

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BRECKNOCKSHIRE COMMITTEE
HELD AT NEUADD BRYCHEINIOG,
BRECON ON MONDAY 22ND JUNE 2015**

Present: County Councillor H. Williams – Chairman

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

In attendance:

Councillor W.J. Jones – Deputy Leader/Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Finance
Councillor J.P. Powell – Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Environment and Sustainability

Three representatives from Brecknockshire YFC, Tony Caine - Road Safety and Traffic Systems Manager, Derek Price - Principal Engineer and Shane Thomas – Clerk.

1.	APOLOGIES	BS26-2015
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Apologies for absence were accepted from County Councillors M.J.B. Davies, L. Fitzpatrick, J.C. Holmes, G.G. Hopkins and W.D. Powell.

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS – 18TH MARCH AND 13TH MAY 2015	BS27-2015
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The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meetings of the committee held on Wednesday 18th March and Wednesday 13th May 2015 as correct records subject to amending the reference in the minutes of the 18th March meeting re: minute 8 d. Priority 3 to read that sixth form provision at Ysgol Maesydderwen would be reviewed (not ceased). During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Brecknockshire Reserve Fund (Hay-on-Wye)** – it was confirmed that the previous Brecknock Borough Council had identified £200k as a reserve to fund a community facility at Hay-on-Wye, however, the fund had yet to be used and had been held in reserve. Cabinet had agreed to allow Hay-on-Wye Town Council to use £70k of the funding, to be paid back over a set period (interest free) to support community development schemes
- b. **Brecon Strategic Outline Case** – the Brecon SOC had recently received Ministerial approval
- c. **Cashless Systems for Schools** – the initiative would be rolled out in due course. Schools should be cashless by July 2017

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	BS28-2015
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There were no declarations of interest made in relation to items on the agenda. Councillor S. Davies informed members that he had been advised to declare an interest

in relation to any discussions regarding dementia. At item 8.1 on the agenda the Dementia Champion had provided an activity update which had been produced before the recent Council seminar on dementia.

4.	CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	BS29-2015
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The Chairman reported having recently attended Civic Services for the Mayor of Brecon and the Chairman of Council.

5.	BRECKNOCKSHIRE YFC	BS30-2015
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Members received an update in relation to activities being undertaken by Brecknockshire YFC. During discussion particular reference as made to:

- a. **Membership** – membership in the County had increased in comparison to last year by 14%, there are currently in the region of 500 10-26 year old YFC members. Membership from the non-farming community has increased significantly and allows for a good mix of backgrounds within organisation. There are particular challenges in terms of members leaving at 18 for university and further studies
- b. **Activities** – the movement helps build confidence and shape young people. Activities undertaken include public speaking, sports, entertainment and community activities
- c. **Welsh Language** – there had been a significant increase in demand for the Welsh language and provision would be developed accordingly
- d. **Income** – the movement had recognised the financial position and restraints on funding and had reduced catering costs by training its members to cater for events. The club had also provided catering to outside organisations to generate income
- e. **Financial Support** – the Authority provides funding to support two positions (an admin position and an organiser position). Without this support activities would be very limited
- f. **Office Accommodation** – as part of a sponsorship arrangement Hay and Brecon Farmers had provided office space for use by the YFC
- g. **Connections with Europe** – there are strong connections on a national level between the YFC federation and Europe via. the Rural Affairs Committee

Members thanked representatives from the YFC for their update.

6.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS	B31-2015
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Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, Cabinet Portfolio Holders. During discussion particular reference was made to:

6.1 Councillor Wynne Jones – Deputy Leader/Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Finance

- a. **William's Report** – the Welsh Government had recently agreed to consult in relation to moving from a 22 Authority arrangement to operating 8 or 9

- local authority areas. The suggestion for Powys would be for there to be no change to the geography but to look to work more collaboratively between the Council and health board to deliver services via. sharing resource and through joint ventures/initiatives. Many of the proposals to change governance arrangements as contained in the William's report would not be pursued i.e. limiting the number of elected members per authority area, reorganising town and community councils
- b. **National Budget Position** – if each of the 22 authority areas reduced its budget by 5% per annum per year until 2020 the shortfall against the national budget would still be £800 million
 - c. **National Outcome Agreements** – the Welsh Government provides targeted funding to meet areas of need via. Outcome Agreements. There would be a move away from this kind of arrangement in future and funding would be included in the Rate Support Grant as opposed to linked to areas
 - d. **Business Rate Relief (Retail)** – the Authority had been allocated £848k by the Welsh Government to support a business rate relief scheme for qualifying retail businesses. There would be an application process. It would be important to maximise the drawdown. Qualifying Powys businesses could access up to £1,500 of relief from the scheme. In 2014/15 the ceiling had been set at £1k and 568 businesses had benefited. There would be appropriate communication with the business community. A member urged publicising the scheme in the South Wales Evening Post to ensure good coverage in the south of the county
 - e. **Income and Awards (Benefit Payments)** – a pilot face-to-face approach for providing the income and awards service i.e. benefit payments would be rolled out across other areas of Powys. The Radnorshire pilot had been very warmly welcomed by staff and those in receipt of benefit as a better way to operate. It would be timely to review other matters including the notices and letters sent regarding benefit payments. It was noted that use of automated letters generated by systems would be considered as part of the reviewed approach
 - f. **Budget Outturn Statement 2014/15** – the surplus would be reported as £282k, however, Cabinet had agreed to use an additional £2 million surplus to create a budget management reserve. The Portfolio Holder felt that an underspend of £282k against a budget of £246 million was within a reasonable level
 - g. **Reserves** – a member expressed concern regarding use of the reserve to meet shortfalls in unmet savings
 - h. **Windfarm Inquiry** – the reserve includes identified funding to meet windfarm inquiry costs. The fund would not be accessed for other purposes. There would be due scrutiny of the inquiry at an appropriate time
 - i. **2014/15 Savings** – 80% of planned savings had been achieved in year, 84% of planned savings had been achieved in 2013/14. Base budgets would be adjusted by their 2014/15 unmet savings target (£3.5 million across all Council services). There would be an exercise to 'unpick' where targets had not been achieved.

- j. **Budget Seminar** – a member requested a budget seminar to update on positions. In general terms members support moving forward at pace with reducing spends
- k. **Removed Positions** – savings made from reducing the number of posts in the organisation would be accounted for accordingly. It is recognised that reducing positions could create pressures and that capacity could be an issue. Positions would continue to be monitored
- l. **Domiciliary Care** – PWC would be supporting the Authority in terms of its review of domiciliary care. £850k had been identified to bring the service back in-house. The Authority would learn from the experience and feed the learning into its commissioning approach. There would be due scrutiny
- m. **School Budget Information** – most members are school governors. The accuracy of budget information provided by the Authority was called into question particularly as decisions are taken on budget forecasts which often prove to be inaccurate
- n. **Car Park Revenue** – Cabinet had agreed to adopt a consistent approach for charging for car parking (allowing for appropriate flexibility). In Brecon the arrangement with Theatr Brycheiniog is that the Council let the car park under lease to the Theatr so the Authority has little or no control over the level of charging, however, officers attempt to influence the operators to fall in-line with county rates
- o. **3 Year Budget** – Cabinet would look to adopt a three year budget planning approach. Services would welcome the approach to allow for better planning. During the three year cycle 2015/16 to 2017/18 £29 million of savings would be required, to date £21.657m over the period had been identified
- p. **Austerity Measures** – having been elected to UK Central Government the Conservative Party would reduce the Welsh Government budget by a further £50 million in order to meet its austerity manifesto commitment. The cut would deliver £50 million less (£43 million revenue, £7 million capital). Cabinet had begun initial work to review the budget in light of the cut and had based initial projects on year-on-year further reductions of 5%, assuming annual Council Tax rises of 3.75 per annum (the Portfolio Holder stressed that the level of Council Tax would be set by Council, 3.75% had been used for the budgeting exercise)
- q. **Adult Social Care** – in future years there would be no increase to the adult social care budget, the service would be required to deliver within budget

6.2 Councillor John Powell – Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Environment and Sustainability

- a. **Waste and Recycling (Target)** – with the support of officers, operatives and communities the Authority had achieved its 2014/15 recycling target of 52%. The 2015/16 target would be set at 58%. For every percentage increase not met the Welsh Government could impose a fine, however, the Welsh Government would favour working with authorities to resolve issues than imposing cuts

- b. **Waste and Recycling (Kerbside Collections)** – by and large kerbside roll out is complete, there are some issues in rural areas that need to be addressed. Three weekly residual collections would begin with effect from October. There are issues with regard to the disposal of medical waste in terms of the frequency of collections which are being considered prior to the three weekly cycle roll out. It was felt that media releases to communities should explain why actions are being taken in terms of the need to deliver on the scheme and make savings
- c. **Council Seminar** – members would welcome a Waste Management seminar or similar event
- d. **Trade Waste** – the Authority imposes charges for removing trade waste
- e. **Waste Awareness Team** – the team promotes and publicises schemes and there are local contacts. Where there are local issues i.e. trade waste and kerbside etc. it would be a good idea to link with the local officer
- f. **CO² Emissions** - Powys is rated as a 'high flyer' in terms of reducing its CO² emissions and is fourth in terms of its performance in the UK. During 2014/15 a further 2% reduction was achieved
- g. **Green Dragon Audit** – Powys had recently been re-inspected and retained its five star rating
- h. **Livestock (Local Shows)** – there had been media attention because a show had been cancelled due to the organisers not having complied with guidance in relation to a site having been free from livestock for a given period. The requirement had been introduced five years ago to manage risk. The Authority had advised the organisers and engaged in advance but there had been a reluctance to comply. Advice had been sent to all known show organisers. Although the advice relates to a Code of Conduct and not legislation insurers would be very unlikely to insure activities which don't comply
- i. **Civic Amenity Sites (Brecon and Ystradgynlais)** – the Portfolio Holder would clarify the position with regard to the operation of both sites and distribute an update via. e-mail

7.	ROAD SAFETY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT	BS32-2015
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Members welcomed Tony Caine, Road Safety and Traffic Systems Manager to the meeting for this item of business.

7.1 Brecon Parking Review – St. John's Ward

Members **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the proposals for parking restrictions in St. John's ward be approved
- 2) to only progress when proposals for the whole town are identified and approved
- 3) to progress the Traffic Regulation Order for the approved changes within Brecon ahead of changes within other areas of the county

- 4) subject to 3 and 3 above, to initiative the TRO consultation procedure and if no substantive objections are received the proposal for Brecon be implemented

While discussing matters it was felt that a holistic approach to traffic management and parking for Brecon town would deliver a better outcome.

Members welcomed Derek Price, Principal Engineer to the meeting for this item of business.

7.2 Llangors Lake Footway

Members **RESOLVED** that the scheme be removed from the County 'Road Traffic Management Schemes' Capital Programme.

8.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES	BS33-2015
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8.1 Dementia Champion Update

Members welcomed a written update from the dementia champion (Councillor Dawn Bailey) in relation to activities. Members were advised that the update report had pre-dated the recent Council dementia seminar. The dementia champion had committed to keeping members updated on matters.

8.2 Brecon Beacons National Park Liaison Committee

Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Gillian Thomas to a vacant position on the Brecon Beacons National Park Liaison Committee. In the light of Councillor Thomas having held a reserve position it was agreed to appoint to the reserve position at the next meeting.

9.	CORRESPONDENCE	B34-2015
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There were no items of correspondence.

10.	FUTURE MEETINGS	BS35-2015
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Future meetings would be held on 21st September and 21st December 2015. The cycle for 2016 would be determined to fit with meeting quarterly.

**County Councillor H. Williams
Chairman**