

Contents

Chair's Foreword	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Overview of the Work of the Committee in 2021/22	3
2.1 The Role of Scrutiny	3
2.2 The Forward Work Programme	4
2.3 Meetings of the Education and Children Scrutiny Committee	4
2.4 Performance Monitoring / Strategic Issues	5
2.4.1 Carmarthenshire County Council Annual Report 2020/21	5
2.4.2 Performance of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire 2020/21	5
2.4.3 2021-22 Performance Report relevant to Education and Children scrutiny	6
2.4.4 Education Department's 10-Year Strategy	6
2.4.5 Education and Children's Service' Draft Departmental Business Plan 2022/23	6
2.4.6 Actions and Referrals	6
2.5 Revenue & Capital Budgets	7
2.5.1 Budget Monitoring Reports	7
2.5.2 Revenue Budget Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25	7
2.6 Education	7
2.6.1 Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation	7
2.6.2 Education Recovery Plan "STEPPING FORWARD"	8
2.6.3 Welsh in Education Plan (WESP) 2022 - 2032	8
2.6.4 Well-being of Learners and Staff in Educational Settings	9
2.6.5 Update on PARTNERIAETH	9
2.7 Children's Services	10
2.7.1 Youth Support Service	10
2.7.2 Contacts and Referrals to Children's Services	10
2.7.3 Family Support Services: Education and Children's Services	10
2.7.4 Working With Those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)	10
3. Other Scrutiny Activity	11
3.1 Task and Finish	11
3.2 Update on previous Task and Finish Groups	12
3.3 Site Visits	12
3.3.1 School recovery from the coronavirus pandemic	12
3.3.2 ALN Transformation	13
4. Development Sessions	13
5. Public Engagement	14
6. Challenges	14
7. Future Work	14
8. Support for the Scrutiny Function	15
9. Attendance	16

Chair's Foreword



I am pleased to present this Annual Report for the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee for the 2021/22 municipal year.

At the outset I would like to thank both the elected and co-opted members of the Committee for their contributions over the past year in attempting to scrutinise the Authority's performance and policies.

Due to ongoing coronavirus restrictions, the Committee held all of its meetings online during the year, and we again allocated time in the Committee's Forward Work Programme to assess the authority's response to the pandemic, particularly in relation to Education and Children's Services.

The Committee also scrutinised the Youth Support Services, the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, the Education Department's 10 Year Strategy, Mental Health and Wellbeing relating to staff and pupils, the monitoring of air quality and ventilation in schools, funding challenges relating to those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), the Council's 2022/23 budget proposals for the Department, the Departmental Business Plans and the new regional school improvement model.

As the Committee was unable to carry out physical school visits, a number of schools were invited to attend the meetings remotely to share their experiences in terms of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation Programme and their Covid recovery work in supporting pupils and staff.

The Committee undertook a Task & Finish Group during the year which scrutinised the way in which the Council consulted on school organisation proposals. We received evidence from Council officers, schools, Town and Community councils and Welsh Government officials and were pleased that the Cabinet accepted our recommendations in full.

The Committee also wrote directly to the Welsh Government to outline our concerns with regards to Elective Home Education and future funding pressures in tackling the NEET agenda.

I would again like to thank Democratic Services and Education and Children's Services Officers for their input and for their professionalism in supporting the work of the Committee, not only this year, but for the full Council term since 2017. They have supported the Committee's work effectively and have always been prepared to provide open and honest answers to often very challenging topics and questions.

There is no doubt that the Education and Children's Services Department has an integral part to play in meeting the Council's ambitions of creating a greener, fairer and wealthier Carmarthenshire and the Committee's work has enabled us to see first hand the huge amount of work that is carried out across the service to meet those aims.

I commend the Annual Report to members.

Councillor Darren Price
Chair of the Education & Children 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 & Children Scrutiny Committee during the 2021/22 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 Darren Price 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 2021/22

2.1 The Role of Scrutiny

The Education & Children Scrutiny Committee's key responsibilities are:

- Educational Standards & School Performance
- Inclusion & Additional Learning Needs
- Welsh Medium Education
- School Modernisation
- Adult Community Learning
- Youth Services
- Youth Offending
- School meals
- Children's Services including Social Services & Family Support Services

In accordance with its areas of responsibilities, the Education and Children 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 Programme

The Committee utilised the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny's Gateway framework to develop its own Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the 2021/22 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 FWP.

2.3 Meetings of the Education and Children Scrutiny Committee

The Committee schedules its meetings on a 6 weekly basis to consider issues and reports included in its FWP.

The Committee held 6 formal meetings during the 2021/22 municipal year. The meeting scheduled to be held in October 2021 did not proceed as no reports were available and the meeting scheduled for April 2022 was cancelled due to it falling within the pre-election period.

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 member development sessions.

2.4 Performance Monitoring / Strategic Issues

One of the principal roles of the Education and Children 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 2020/21

In July 2021, the Committee considered the Council's Annual Report for 2020/21 which detailed the progress made during the year for each of the Council's 15 well-being objectives, adopted in June 2018, and which had been amended to reflect developing priorities and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Brexit and climate change. The Committee focused upon the 4 objectives which were relevant to the Education and Children Scrutiny, namely:

- Well-being Objective 1:** Help to give every child the best start in life and improve their early life experience.
- Well-being Objective 2:** Help children live healthy lifestyles (Childhood Obesity).
- Well-being Objective 3:** Support and improve progress, achievement, for all learners.
- Well-being Objective 4:** Ensure all young people are in Education, Employment or Training (EET) and are following productive learning and career pathways.

Outcome:

In accordance with the recommendation of the Cabinet in September 2021, the Annual Report 2020/21 was subsequently approved and adopted by Council in October 2021.

2.4.2 Performance of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire 2020/21

At its meeting in July 2021, the Committee considered the draft Annual Report on the Effectiveness of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire for 2020/21. The Committee noted the statutory requirement for the Director of Social Services to report annually to Council on the delivery, performance and risks, as well as plans for the improvement of the whole range of Social Services. A detailed discussion ensued regarding the administration of Elective Home Education, whereby Committee sought assurances within the following areas:

- Maintaining a register
- Safeguarding
- Defining suitable education
- Intervention
- Flexi-schooling
- Funding

Outcome:

The Committee made representations to Welsh Government with a view to strengthening Elective Home Education legislation. The correspondence proposed collaboration between Welsh Government and Local Authorities by way of the development and enhancement of legislation, policy and guidance to enable Authorities to effectively administer Elective Home Education process.

2.4.3 2021-22 Performance Report relevant to Education and Children scrutiny

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

- October 2021 – Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring 2021/22
- December 2021 – Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring 2021/22

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.

2.4.4 Education Department's 10-Year Strategy

At its meeting in November 2021 the Committee considered the Education Department's 10-year Strategy which brought together the department's strategic thinking, mission statement and priorities for the next 10 years. The strategy set out the vision for the role that education services would play in the future development of vibrant communities and a prosperous economy in Carmarthenshire. The Committee reviewed the strategy and put forth observations to further refine the strategy and ensure that it reflected the Authority's aspirations.

Outcome:

The Education Department's 10-year Strategy was further developed to incorporate the feedback of the Committee and was subsequently approved for publication by the Cabinet in January 2022.

2.4.5 Education and Children's Service' Draft Departmental Business Plan 2022/23

At its meeting in January 2022, the Committee considered the Education and Children's Services Draft Departmental Business Plan 2022/23 which detailed the department's aims, objectives and priorities to support the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and the Authority's Well-being Objectives. This provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider and comment upon the priorities outlined for the department.

2.4.6 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. An update on the Actions and Referrals was presented to the Committee at its meeting in March 2022 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 2021 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 30th June 2021; and
- February 2022 - in respect of the budgetary position as at 31st October 2021.

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 2022/23 to 2024/25

In addition to monitoring the current revenue and capital budgets, the Committee was also consulted on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25 at its meeting in January 2022. The report provided the Committee with the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2022/23, together with indicative figures for the 2023/24 and 2024/2025 financial years.

Outcome:

As part of the Authority's widespread consultation undertaken on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25, the Committee considered the Strategy and endorsed the budget proposals, as submitted. The Budget Strategy was subsequently adopted by the Council at its meeting in March 2022, subject to some amendments and a reduction in the planned council tax levy.

2.6 Education

2.6.1 Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation

In June 2022 the Committee reviewed the Authority's progress in respect of the ALN Transformation Action Plan and associated funding formula which had been developed to meet the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. Members raised significant concerns regarding the disparity of approach in respect of the ALN funding formula across Wales. A further update report was considered by the Committee during a school engagement session at its meeting in March 2022 (section 3.3 refers) which provided an overview of the array of measures taken by the Authority to prepare for the introduction of the ALN system.

Outcome:-

The Committee made representations to Welsh Government to establish whether support would be provided to Local Authorities by way of:

- Identifying a National funding formula for schools to address the additional learning needs for pupils.
- Leading on all-Wales discussions on best practice in creating a fair and equitable ALN Funding Formula.

The Welsh Government subsequently confirmed that ALN funding was un-hypothecated, and once distributed it was the responsibility of individual local authorities to set budgets for their schools and the associated local provision supported. This approach to funding was in accordance with the Welsh Government's view that local authorities are best placed to deliver services in line with the requirements and circumstances of their population, to whom they are accountable. An assurance was however provided that the phased rollout of the ALN system would be monitored and evaluated by Welsh Government in accordance with the findings of the independent review of school spending across Wales, published in 2020.

2.6.2 Education Recovery Plan "STEPPING FORWARD"

In July 2021 the Committee reviewed the Education and Children's Services arrangements with schools and pupil referral units to promote learning and support vulnerable pupils during the coronavirus pandemic. The Committee acknowledged the way in which services within the department had adapted their working practices to respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic, together with the key learning opportunities derived from the areas of promoting learning and supporting vulnerable pupils. Officers addressed members' enquiries in respect of attendance levels, workload of headteachers, implementation of the new curriculum and monitoring of the wellbeing and standards of education of electively home educated children.

Outcome:

The findings of the report and the feedback from Committee facilitated the development of the department's strategic plan to ensure sufficient support for schools to meet the needs of vulnerable learners.

2.6.3 Welsh in Education Plan (WESP) 2022 - 2032

In July 2021 the Committee considered the draft WESP 2022-2032, the production and implementation of which is a statutory requirement for the Authority. A presentation was provided to the Committee which set out the Authority's 10-year vision to create an improved planning system for Welsh-medium education.

The Committee recognised that the Authority's WESP would provide the means for the Welsh Government to monitor the way in which the Authority would contribute to the implementation of the Welsh Medium Education Strategy (WMES) objectives, which sought to facilitate an increase in the number of people of all ages able to use the Welsh language with their families, in their communities and in the workplace.

Officers addressed a range of queries and observations which related to job security, staff capacity and training opportunities, training for governors, support for Headteachers, teacher recruitment, Welsh-medium vocational pathways and the value of multilingualism. The importance of clear communication with stakeholders was emphasised by the Committee, specifically with parents and their children in order to raise awareness and understanding of the process.

Outcome:

The Committee's observations, together with stakeholder feedback provided as part of a comprehensive 8-week consultation process undertaken in the Autumn of 2021, helped to refine the WESP. At its meeting in January 2022, the Cabinet approved the revised WESP, to be implemented from September 2022.

2.6.4 Well-being of Learners and Staff in Educational Settings

In November 2021 the Committee scrutinised the support arrangements provided by the Authority to schools, pupil referral units and specialist settings in respect of the well-being of learners and staff against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic. The Committee acknowledged the increasing complexity of the well-being challenges faced by schools, with significant unprecedented pressure placed on educational staff, children, and parents alike. In reviewing the report, the Committee commended the robust support mechanisms which had been made available to schools in response to the challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. The Committee was however particularly concerned to note the poor ventilation in some schools whereby CO₂ readings were consistently amber or red.

Outcome:

The Committee requested regular updates on the situation regarding ventilation in schools. A verbal update was given to the Committee on the matter during consideration of the Authority's Revenue Budget Strategy Consultations 2022/23 to 2024/25 in January 2022.

Furthermore, the Cabinet, at its meeting in January 2022, supported a Notice of Motion submitted by the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, which called on the Welsh Government to urgently consider approving, tendering and funding Ultra Violet and/or High Efficiency Particulate Air Filters in schools.

2.6.5 Update on PARTNERIAETH

In March 2022, the Committee received for consideration a report which set out the collaborative arrangements for the establishment of 'PARTNERIAETH', a regional consortium designed to promote excellence, and which would serve the schools within Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Swansea. Officers addressed a number of queries in relation to the staffing structure, priorities, functions and funding mechanisms required to deliver its aims and objectives.

2.7 Children's Services

2.7.1 Youth Support Service

In June 2021 the Committee reviewed the Youth Support Service response provided during the coronavirus pandemic. The Committee scrutinised the main areas of activity and noted the innovative approaches which had been implemented during this period and which would be adopted as standard practice to meet the individual needs of children and young people. The Committee recognised the valuable contribution to service delivery in respect of children, young people, and families during unprecedented circumstances.

Consideration was given to the remit, structure, governance arrangements and funding model for the provision of youth support services. In this regard it was acknowledged that youth work was undergoing a period of significant change in line with the Welsh Government Youth Work Strategy recommendations to develop a new funding model, introduce an innovation and outcomes framework for youth work, establish a youth information service and implementation of a regional partnership approach to inform and develop local delivery of services.

2.7.2 Contacts and Referrals to Children's Services

In July 2021 the Committee reviewed the Authority's position in respect of the contacts and referrals, pressures and demands within the Children's Services division since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. In March 2022, the Committee received updated information on the current situation regarding the volume of work within the division, the challenges faced and the potential need for additional resource. The Committee considered the remit and structure of the Children's Services division and highlighted concerns in respect of the ongoing National recruitment crisis, and potential risks presented to the Authority in light of the difficulties in appointing social workers. The Committee was assured to note the array of measures implemented to mitigate those risks.

2.7.3 Family Support Services: Education and Children's Services

In December 2021 the Committee evaluated the Education and Children's Services delivery of preventative support for families across the County. A review of the challenges faced by the preventative services was undertaken, together with the actions taken to address those challenges within the context of the emerging needs of families and demands on services. Officers addressed the Committee's concerns in relation to the Childcare Offer for Wales initiative, the myriad of data collection systems in place, employee well-being and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic upon the number of referrals submitted.

2.7.4 Working With Those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)

In December 2021, the Committee scrutinised the Authority's actions to reduce the number of NEETs. The Committee expressed the view that the current funding mechanisms, which was heavily reliant upon the receipt of short-term grants, was not deemed to be sustainable.

Outcome:

The Committee made representations to Welsh Government requesting a long-term funding mechanism to address the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic whereby an increase in demand was anticipated for youth support services in relation to NEET issues as well as other complexities.

A response was duly provided by the Welsh Government which clarified that details of the UK Government's plans to replace EU funding was awaited. Reference was also made to the Programme for Government which comprised a number of initiatives to support young people. Specifically, two new programmes had been introduced for NEET, namely Jobs Growth Wales+ and ReAct+, with a successor community based employability provision, based on the current Communities for Work+ programme scheduled to be launched in April 2023.

3. Other Scrutiny Activity

3.1 Task and Finish

The purpose of a task and 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 review of the current consultation process for school organisation changes, including changes in linguistic provision and closure of schools.

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

- Review the current process of engaging and consulting with schools, pupils, parents and the public in terms of any proposed school changes;
- Identify National and international best practice on consultation and engagement;
- Review the way in which the Council's Strategic Objectives are communicated, consulted upon and understood by schools, pupils, parents and residents e.g. WESP and MEP;
- Formulate recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet.

The membership of the Task and Finish Group comprised 6 Elected Members appointed to reflect the political balance of the Council as a whole, as far as possible:

Plaid Cymru:	Councillors Darren Price, Kim Broom & Jean Lewis
Independent Group:	Councillor Edward Thomas
Labour Group:	Councillor Dot Jones
New Independent Group:	Councillor Shahana Najmi
Co-opted Member:	Mr Anthony Enoch

To enable the Group to positively contribute to the development of the Authority's strategic plans, the review was separated into 2 parts in order to align with the timescales of review of the Education and Children's Services WESP and MEP plans. Accordingly, an Interim Recommendations Report which comprised of 6 recommendations developed by the Group and was subsequently endorsed by the Cabinet in September 2021.

The Group met on a further 3 occasions between September and November 2021 and developed 9 additional recommendations based on a thematic structure within the areas of:

- School Organisation Code;
- Engagement and Consultation;
- Project Engagement; and
- Information and Training.

The recommendations will be presented to the Cabinet in Autumn 2022.

3.2 Update on previous Task and Finish Groups

At its meeting in March 2018, the Committee agreed to establish a task and finish group to undertake a review into provision for early years education, childcare and play opportunities.

As part of its investigation, the Group considered a range of evidence over a series of meetings held between May 2018 and February 2019. A number of recommendations were formulated and presented to the Cabinet in October 2019, however Members requested further detail in respect of funding implications and policy matters. In April 2021 an update report was provided to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration and the Group's remit was subsequently extended to review school admission arrangements.

The scope and aims of the Task and Finish Group were to review the:

1. Foundation Phase provision
2. Standard of provision
3. Provision of play opportunities
4. Provision of Childcare
5. 30 Hour Childcare Offer
6. Carmarthenshire Schools Admissions Policy

During the course of the review, Welsh Government announced that the all-Wales Childcare Offer for 3 and 4 year olds would be rolled-out across Carmarthenshire from January 2019. This had had a significant impact on the work of the Task and Finish Group, and the recommendations reflected this.

Outcome:

A total of 20 recommendations were considered and subsequently approved by the Cabinet in January 2022.

3.3 Site Visits

Due to coronavirus restrictions, it was not possible to undertake physical site visits during the municipal year. At its meeting in June 2021, an alternative structure, in the form of online school engagement sessions was therefore endorsed as a temporary measure to enable the Committee to continue with its school evaluation and improvement function. The Committee subsequently agreed the thematic reviews and timetable for the school engagement sessions up until the Autumn of 2022.

The following online school engagement sessions were undertaken during the 2021/22 municipal year:

3.3.1 School recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

In January 2022 the Committee considered the financial support allocated to schools during 2021/22 by way of the Accelerated Learning Programme and which included an additional 'Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards' (RRRs) grant recently provided. The Committee's remit was to focus upon the utilisation of the additional funding provided to schools to meet the requirements of the RRRs, within the areas of Accelerated Learning, Priority Cohorts for Support and Curriculum Reform.

The Committee then received a presentation from the federated Bryngwyn and Glan-Y-Mor school representatives which focussed upon the means by which they had addressed the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, the impact upon pupils and staff and the perceived longer-term challenges ahead.

Outcome:

The overview of how the schools had utilised the additional funding provided members with a detailed understanding of the impact of the Local Authority's support on provision across the school system.

In response to a suggestion put forth by the Committee, the school engagement session was enhanced whereby pupils were invited to form part of future engagement sessions to enable them to articulate their experiences directly to the Committee.

3.3.2 ALN Transformation

In March 2022 the Committee was provided an overview of the array of measures taken by the Authority to prepare for the introduction of the ALN system. The update comprised a school engagement session with representatives from QE High School in attendance to provide the Committee with an in-depth understanding of the school's transition to the new system which aimed to provide a fair and inclusive educational structure and derive improved outcomes for children and young people with ALN.

Outcome:

The school engagement session provided members with a detailed understanding of the school preparedness for, and implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

4. Development Sessions

During the 2021/22 municipal year, Committee Members were invited to the following development sessions /seminars provided by the Authority: -

- Microsoft Teams Training for online meetings – numerous sessions in June 2021
- Historic Buildings and Carmarthenshire's Net Zero Carbon Commitment (May 2021)
- The Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (June 2021)
- Hywel Dda University Health Board – Covid Briefing (September 2021)
- Planning Services Seminar (September 2021)
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Workshop (October 2021)
- Planning Service Phosphates Briefing (November 2021)
- Digital Connectivity Event (January 2022)

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 2021/22, the Committee's Forward Work Programme 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 Programmes 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.

6. Challenges

The Education and Children's Services department continued to be under pressure throughout the municipal year as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, the department has adapted and developed innovative solutions during unprecedented circumstances to meet the needs of children and young people across 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.

7. 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 work of the Committee for 2022/23 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 Programme 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.

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 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.

9. Attendance

Attendance by members of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee during the 2021/22 year is shown in the table below. A total of six meetings were held during the 2021/22 municipal year.

Scrutiny Committee Member	Meetings Attended	%
Cllr. Sue Allen	6	100%
Cllr. Liam Bowen	4	67%
Cllr. Kim Broom	6	100%
Cllr. Sharen Davies (Since 10.11.21)	1 [of 4]	25%
Cllr. Rob James (since 14.07.21)	2 [of 4]	50%
Cllr. John Jenkins	5	83%
Cllr. Betsan Jones	6	100%
Cllr. Dot Jones	5	83%
Cllr. Gary Jones	4	67%
Cllr. Jean Lewis	6	100%
Cllr. Shahana Najmi (until 10.11.21)	1 [of 2]	50%
Cllr. Darren Price	6	100%
Cllr. Emlyn Schiavone	6	100%
Cllr. Bill Thomas (until 14.07.21)	0 [of 2]	0%
Cllr. Edward Thomas	5	83%
Cllr. Dorian Williams	4	67%
Parent Governor Representatives	Meetings Attended	%
Mr Anthony Enoch	6	100%
Mrs Felicity Healy-Benson (since 01.10.21)	4 [of 4]	100%
Church Representatives	Meetings Attended	%
Mrs Vera Kenny	6	100%
Rev D. Richards	2	33%

Substitutes	Meetings Attended
Cllr. Mansel Charles	1
Cllr. Deryk Cundy	2
Cllr. Jeff Edmunds	1
Cllr. Rob James	2
Cllr. Ken Lloyd	1
Cllr. Eryl Morgan	1
Cllr. Gwyneth Thomas	1
Cabinet Member	Meetings Attended
Cllr. Glynog Davies (Education and Children)	5
Cllr. David Jenkins (Resources)	1