being 176 adults at risk reported in this quarter compared to 221 adults at risk reported in quarter 1.
- Staff in the Local Authority were the main source of the referrals in this quarter.
- The most reported category of abuse this quarter was emotional/psychological abuse (87), neglect (84) reports of adults at risk where this was the main category of abuse; 47 related to physical abuse, 49 was in relation to financial abuse and 9 relating to sexual abuse. Emotional/psychological abuse and neglect were the highest categories of abuse reported in the previous quarter also, but neglect was more prevalent in that quarter.
- From the reports received, in relation to all categories of abuse, men were reported to be the highest victims than women in relation to the category of neglect and financial abuse and the females were more the victims in relation to physical, sexual and emotional/psychological abuse.
- In Quarter 2, the majority of the abuse/neglect was reported to have happened in people's own homes, with a relative/friend being the person most responsible for the reported abuse/neglect. The second highest was with in a care home setting, with a paid employee being responsible for the alleged abuse/neglect.

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 Cabinet Member and Officer for presenting the information.

42 To present the final Ceredigion Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 and accompanying report on the consultation exercise

Councillor Catrin M S Davies, Cabinet Member was welcomed to the meeting supported by Cathryn Morgan, Equalities and Inclusion Manager, to present the Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028.

Councillor Davies advised Committee Members of the current situation as follows:

The public consultation ran from 25/10/23 to 31/12/23. It was promoted widely and was also presented to Ceredigion Youth Council to gather the views of young people. 43 people responded to the online survey, No paper copies were returned and 16 members of the Youth Council provided feedback.

Respondents generally felt that our five Equality Objectives were the right Equality Objectives for Ceredigion Council – an average of 94% said ‘yes’. An average of 83% of the people who responded felt that the actions in the plan would help us to achieve our objectives.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission’s monitor report, ‘Is Wales Fairer?’ was published in November 2023. The report reinforces the need for the actions set out in our draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28. Findings of the report have been included in the evidence base that supports our Plan. Our Equalities Working Group is coordinated by Policy, Performance and Public Protection service and chaired by Cllr Catrin MS Davies (Equalities Champion). The group is responsible for the development and monitoring of our Strategic Equality Plan. The group met in January 2024 to review the draft Equality Plan following the public consultation. The group agreed the following amendments to the Strategic Equality Plan:

- Amend action 3.1 to include ‘young people’ in the success measure.
- Find out more about Electrical Hypersensitivity (EHS).
- Encourage staff to take an anonymous feedback box to face to face consultations.
- Amend our internal Engagement toolkit to offer more ways for people to tell us what they think when we consult with them.
- Amend specific actions under Objective 4 to include the term ‘lived experience’.
- Change our equalities monitoring form so that it asks about a person’s ‘sex’, and in a further question asks about their ‘gender identity’
- Remove the action, “to establish an integrated model of community care and housing in Tregaron”. The group felt that a variety of matters contribute to achieving this outcome, most of which are outside of the remit of the Equalities workgroup. The action is included in the Corporate Strategy 2022-27.

Following discussion, Committee Members agreed the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION/S:

- To recommend that Cabinet endorses the Ceredigion Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28.

- To make recommendations as appropriate when the report is presented to Cabinet on 19th March 2024. There were no further recommendations, however, Committee Members praised the Cabinet Member and Officers for the work involved in producing the Strategic Equality Plan.

Reasons for decision:

The proposed Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 will progress the aim of the Council to address inequality, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not in Ceredigion.

43 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 2nd of February 2024 Committee meeting as a true record. There were no matters arising from those minutes.

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

Each Chair in turn gave an update on their respective Committee's Forward Work Plans.

Any other matter which the Chairman decided is for urgent attention of the Committee

The Chairman stated that as his two years Chairmanship is nearing an end, he wished to take the opportunity to thank the Vice-chairman, Councillor Wyn Evans, Lisa Evans and Dwynwen Jones, Officers, and Translators, for their support. He also thanked the Committee Members for their support and courtesy during meetings. He wished the next Committee Chairman well in the role.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 13 June 2024

Chairman: _____

Date: _____