

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held in the Committee Room and virtually on Zoom on 10 April, 2025

PRESENT: Councillor Sonia Williams (Vice-Chair) (In the Chair)
Councillor Geraint Bebb (Vice-Chair for this meeting only)

Councillors John Ifan Jones, R. Llewelyn Jones, Jackie Lewis, Llio Owen, Keith Roberts, Ieuan Williams, Arfon Wyn.

Portfolio Members

Councillors Robin Williams (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Finance and Housing) Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience), Alun Roberts (Portfolio Member for Adults' Services and Community Safety), Dafydd Roberts (Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language), Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property).

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive (for items 1 to 3 and part item 4)
Director of Social Services
Head of Highways, Waste and Property (HP)
Head of Adult Services (for item 3)
Head of Democracy (DS)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
Democratic Services Support Assistant (CH) (webcasting)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Douglas Fowlie, Aled M. Jones, Alwen Watkin, Mr John Tierney (Co-opted Member)
Councillors Neville Evans (Portfolio Member for Leisure, Tourism and Maritime), Dyfed Wyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Children, Young People and Families), Mr Rhys H. Hughes (Deputy Chief Executive), Mr Aaron Evans (Director of Education, Skills and Young People)

ALSO PRESENT: N/A

The Chair, Councillor Douglas Fowlie, was present for the initial introductions but left immediately afterwards due to a personal commitment. The remainder of the meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair, Councillor Sonia Williams. Councillor Geraint Bebb was elected to serve as Vice-Chair for this meeting only.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillors Jackie Lewis and Llio Angharad Owen both declared a personal interest only with regard to item 3 on the agenda.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 11 March 2025 were presented and were confirmed as correct. Progress against the actions agreed at the meeting was outlined and was noted.

3 CARE INSPECTORATE WALES: ADULT SERVICES IMPROVEMENT CHECK LETTER AND ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT

The report of the Head of Adult Services setting out the progress made in the last six months against all the improvement areas highlighted by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) following its inspection of the Social Services Department in 2022 and subsequent improvement check review in June 2024 was presented for the committee's consideration and scrutiny.

Councillor Alun Roberts, Portfolio Member for Adult Services, Equality and Community Safety presented the report and he summarised the background saying that the Social Services covering both Children and Families and Adult Services were inspected by CIW in October 2022 as part of its routine Performance Evaluation Inspection. The inspection highlighted areas of strength, good practice and service development with no areas of significant risks or safeguarding matters identified. An improvement check visit conducted by CIW in June 2024 assessed progress on the previously identified areas for improvement and the key findings and evidence are summarised in the report. A Development Plan was created to monitor improvements and the plan and accompanying report were presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in October 2024. The committee requested a further update in six months and this report fulfils that request and includes at Appendix 1 an updated service development plan detailing the progress made in that period against all the improvement areas highlighted by CIW.

The Head of Adult Services confirmed that reports and information had been consistently shared with CIW throughout the process to the Inspectorate's satisfaction. A final meeting is scheduled for May to conclude the process.

In acknowledging the positive progress and improvement in the Social Services highlighted in the update report, the committee raised a number of matters in the ensuing discussion to which the Portfolio Member for Adult Services, Equality and Community Safety and the Head of Adult Services responded as follows –

- Questions were asked about the training provided for domiciliary care staff with assurances sought that all staff undergo a comprehensive training programme to equip them to meet clients' needs thereby ensuring a positive client experience. Further enquiries were made about the oversight and monitoring of arrangements and service provision.

The committee was informed that CIW has stringent requirements for staff regulation and has high expectations regarding staff training. Any concerns in this area should be promptly brought to the service's attention. The Head of Adult Services confirmed that the service actively monitors and reviews the quality of domiciliary care provision which is also subject to external regulation and inspection by CIW.

- Enquiries were made about waiting lists and whether individuals continue to face delays in receiving care and support.

The committee was advised that waiting lists across all areas have decreased since the inspection. However, challenges in delivering care remain particularly in relation to staff recruitment, although the staffing position has now stabilised. It was noted that the situation can change depending on factors such as demand, workforce availability, the specific needs of individuals and seasonal variations.

- Reference was made to advocacy provision and questions were asked about how advocacy services are offered. A further query was raised on whether an average recording percentage of 65% justifies a Green rating.

The committee was advised that the option of advocacy is introduced during the client's initial contact and is repeated in subsequent interactions or when care packages are reviewed. This ensures that any changes in the client's circumstances, needs or preferences are considered. Offers of advocacy are documented and records are maintained to monitor access and take-up. While achieving 100% advocacy take-up is challenging due to changing circumstances, a 65% rate is considered a significant achievement. Nonetheless, the service is committed to seeking further improvement in this area.

- It was noted that the evidence of people's voice and choice in assessment and care and support plans is inconsistent. Questions were asked about the arrangements in place to strengthen the voice of service users.

The committee was advised that social workers have received practice guidance on recording service users' voices during assessments and forms have been amended to better capture their perspectives. The importance of engaging service users in discussions about their care via hubs and forums is recognised to ensure their voices are heard. The Portfolio Member for Adult Services, Equality and Community Safety highlighted that to the end of March last year there were 110 positive comments on services received with 19 complaints none of which required formal investigation by an independent investigator.

- It was noted that Social Services digital case recording will be migrating to a new system and assurance was sought that the introduction of the new system will not result in loss of records or evidence including by service users, and that arrangements are also in place to meet the training needs of system users. Questions were also raised about the 631 safeguarding reports received by Adult Services with a request for greater clarity regarding the outcome of the 236 resulting safeguarding enquiries to provide a fuller picture of safeguarding practice.

The committee was advised that preparation for the national level transfer to a new digital system, supported by the WLGA is underway. Previous migration to the WCCIS system was completed successfully without data loss and assurance was provided that the new system's implementation will also safeguard information. Social Care staff have been involved in planning and adapting applications to meet local needs and all staff will receive support to become proficient in the system. The new system is also designed to enable real time service user feedback which can be used to improve services. The new system is expected to go live in 12 to 18 months and an oversight board is monitoring its implementation. In response to further questions about ensuring service user feedback is recorded and evidenced, the committee was informed that feedback mechanisms include formal processes such as complaints and compliments and informal avenues such as thank you cards or verbal expressions of gratitude. The CIW also gathers user opinions as part of inspections with the Inspectorate having noted the high user response in its review of Anglesey's Adult Services. The Director of Social Services further clarified that there is ongoing engagement with service users throughout the care process starting with the "What Matters" conversation to identify individual needs and wishes.

The Chief Executive advised that the system transition is a significant change and has been identified as both a risk and an opportunity for Social Services to evaluate current practices, identify improvements and enhance efficiency over the next twelve months.

The Head of Adult Services updated members on safeguarding, reporting that in February this year there were 22 enquiries of which 19 required action. The service keeps comprehensive records on safeguarding including the number of cases requiring a safeguarding plan and any instances leading to a criminal investigation. Due to the sensitive nature of this information, the service is limited in what it can disclose; however, the committee can be presented with percentage based data.

- The committee enquired about the steps taken to ensure that reviews of care and support plans are undertaken in a timely manner.

The committee was advised that limitations in social worker capacity and heavy workloads may impact the ability to conduct reviews, with new or urgent cases taking precedence over long-term, stable cases. Nonetheless, stable cases are regularly monitored though the services provided and a review would be initiated if their circumstances were to change.

- Reference was made to winter pressures and questions were asked about the social services' approach to winter pressures and the lessons learnt from past experience.

The committee was advised of the importance of collaborating with partners to address winter pressures and the value of taking a preventative approach to enhance health and wellbeing was highlighted. The service regularly reflects on its management of winter pressures to identify lessons and improve future responses. Greater funding certainty was highlighted as a crucial factor that could significantly strengthen planning efforts for winter challenges. Responding to further questions about the adequacy of the current Adult Services budget, the Portfolio Member for Adult Services recognised the Authority's recent investment in adult services which he appreciated. However, he expressed that this investment remains insufficient to address all the challenges the service faces. He emphasised that improved multi-year budgets would allow the service to plan more confidently for the future.

In response to additional questions about unpaid carers the Portfolio Member for Adult Services emphasised that this is a topic of national interest and ongoing discussion. He confirmed meeting with unpaid carers on several occasions including at the Glanhwfa Centre for dementia sufferers and at community hubs which he had found informative. He commended unpaid carers for their invaluable efforts and highlighted the Authority's commitment to supporting their needs to promote their wellbeing.

Having reviewed and scrutinised the progress made in implementing the post inspection work programme and taking note of the assurances provided by the officers and the Portfolio Member, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee resolved to formally accept the update report.

4 NORTH WALES REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN

The report of the Head of Highways, Waste and Property incorporating the Isle of Anglesey's proposed consultation response to the North Wales Regional Transport Plan was presented for the committee's consideration and scrutiny.

Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property presented the report setting out the Council's proposed response to the consultation held by the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) on the draft North Wales Regional Transport Plan (RTP). The RTP establishes the priorities and interventions within the various parts of the transport system and sets the direction of travel for the next five years. The North Wales RTP will be managed and governed by the CJC which has a statutory duty to create both a Strategic Development Plan and a Regional Transport Plan. The CJC has established a Strategic Transport Planning Sub-Committee to carry out its statutory functions. The sub-committee has met and has conducted work to draft the RTP in accordance with Welsh Government guidelines. Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas urged

everyone to participate in the public consultation on the RTP before the closing date of 14 April 2025 highlighting that approximately 1,400 people had already taken part with over 500 having visited the virtual community hall. Additionally, two call-in sessions have been conducted in Holyhead and Llangefni as part of the consultation process.

The Head of Highways, Waste and Property explained that the RTP is a high level strategic document outlining the vision for the region. The Council's proposed response to the RTP aims to balance the region's strategic priorities with the unique needs of Anglesey as a rural area whose needs differ significantly from other parts of the region. The draft response will also incorporate the views of elected members, town and community councils, service users and the general public. As the RTP is expected to align with the Welsh Government's Llwybr Newydd – The Wales Transport Strategy 2021 (WTS), the Council must ensure that its aspirations are achievable within the parameters of Welsh Government policy. However the North Wales Transport Commission's review and a review of the resilience of the Menai crossings led by Lord Burns have provided a robust starting point. Ultimately, the success of the RTP depends on the availability of the resources and capacity to execute the Delivery Plan over the next five years. Therefore it is crucial that the Plan does not overly raise expectations.

In the subsequent discussion on the proposed response to the Regional Transport Plan, the following matters were raised by the committee –

- Given the strategic importance of Holyhead Port in serving Wales, the wider UK and internationally to connect Ireland with mainland Europe, questions were asked about the timeline for fully reopening the port after it was damaged during Storm Daragh.

The committee was advised that subject to confirmation by Stena, the second damaged berth is expected to reopen by summer 2025. A task group which includes the Council Leader has been formed by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales to examine the Port's importance. The Head of Highways, Waste and Property noted that while railways and highways are excluded from the RTP, the Council's draft response has taken advantage of the public consultation to highlight resilience concerns with the Menai crossings, the quality of the road network to Holyhead Port and lack of facilities for HGV drivers due to their significance to the Island.

- The extent to which the public consultation process will influence the final version of the Regional Transport Plan and whether the council has any influence over the final version.

The committee was advised that the consultation responses will be collated and analysed by Arup consultancy group who will be implementing a You said, We did feedback approach. The consultation outcome will be reported to the Strategic Transport Planning Sub-Committee in June and to the CJC in July, 2025.

- Enquiries were made about the relationship between the proposed Regional Transport Plan and the Wales Bus Services Bill and franchising proposals.

The committee was informed about the Bus Services (Wales) Bill introduced by Welsh Government which reforms bus service operations in Wales. The bill proposes moving services from commercial company control to public oversight using a regional franchising model across four regions – North Wales, Mid Wales, Southwest Wales and Southeast Wales with the changes beginning in Southwest Wales in 2027 and North Wales in 2028. While aligning with the Regional Transport Plan vision, the success of the bill depends on adequate funding particularly to improve connectivity in rural areas where services are limited. In response to questions about resourcing, the Head of Highways, Waste and Property stressed the importance of giving due consideration to education transport, third sector funding, grants and community transport alongside main bus services when funding is allocated. Further integration of these aspects within future arrangements will be key to creating a unified transport system. Responding to questions regarding the extent to which the RTP will create a seamless service, the Head of Service

further explained that under franchising, local authorities will manage routes, timetables and fares leading to better co-ordination potentially enabling passengers to use a single ticket for their entire journey across different transport modes.

The Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property pointed out that the Council's proposed response to the RTP highlights the lack of focus on interconnectivity which is crucial for developing an integrated transport system to address rural community needs. Instead the plan appears to concentrate on each of the transport modes in isolation.

- Concerns were raised that the draft RTP may not sufficiently address the needs of individuals living in rural communities who depend on public transport for work and business purposes. Questions were also asked regarding the availability and development of community transport schemes.

The committee was informed that the Council's proposed response raises concerns about the extent to which the RTP addresses the unique challenges faced by rural communities whose needs differ significantly from those of towns and cities. It emphasises the necessity of focusing more on solutions tailored to overcome these challenges. The Council has trialled community transport initiatives in parts of the Island and is aware that other councils have explored different schemes. The Council plans to request that Transport for Wales and the Strategic Transport Planning Sub-Committee conduct studies to identify the most suitable model for rural areas to ensure that an urban solution is not applied to a rural problem.

- The committee questioned whether the Council's proposed response adequately emphasises the need for sufficient funding, noting that funding limitations are likely to hinder what the Council can achieve.

The committee was advised that funding concerns were addressed in the original document to which the Council contributed, raising the points highlighted. Recent cabinet changes in the Welsh Government have indicated a shift in mindset raising hopes that future regional funding will offer greater flexibility for prioritising local needs. This would enable the Council to place a stronger focus on addressing the requirements of rural communities and to implementing a plan tailored specifically to meet those needs.

- Questions were asked whether the needs of individuals with disabilities have been sufficiently considered.

The committee was advised that a specific needs assessment is conducted for each individual scheme implemented. In its proposed response, the Council has raised a query whether the Integrated Wellbeing Appraisal will be applied to the overall programme or to individual projects.

- The committee enquired whether the slow recovery of bus passenger numbers across Wales since the pandemic has been taken into account. Members also raised questions regarding the extent of the reduction in usage, specifically on Anglesey.

The committee was advised that obtaining accurate data on usage is challenging, as it is held by commercial operators. Generally, the recovery of bus passenger numbers has been slower in rural areas. On the Island, frequent timetable changes and a reduction in service frequency by operators have further complicated data collection. While the data was published yesterday incorporating it into the response to the RTP is difficult. The Head of Highways, Waste and Property suggested that addressing this matter in the response to the Bus Services Bill, which is open to consultation until May 2025, might be more appropriate. This would allow time to scrutinise the data, using it to support the principle of franchising while emphasising the importance of delivering solutions that are realistic and do not raise expectations unnecessarily.

- Questions were asked about plans to improve the resilience of the Menai crossings.

The committee was advised that the letters sent to the Welsh Government and North Wales Police, attached to the proposed RTP response, highlight the extensive impacts that any disruption to either of the Menai crossings can have on the island. The Council maintains that the core issue is lack of resilience rather than capacity. Current studies are exploring potential solutions such as installing wind deflectors which could raise the threshold at which the bridges are closed due to wind. However, the effects such measures might have also have to be discussed with CADW and the work remains ongoing. The Council has expressed concerns about Welsh Government's plans should such measures prove ineffective or unfeasible questioning whether the ultimate solution is the construction of a third crossing.

Following a comprehensive discussion, the committee concluded that the proposed consultation response to the Regional Transport Plan is both robust and realistic, and that it addresses the key issues relevant to Anglesey. Members expressed their gratitude to the Officers for their efforts in preparing the report. An additional request was made for members to receive an annual update on the progress and status of transport/ travel improvement schemes and works in their respective areas.

It was resolved that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee endorses the Isle of Anglesey County Council's proposed consultation response to the North Wales Regional Transport Plan as set out in Appendix A to the report presented. *(Councillor R. Llewelyn Jones abstained from voting)*

Additional action agreed – Members to receive an annual update on the progress and status of transport/travel improvement schemes and works in their respective areas.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Scrutiny Manager incorporating the Committee's proposed Forward Work Programme for 2025/26 was presented for consideration.

Responding to suggestions made by Councillor R. Llewelyn Jones regarding topics for inclusion in the committee's forward work programme, the Scrutiny Manager confirmed that she would submit the suggestions to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs forum for review and consideration.

It was resolved to agree the current version of the Forward Work Programme for 2025/26.

**Councillor Sonia Williams
Chair**