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Chair's Foreword



As the Chair of the Committee I am pleased to present this Annual Report for the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee for the 2022/23 municipal year.

Following the May 2022 Local Elections the Committee welcomed new and experienced members to scrutinise the effectiveness of the Authority's provision. I would like to thank both the elected and co-opted members of the Committee for their valuable contributions over the past year.

The Committee has welcomed the pre-decision method of scrutiny which was introduced in September 2022. This has given the Committee an opportunity to be pro-active in its interaction with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, and to scrutinise relevant matters from their inception. The Committee has also identified its own topics for investigation, and has continued to assess ongoing themes.

This post Covid-19 era has presented its own challenges in the lives and life-long education of our children and young people. The Committee developed a comprehensive Forward Work Plan to take account of the extraordinary circumstances of recent years, and to consider the ongoing impacts of the epidemic on learners of all ages.

The Committee scrutinised the implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales and the support provided to meet the challenges faced by schools. It reviewed the Education and Children's Services Department Improvement Strategy which aimed to reflect upon the progress achieved by pupils, and considered the Carmarthenshire Professional Learning offer for schools.

A Post-16 Education Review workshop was delivered to members which considered the inputs provided by secondary schools in response to questions about their educational provision and experience. The Committee's observations contributed to the Review prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

The Committee was provided with an update on the Council's progress in implementing the transition from Statements of Special Education Needs to Individual Development Plans for pupils with Additional Learning Needs. The Committee also reviewed the data on pupils with Additional Learning Needs in mainstream schools and specialist settings and the increase in demand for Autistic Spectrum Disorder provision.

The Committee considered a report on Estyn inspection outcomes within Carmarthenshire since 2018 and their impact on improvement strategies for schools, and reviewed the Youth Justice Plan which provided for the delivery of youth support services across Carmarthenshire.

The Welsh Language Promotion Strategy was reviewed by the Committee and the action plan to deliver the aims of the strategy will be monitored during its period of operation. The Council's Policy on Awarding Grants and the Welsh Language was scrutinised and endorsed prior to approval by Cabinet.

During the year the Committee has also reviewed the recommendations of relevant past Task and Finish Groups, and received a school presentation on meeting post-Covid-19 challenges. In addition the Committee requested several themed seminars which were delivered by officers. I would like to thank all officers across the remit of this Scrutiny Committee for their input and professionalism in supporting the work of members through this period of change.

The revised remit of the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee has been well-established during 2022/23, and members have contributed positively and enthusiastically to policy development and decision making. I look forward to continuing to work with Members, Co-opted Members and Officers in the year ahead.

Councillor Carys Jones

Chair of the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee

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 Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee during the 2022/23 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 Carys Jones and is made up of 14 Elected Members and 5 voting Co-opted Members (3 elected parent governor members, 1 representative from the Church in Wales and 1 representative from the Roman Catholic Church). 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.

2. Overview of the Work of the Committee in 2022/23

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 Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the scrutiny of Cabinet's Education and Welsh Language portfolio and the respective service areas:

Schools and Education Services from 3 - 19	Regional Integrated School Improvement Service
School Improvement, Organisation and Performance	Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and Forum
Education Welfare and Inclusion	Adult Community Learning including Welsh for Adults
School Support and Governor Services	Youth Support Service
Nursery Education and Standards	School Admissions
Young People Not in Education, Employment & Training (NEETS)	Behavioural Services
Regional Consortia	School Attendance

Carmarthenshire's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme	Post 16 Education & Funding and Regional Learning and Skills Partnership
Additional Learning Needs	Play Sufficiency Assessment
Development of the Welsh Language / Standards reporting	Music Service
Healthy Schools	School Catering Services
Estyn	Education data and systems
Educational Psychology	Schools Safeguarding and Attendance Team
Education and Wellbeing Team	

In accordance with its areas of responsibilities, the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language 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 own Forward Work Plan for the 2022/23 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 Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee

The Committee held 5 formal meetings during the 2022/23 municipal year.

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 may also undertake other scrutiny functions such as Task and Finish, One Day Scrutiny Inquiries and Site Visits to establishments falling within its remit, together with member development sessions and workshops.

2.4 Performance Monitoring / Strategic Issues

One of the principal roles of the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language 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 Carmarthenshire County Council Annual Report 2021/22

In December 2022, the Committee considered the draft Council Annual Report for the period 2021/22 which had been produced to meet the relevant provisions within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021. The report detailed the progress made with the Council's 13 Well-being Objectives (WBO) against a backdrop of unprecedented circumstances presented by the coronavirus pandemic, together with the Council's self-assessment against the performance requirements of the previous financial year. The Committee focused upon the 5 Well-Being Objectives falling within the remit of the committee, namely:

- WBO 1:** Help to give every child the best start in life and improve their early life experiences
- WBO 2:** Help children live healthy lifestyles.
- WBO 3:** Support and improve progress, achievement, and outcomes for all learners.
- WBO 4:** Tackle poverty by doing all we can to prevent it, help people into work and improve the lives of those living in poverty.
- WBO 12:** Promote Welsh Language and Culture.

Outcome:

The Cabinet, at its meeting in January 2023, recommended to Council that the Annual Report 2021/22 be received which was subsequently adopted by the Council in January 2023.

2.4.2 Draft Divisional Delivery Plans 2023/24

In March 2023 the Committee received for consideration the Draft Divisional Service Delivery Plans relevant to the Education and Children's Services directorate for 2023/24, as follows:

- Education and Inclusion Services
- Access to Education
- Strategy & Learner Support
- Children's Services

These plans set out the strategic actions and measures to be implemented within each Division in order for the Council to progress with its well-being objectives, thematic priorities and service priorities. This provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider and comment upon the priorities outlined for the Division.

Outcome:

The Committee endorsed the Draft Divisional Service Delivery Plans relevant to the Education and Children's Services directorate for 2023/24.

2.4.3 Statutory Director of Social Care Services' Annual Report 2021/22

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 2022.

Outcome:

In accordance with the recommendation of the Cabinet in October 2022, the Director of Social Care Services' Annual Report 2021/22 was subsequently approved and adopted by Council in November 2022.

2.4.4 2022-23 Performance Reports relevant to the Committee

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

- December 2022 – Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring 2022/23
- January 2023 – Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring 2022/23
- May 2023 – Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring 2022/23

The reports enabled members to monitor performance in respect of the Well-being Objectives pertinent 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.

2.4.5 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. Updates on the Actions and Referrals were presented to the Committee in January 2023 and May 2023 which detailed the progress made in relation to these requests.

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 2022 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 30 June 2022, together with the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring outturn position for 2021/22;
- December 2022 – in respect of the budgetary position as at 31 August 2022;
- January 2023 – in respect of the budgetary position as at 31 October 2022; and
- May 2023 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 31 December 2022.

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 Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26

In addition to monitoring the current revenue and capital budgets, the Committee was also consulted on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26 at its meeting in January 2023. The report provided the Committee with the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2023/24 together with indicative figures for the 2024/25 and 2025/2026 financial years.

Outcome:

As part of the Authority's widespread consultation undertaken on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26, the Committee considered the Strategy and endorsed the budget proposals, as submitted. The Budget Strategy was subsequently adopted by the Cabinet and Council at their meetings in February and March 2023, subject to some amendments and a reduction in the planned council tax levy.

2.6 Education

2.6.1 Support for Curriculum Development across schools in Carmarthenshire

In January 2023 the Committee reviewed the support available to Carmarthenshire's schools, specialist settings and Pupil Referral Units from the County Council and from the regional consortium, Partneriaeth, to facilitate the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.

The development of the new Curriculum for Wales sought to ensure robust and effective pedagogy to meet the needs of individual pupils at all levels to enable schools to effectively progress in line with the aims of the National Mission. Accordingly, the new Curriculum for Wales had been organised around 6 Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) underpinned by the Cross Curricular Responsibilities of Literacy, Numeracy, Digital Competence and the Wider Skills. The Committee gave detailed consideration to the nature of support provided to address the challenges faced by schools in adhering to the range of complex and mandatory elements required in the development and provision of the new curriculum. In this regard, an overview of the Partneriaeth Business Plan was provided to the Committee which had embedded the new curriculum into its strategic objectives and Professional Learning Offer, in addition to the provision of bespoke, localised support for schools.

The Committee reviewed the Authority's Education and Children's Services department Improvement Strategy which was aligned to the Welsh Government Guidance for School Improvement and aimed to work alongside schools to reflect upon the progress achieved by pupils as a result of the curriculum provision. Consideration was also given to the Carmarthenshire Professional Learning offer for schools and the priority areas for 2022 2023.

The Committee welcomed the positive work being developed across the schools within Carmarthenshire, however it was acknowledged that the level of progress varied across schools.

2.6.2 Post-16 Review

In March 2023, and subsequent to the Post-16 review workshop delivered to members, the Committee received for consideration an interim report on the Post-16 Education Review which had been undertaken in line with the aims of the Education and Children's Service Business Plan to create strong and inclusive schools and services committed to excellence, equity and well-being.

The report outlined the progress made to establish overarching Learner Entitlement Principles for evolving the post-16 landscape in Carmarthenshire and proposed a remodelled governance structure based upon the feedback provided by secondary schools in terms of what learners valued within their educational provision and experience. In this regard, a synopsis of the key themes which formed the basis of those principles were established as follows:

- Relationship, Belonging, Well-Being and Ethos.
- Improved Pathway Guidance and Skills for Independence and for success in academic, work and life.
- Equity through More Welsh Language options.
- Equity through a wide range of options especially Vocational options.

The Committee raised concerns in respect of the ongoing National recruitment shortage of teachers and teaching staff and will be exploring this issue further as part of its Forward Work Plan for 2023/24.

Outcome:

The Committee's observations, together with stakeholder feedback provided as part of a comprehensive consultation process helped to refine the Post-16 Review. The Committee endorsed the Post-16 Education Review which has been referred to the Cabinet for further consideration.

2.6.3 Transformation, Innovation and Change (TIC), Including School Budgets

The Committee considered a report in March 2023 which provided an overview of the Schools' Transformation Programme introduced in 2017 to support schools in meeting significant financial challenges. The programme aimed to apply the Authority's core transformation principles of collaborative working and challenging existing practices to support schools in taking advantage of cost saving opportunities and service improvements, by way of a sustainable approach, across a wide range of activities, whilst also maintaining good pupil outcomes.

A presentation was provided to the Committee which detailed the progress made to date in delivering the key priority areas identified. Officers addressed a range of queries and observations which related to benchmarking, the responsibilities prescribed to schools by way of legislation, budgetary constraints and capacity issues.

The importance of clear communication and engagement with schools was emphasised by the Committee as a means of sharing best practice and supporting schools through the transformation process.

2.6.4 Additional Learning Needs Update

In May 2023 the Committee received for consideration a progress update on the Council's implementation of the provisions enshrined within the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, which aimed to transform the expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

The Committee received a presentation which detailed the progress of transition from Statements of Special Education Needs (SEN) to Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for pupils with ALN. Implementation would be undertaken on a phased basis up to August 2025 and would result in three potential categorisation outcomes for children and young people. The Committee reviewed the feedback provided on the level of success of the transition into the new ALN system, which included an overview of the areas that are working well and those that need to be addressed in terms of the role of the ALN Officers and Co-ordinators, Early Years and Post-16 Provision for children and young people with ALN, training and support, and also the ongoing partnership working with health professionals. The Committee also reviewed the statistical data on pupils with ALN in mainstream schools and those requiring specialist setting support whereby it was recognised that there had been a significant increase in demand for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) provision since September 2021.

Officers addressed a range of queries and observations which related to the process, criteria and quality of IDPs, capacity issues within specialist settings, budgetary pressures and post-16 specialist provision entitlement. Concerns were also raised by the Committee in terms of the lack of parity between Welsh-medium schools in being able to access a wide range of standardised assessments and resources to support the early and accurate identification of ALN, compared with English medium schools.

Outcomes:

The Committee requested an update on the outcome of the discussions ongoing with Welsh Government pertaining to funding of post-16 provision.

A further update on the ALN implementation will be considered by the Committee during 2023/24.

2.6.5 Evaluation of Estyn Inspections Across Carmarthenshire Schools, Pupil Referral Units and Specialist Settings

In May 2023 the Committee received a report which provided an overview of Estyn inspection outcomes within the county for the past five years. The report provided an assurance to the Committee that standards and leadership are considered good or better in the majority of schools, with only a minority of schools placed in a follow-up category for improvement. An overview of new inspection framework adopted by Estyn in March 2022 was provided to the Committee, together with a summary of the strong or effective practice identified by Estyn inspectors to be shared with others.

The Committee reviewed the school improvement recommendations provided by Estyn since March 2022 and an assurance was provided to the Committee that all Estyn outcomes influenced the division's improvement strategies for schools, ways of working and the Professional Learning support programme.

2.7 Children's Services

2.7.1 Carmarthenshire Youth Justice Plan 2022/23

In December 2022 the Committee received for consideration the Carmarthenshire Youth Justice Plan which had been developed in accordance with the legislative requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The Youth Justice 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. A review the remit, structure, governance arrangements and funding model for the provision of youth support services was undertaken by the Committee. Section 8 of the Youth Justice Plan detailed the performance of the partnership during 2021/22 and also set out the priorities and improvement planning objectives for the forthcoming year in accordance with the overarching 'child first' principles and an ethos of continuous improvement.

Outcome:

In reviewing the main areas of activity, the Committee gained an understanding of the ongoing crucial work of the partnership in seeking to mitigate the continued impact of the coronavirus pandemic in order to safeguard the most vulnerable and complex children and families across the County.

2.8 Welsh Language

2.8.1 Policy on Awarding Grants and the Welsh Language

In May 2023 the Committee considered the Council's Policy on Awarding Grants and the Welsh Language which had been prepared in order to comply with the provisions enshrined within the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The Policy provided a consistent approach in the handling of the Welsh language across the Council's various grants, ensured compliance with the Welsh Language Standards in the allocation of grants and also equipped Council employees to assist third party bodies to promote the Welsh language in their operations effectively. In this regard, the Policy was aligned to the Council's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-28 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

The Committee provided valuable feedback in respect of the eligibility criteria and the grant application process.

Outcome:

Following the feedback provided by the Committee, the Policy on Awarding Grants and the Welsh Language was endorsed and referred to the Cabinet for approval.

2.8.2 Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-28

At its meeting in May 2023, the Committee reviewed the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy for 2023-28, which had been prepared in conjunction with the Welsh Language Strategic Forum as part of the Council's responsibilities through the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 and the subsequent Welsh Language Standards. The strategy detailed how the Council proposed to promote the Welsh language and facilitate the use of the Welsh language across the county.

The Strategy sought to instigate an increase in the number of Welsh speakers, pride and confidence in the Welsh language, increased use of Welsh in the workplace and workforce as 'a norm' and thriving Welsh speaking communities. The Committee reviewed the 9 workstreams that would be implemented as an action plan to deliver the aims of the strategy during its period of operation.

The Committee welcomed the strategy as a means of positively impacting upon the viability of the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire and highlighted the importance of residents being given the opportunity to hear and use the Welsh language within their daily lives. Concerns were however raised in respect of the decline in the Welsh for Adults provision of physical, localised classes and a further report on this issue will be reviewed as part of the Committee's 2023/24 Forward Work Plan.

Outcome:

Following the feedback provided by the Committee, the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy for 2023-28, was endorsed and referred to the Cabinet for approval.

3 Other Scrutiny Activity

3.1 Task and Finish

The Committee did not undertake a Task and Finish review during 2022/23. At its Forward Work Planning session held in May 2023, the Committee reviewed the progress made regarding the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the following Task and Finish Groups:

- A Review of the current provision for Early Years Education, Childcare and Play Opportunities. – undertaken in 2018/19
- A Review of the School Organisation Consultation Process – undertaken in 2021/22

3.2 Site Visits

Due to the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic, it was not considered appropriate to undertake physical site visits during the municipal year. However, an alternative structure, in the form of online and hybrid school engagement sessions was therefore implemented as a temporary measure to enable the Committee to continue with its school evaluation and improvement function.

The following school engagement session was undertaken during the 2022/23 municipal year:

3.2.1 School recovery from the coronavirus pandemic

In October 2022 the Committee received a presentation from Ysgol Bryn Teg which focussed on the way in which the school had supported the well-being of pupils, families and staff since the Covid-19 pandemic. The presentation detailed the journey of significant improvement made within the school, against a backdrop of financial challenges, to become highly effective in terms of its learning and organisation and had embraced change in order to achieve a culture of excellence.

The engagement session focussed upon the findings of the Estyn inspection undertaken in June 2022 within the following areas:

- Leadership
- Care, Support and Guidance
- Teaching and Learning Experiences
- Well-being and Attitudes to Learning
- Learning

Outcome:

The school engagement session raised awareness of the services and innovative practices introduced to support and improve the well-being of pupils following the coronavirus pandemic. Furthermore, the Committee gained a detailed understanding of the main challenges, pressures and priorities identified by schools, which centred upon an increased influx of children with additional needs, cost of living crisis, reduced budgets and the over reliance on grant funding. Access to quality services, individually and collectively was also deemed to be more difficult following the coronavirus pandemic.

A programme of school visits will be resumed as part of the Committee's Forward Work programme for 2023/24.

3.3 Development Sessions

Following the Local Government elections held in May 2022, a comprehensive Councillor Induction Programme was provided for all elected members. The programme was designed primarily for new Councillors but was also open to those who were re-elected. The induction programme was geared to provide members with the requisite knowledge, skills and understanding to assist them in serving as a Councillor. The training relevant to the work of the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee included an overview of the scrutiny function, Budgetary and Treasury Management and Equality and Diversity (including Welsh Language). Several budget seminars were also held during January 2023 as part of the Council's consultation process on the 2023/24 Revenue Budget and the five-year capital programme.

In addition, at the request of the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee, the following sessions were provided during the 2022/23 municipal year:

- **Self Evaluation and School Data (18/10/2022):** This workshop provided an overview of the way the Education division had embedded self-evaluation as an integral element to its business planning processes and modified its approach by triangulating judgements from a wider range of perspectives.
- **Introduction to Scrutiny (01/12/2022):** Overview of the role and updated remit of the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee within Carmarthenshire County Council, including an overview of the pre-decision process.
- **Post 16 Review (10/02/2023)**– Members were afforded the opportunity to consider the initial findings of the Post-16 Review, encompassing Vocational Qualifications and those Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEETs)
- **Modernising Education Programme (MEP_ (18/10/22, 02/12/22 and 05/05/2023) –** This workshop provided a valuable opportunity for Members to contribute to the progression of the MEP review. Members received an overview of the background, current situation, challenges, engagement methods, budgetary considerations and priorities pertaining to the Modernising Education Programme. The draft viability and investment criteria was reviewed in accordance with the Council's aspiration of ensuring viable, sustainable and efficient school estates.

4. 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 2022/23, 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 Plan 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 department provided digital marketing support to the Authority's Scrutiny function and proactively promoted details of forthcoming items which may be of interest to the public.

5. Challenges

One of the challenges faced by the County in 2022/23 was the continued impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the provision of services to the residents of Carmarthenshire and the councils' efforts to achieve a return to pre-pandemic service levels. As a result, the Education and Children's Services department continued to be under pressure throughout the municipal year. Nevertheless, the department has adapted and developed innovative solutions during unprecedented circumstances to meet the needs of children and young people across Carmarthenshire.

Following the local government elections in May 2022 the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee saw a new cohort of members. The newly elected members worked with the rest of the Committee to familiarise themselves with the decision-making process and the topics within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee's portfolio. However, the past year has also been a challenging period following a reconfiguration of the Committee's remit, which now includes the Welsh Language. Furthermore, the reporting process has changed from the systematic referral of reports to a pre-decision process. Whilst these changes have been embraced by the Committee, the revised processes are still being embedded across the Council.

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.

6. Future Work

As the Authority emerges from 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 Public Scrutiny in order to achieve a streamlined and focused scrutiny process.

The future work of the Committee will be considered as part of the Forward Work Planning programme and will continue to be monitored 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.

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 Programmes.
- 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 through engaging in National and regional Scrutiny networks and initiatives, supporting the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum and meetings of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs with the Cabinet.
- Advising and supporting the implementation of the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 as and when guidance is published.
- Managing the co-ordination and development of the Scrutiny Committees' Forward Work Programmes 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. Attendance

Attendance by members of the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee during the 2022/23 year is shown in the table below. A total of five meetings were held during the reporting period.

Scrutiny Committee Member	Meetings Attended	%
Cllr. Sue Allen	5	100%
Cllr. Liam Bowen	2	40%
Cllr. Kim Broom	5	100%
Cllr Lewis Davies	4	80%
Cllr. Llinos Mai Davies (until 19.04.23)	4 [of 4]	100%
Cllr. Peter Hughes-Griffiths	5	100%
Cllr. Betsan Jones	5	100%
Cllr. Carys Jones	5	100%
Cllr. Dot Jones	5	100%
Cllr. Hefin Jones (since 19.04.23)	0 [of 1]	0%
Cllr. Jean Lewis	4	80%
Cllr. Sean Rees	5	100%
Cllr. Edward Skinner	5	100%
Cllr. Michael Thomas (since 09.11.22)	4 [of 4]	100%
Cllr. Shelly Godfrey-Coles (until 09.11.22)	0 [of 1]	0%
Parent Governor Representatives	Meetings Attended	%
Mr Anthony Enoch	5	100%
Mrs Deborah Elias (until 10.02.23)	0 [of 3]	0%
Dr Felicity Healy-Benson	4	80%
Church Representatives	Meetings Attended	%
Mrs Vera Kenny	4	80%
Rev D. Richards	0	0%

Substitutes	Meetings Attended
Cllr. Mansel Charles	3
Cllr. Michelle Donoghue	1
Cllr. Michael Thomas	1
Cabinet Member	Meetings Attended
Cllr. Glynog Davies (Education and Welsh Language)	5
Cllr. Philip Hughes (Organisation and Workforce)	1
Cllr. Gareth John (Regeneration, Leisure, Culture and Tourism)	1
Cllr. Alun Lenny (Resources)	1
Cllr Jane Tremlett (Health and Social Services)	1