

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BRECKNOCKSHIRE COMMITTEE  
HELD AT NEUADD BRYCHEINIOG,  
BRECON ON WEDNESDAY 18<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2015**

**Present:** County Councillor H. Williams – Vice-Chair, in the Chair

County Councillor P.J. Ashton, S. Davies, M.J. Dorrance, L. Fitzpatrick, R.M. Harris, J.C. Holmes, G.G. Hopkins, S. McNicholas, E.T. Morgan, J.G. Morris, D.R. Price, G.W. Ratcliffe, K.S. Silk, T. Thomas, D.G. Thomas, T.J. Van-Rees and A. York.

**In attendance:**

Councillor W.B. Thomas – Leader

Councillor E.A. Jones - Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Education

Jeremy Patterson – Chief Executive, Julie Lewis - Tourism Officer, Mark Evans - Head of Business Services, Nicola Williams - Schools Cashless Systems Project Manager and Shane Thomas – Clerk.

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>	<b>BS12-2015</b>
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Apologies for absence were accepted from David Powell - Strategic Director, S.C. Davies, D.W. Meredith, W.D. Powell, D.A. Thomas and S.L. Williams.

<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 28<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2015</b>	<b>BS13-2015</b>
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The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the committee held on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2015 subject to including Councillor K.S. Silk and L. Fitzpatrick within the list of apologies. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Local Growth Zone (Welsh Government Initiative)** – members supported the proposal to receive an update in relation to the initiative, with a particular focus on schemes for Brecknockshire, to the next meeting when it would be more appropriate to report on activities
- b. **Glen View (Respite Care)** – members welcomed clarification in terms of the ownership resting with the Family Housing Association and requested clarification in terms of whether there were any restrictions imposed on use of the site
- c. **Brecon Market Hall** – shortly before the meeting members had been e-mailed a report which provided detail in relation to the recovery of costs and operation of tenancy agreements. Members would welcome particular detail in relation to the charges per pitch, arrangements for marketing when space becomes available and the allocation and review process for pitches/areas within the hall. While discussing matters a member referred to a prior commitment from a previous Portfolio Holder which had yet to be actioned in terms of undertaking some refurbishment works which included signage. The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning agreed to arrange for relevant members to meet with the responsible portfolio holder

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	<b>BS14-2015</b>
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There were no declarations of interest made in relation to items on the agenda.

<b>4.</b>	<b>CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>	<b>BS15-2015</b>
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The Chairman informed members that agenda items would be taken out of order and that item 7 'Brecknock Young Farmers' had been deferred to allow for more time for discussion with Cabinet members. The YFC matter would be an item for a future meeting.

<b>5.</b>	<b>BRECKNOCKSHIRE RESERVES</b>	<b>BS16-2015</b>
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The Chief Executive reminded members that the former Brecknock Borough Council (which had operated up until 1996) had held a reserve fund and that a decision had been taken by the shire when Powys County Council came into being in 1996 to identify £200k from that fund to contribute to the costs of constructing a community hall in Hay-on-Wye. Subsequently and due to a variety of reasons the community facility had not been created, however, the funding had been held by the Authority. There had been a recent approach from Hay-on-Wye Town Council to seek to secure an interest-free loan to be repayable over seven years (£70k) from the reserve to support delivering on community led schemes. While members supported the application it was noted that the decision whether to provide the funding and the terms to be agreed would rest with the Cabinet. Particular reference was made to:

- a. **Access to the Reserve Fund (Brecknockshire)** – it was felt by members that all communities should have access to apply to the fund to support relevant community schemes
- b. **Reserve Fund** – should Cabinet agree to the loan it was felt by members that the remaining balance should be set aside as a standalone fund to support relevant Brecknockshire community schemes. It was also felt that it would be important to identify any other areas where funding might have been set aside for Brecknockshire and to pool the funds under one budget heading. Members were advised that it was very unlikely that there were other 'Brecknockshire' budgets remaining
- c. **Reserve Fund (Previous Applications)** – it was noted that some communities had benefited from funding provided via. the reserve some years ago and that funding had been provided as grant not to be paid back
- d. **Business Case** – it was felt that the Hay Town Council application should be supported by a robust business case. The Chief Executive reported that there had been significant work undertaken by the Town Council to evidence need etc. which would be reviewed by Cabinet when considering the issue. It would be for Cabinet to be satisfied that there was a sound business case. The Shire had been invited to provide input in terms of the principle of entering into the agreement. Members were reminded that there had been a proven track record in terms of Hay-on-Wye Town Council in that there were a number of transfer schemes which had worked well i.e. the running of previously owned Council buildings which were operating as business units

- e. **Community Delivery Schemes** – in general terms it was felt that it would be positive to provide funding which communities could access (via. an agreed process and with relevant business cases) which would provide funding to support community delivery schemes. It was suggested to look to introduce a relevant countywide policy

Members **RESOLVED** to recommend that:

- a) **Hay-on-Wye Town Council** - Cabinet enter into an agreement with Hay-on-Wye Town Council to provide an interest free loan of £70k over a period of 7 years, to be re-paid at a rate of £10k per annum, to support community delivery schemes subject to giving due regard to relevant financial and business case analysis
- b) **Reserve Fund** – that use of the fund be reviewed (including any other relevant funds specific to Brecknockshire) with a view to creating a fund which all communities could access upon application and the submission of relevant business cases etc. to apply for interest-free loans to support community delivery schemes. The review should include consideration of operating a ceiling

Where appropriate schemes could come to the shire for discussion and update. A member requested that the shire be kept advised of any review of the fund. Should Cabinet agree to operating area community delivery budgets it would be helpful for periodic shire reviews.

<b>6.</b>	<b>BLAUBEUREN EXCHANGE</b>	<b>B17-2015</b>
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Members welcomed Julie Lewis, Tourism Officer to the meeting to provide an update in relation to arrangements for the 2015 exchange visit. Members were reminded that visits are rotated in that one year representatives from Blaubeuren visit Brecknockshire and vice versa the next, this year being the Brecknockshire visit to attend a kinderfest. Having discussed matters it was agreed that invites to visit Blaubeuren should be extended to the Chairman and Vice Chairman in the first instance. This year's visit would be from 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> July.

Members re-iterated their thanks to Julie for supporting arrangements for exchange visits.

<b>7.</b>	<b>BRECKNOCKSHIRE YOUNG FARMERS</b>	<b>B18-2015</b>
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This item of business was removed from the agenda. There would be an update to a future meeting.

<b>8.</b>	<b>REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS</b>	<b>B19-2015</b>
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- 8.1 Leader – Councillor Barry Thomas
- 8.3 Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Education – Councillor Arwel Jones

Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, Cabinet Portfolio Holders. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Leisure Service Review** – officers are in the process of evaluating the tenders received for managing/operating the leisure estate
- b. **Community Delivery** – Cabinet continues to support the community delivery approach for delivering services
- c. **William's Report** – members were urged to attend Council events to be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> March where closer working with the health board would be discussed
- d. **Secondary School Reorganisation Programme (Price Waterhouse Cooper Consultant Review)** – the portfolio holder reminded members that Price Waterhouse Coopers Consultants had conducted a review of secondary and sixth form provision and had identified the below priorities for immediate implementation:
  - **Priority 1 - Beacons Learning Campus (Brecon High School/Gwernyfed High School)** – to close both Brecon and Gwernyfed High Schools and create an area learning campus
  - **Priority 2 – Secondary Education in Mid Wales** – to operate a single 11-16 year old bilingual learning campus on one site at either Llandrindod or Builth Wells
  - **Priority 3 – Sixth Form Provision at Ysgol Maesydderwen** – to cease to provide sixth form provision from the site
  - **Secondary Education in North Powys** – to move forward with reviewing the sector and for Cabinet to consider its position in September 2015
- e. **Primary School Review** – members were reminded that officers continue to drive the primary school review, recent activity being to review the Welshpool Town Estate (five primary schools) which would include Leighton
- f. **Brecon Campus (Strategic Outline Case)** – the Welsh Government had not accepted the Authority's Strategic Outline Case for the Brecon Campus mainly because it had not been transformational enough in terms of partnerships with further education providers to deliver post 16 provision. The Welsh Government had recent called the Chief Executive to a meeting to discuss the need to engage in the spirit of transformational planning
- g. **Beacons Learning Campus (Priority 1)** – while accepting the need to act a member expressed concern regard being able to deliver a Beacons Learning Campus by 2017 in terms of the timescale being overly ambitious given the need to follow due processes in respect of planning, design, procurement, build etc. The Chief Executive reported that it was the intention to continue to operate high school sites at Brecon and Gwernyfed for the 2017/18 academic year with a new build coming into operation in 2018/19. A member stressed the importance of good governorship and the importance of the abilities of staff to deliver successful secondary and post 16 learning
- h. **Drivers for Change** – whilst accepting that other factors play a significant part in considerations (budget, surplus places, recruitment and retention of staff, build conditions etc.) the key issue would be the need to provide an estate which would

support the delivery of the best learning for young people of all abilities (academic and vocational studies). In general terms the current estate had been found failing in this respect. Members were reminded that in recent years three high schools had been found failing by the Estyn and in need of significant improvement

- i. **Price Waterhouse Coopers** – a member suggested reviewing using Price Waterhouse Coopers because of recent media reports confirming that the company had encouraged tax avoidance. It was noted that avoidance could be questioned but was not illegal
- j. **North Powys** – particular issues of concern had been raised locally by communities and members regarding the review undertaken by PWC having focused on the mid and south of Powys and there having been no priority proposals for the north of the county. It was noted that the south had also been the first area to have been through primary school modernisation which had removed six primary school sites from the Maesydderwen area. The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder reminded members that the review had included a requirement to begin to review the north estate and that there would be a report to Cabinet in September setting out the process that would be followed. It is accepted that reviews to date had focused on the south of Powys, however, the timetable for review had been driven by officers
- k. **Capital Programme** – a member reported that numbers on roll at Crickowell High School had increased to a point where the site had reached its capacity. It was suggested that the Capital Programme should recognise where additional space would be needed for learning and allow for flexibility to enable funding to be used for unforeseen works
- l. **One School (Two Sites)** – a member referred to the decision taken in mid Powys to operate one secondary school from two sites and felt that the Authority should work to one model
- m. **6<sup>th</sup> Form Provision** – the Authority provides for sixth form provision, however, travel between sites had been a significant issue raised by learners as was limited study choice
- n. **Gwernyfed High School** – performance and achievement had been recognised as very positive in comparison to other Powys high schools. Having been invited at the shire meeting to a meeting of the governing body later in the afternoon the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would be unable to attend but would attend a future meeting with sufficient notice
- o. **Interim Arrangements** – members noted that during periods of review and uncertainty there were often significant local impacts on communities
- p. **Regeneration** – the regeneration impact when reviewing the estate and considering removing schools should be recognised
- q. **Council Seminar** – the Portfolio Holder agreed that it would be important to keep members briefed on plans to reorganise the Powys secondary and post 16 sectors and would welcome a Council seminar in September once Cabinet had considered its position in relation to all areas
- r. **Welsh Medium Provision** – there are concerns that the proposals could remove secondary school Welsh Medium provision from Brecknockshire
- s. **Cabinet 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015** – Cabinet would consider progressing with the priorities for immediate implementation at Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> March. Members wanting to

address Cabinet at the meeting would need to provide advance notice to the Leader/Cabinet Manger

In general terms members accepted the need to move forward with modernising the Powys learning estate.

<b>9.</b>	<b>REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES</b>	<b>B20-2015</b>
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Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and put questions to, member serving on outside bodies. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Housing Strategy (Affordable Housing – Brecon Beacons National Park) –** a member reported that the Brecon Beacons National Park had recently held a meeting to discuss the provision of affordable housing with housing providers without having invited the Council (the accountable housing authority). The Head of Housing and Commissioning had expressed concern
- b. **Brecon Cultural Hub –** members were pleased to learn that the Brecon Beacons National Park had approved planning for the hub, the development would be subject to a view from CADW

<b>10.</b>	<b>CASHLESS SYSTEMS FOR SCHOOLS</b>	<b>BS21-2015</b>
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Members welcomed Mark Evans, Head of Business Services and Nicola Williams, Schools Cashless Systems Project Manager to the meeting to provide an update in relation to plans to introduce cashless payment systems into schools. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Project –** introducing a cashless payment system for schools had been an idea for some time and there could be significant benefits including removing potential risks i.e. potential for fraud. Most Welsh authorities operate cashless payment systems
- b. **Payments –** schemes had proven very successful in other areas where cashless arrangements are in place for paying for school trips, school uniforms, after school clubs, school dinners etc.
- c. **Free School Meals –** there are particular issues with regard to parents accepting their entitlement to free school meals and fears of stigma. It's important to recognise the true Powys position and for the Welsh Government to be made aware especially given that FSM is an indicator of poverty and linked to funding
- d. **Pilot –** a pilot had operated successfully at Gwernyfed High School some years ago
- e. **Roll Out –** officers hope to introduce cashless systems by July 2017
- f. **School Governors –** members who serve as school governors were asked to promote the project with their governing bodies and support the scheme locally

Members agreed to meeting, as a rule, on the third Monday of the month on a quarterly cycle for the remainder of the year. Meetings would, therefore, be held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September and Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December. The May AGM would remain outside of the quarterly cycle.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR H. WILLIAMS  
VICE-CHAIR  
IN THE CHAIR**