

Brecknockshire

Meeting Venue
**Committee Room - Neuadd
Brycheiniog, Brecon, Powys**

Meeting date
Monday, 21 December 2015

Meeting time
9.30 am



County Hall
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5LG

For further information please contact
Shane Thomas
shanet@powys.gov.uk

11th December 2015

AGENDA

1.	APOLOGIES	BS46-2015
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To receive apologies for absence.

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	BS47-2015
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To authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on Monday 21st September 2015 as a correct record.
(Pages 3 - 8)

3.	CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	BS48-2015
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To receive announcements from the Chairman.

4.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	BS49-2015
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To receive declarations of interest from Members in relation to items on the agenda to be discussed.

5.	CORPORATE FRAUD (9.45 - 10.30)	BS50-2015
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To receive an update in relation to activities being undertaken by the Corporate Fraud Team – Yvette Kottaun, Senior Investigator.
(Pages 9 - 12)

6.	SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS (10.30 - 10.45)	BS51-2015
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To receive an update in relation to arrangements for supporting the Syrian Refugee Crisis – Simon Inkson, Head of Housing

7.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS (10.45 - 11.45)	BS52-2015
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To receive reports from, and put questions to, Cabinet Portfolio Holders:

7.1. **Councillor Darren Mayor, Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Property, Buildings and Housing**

7.2. **Councillor Graham Brown - Deputy Leader/Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Commissioning and Procurement/Children's Services**

8.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES	BS53-2015
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To receive reports from, and put questions to, Members serving on outside bodies.

9.	CORRESPONDENCE	BS54-2015
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To receive items of correspondence.

10.	MEETING DATES - 2016	BS55-2015
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To confirm meeting dates for 2016 (Monday 7th March, Monday 20th June, Monday 19th September and Monday 5th December). .

BS47-2015

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BRECKNOCKSHIRE COMMITTEE HELD AT NEUADD BRYCHEINIOG, BRECON ON MONDAY 21st SEPTEMBER 2015

Present: County Councillor H. Williams – Chairman

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

In attendance:

Councillor Phil Pritchard, Cabinet Portfolio Holder: HR and ICT **via video link**

Paul Griffiths –Strategic Director: Place, Sian Powell - Youth and Family Information Co-ordinator, Jo Lancey - Area Traffic Engineer, Derek Price - Principal Engineer and Shane Thomas – Clerk.

1.	APOLOGIES	BS36-2015
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Apologies for absence were accepted from County Councillors S.C. Davies, M.J.B. Davies, R.M. Harris, L. Fitzpatrick, G.G. Hopkins, W.D. Powell, D.R. Price and D.A. Thomas.

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 22nd JUNE 2015	BS37-2015
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The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on Monday 22nd June 2015 as a correct record. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Brecon Amenity Site** – during a period of transfer between providers the site had been closed. Local members expressed concern because they had not been advised or informed. In general terms members would welcome being advised of positions for their awareness and in particular where there would be an impact locally. In terms of the amenity site, a number of members expressed concern with regard to access which was via steep metal plated stairs. The Strategic Director: Place agreed to discuss matters with the relevant head of service
- b. **2014/15 Savings** – a member requested clarification in relation to a reference in the minutes of the previous meeting where the Deputy Header/Portfolio Holder: Finance reported that there would be an exercise to ‘unpick’ where savings had not been achieved. Members were informed that budget matters would be addressed at relevant budget meetings i.e. budget seminars

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	BS38-2015
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There were no declarations of interest made in relation to items on the agenda, however, Councillors Silk and Van-Rees reminded members of their close involvement with the court system as a justice of the peace and practicing solicitor (item 8.3 below).

4.	CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	BS39-2015
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The Chairman reported on having visited Blaubeuren, Germany to take part in the bi-annual exchange visit as part of twinning arrangements between the town and Brecknockshire. Representatives from Blaubeuren would visit Brecknockshire next year.

5.	YOUTH AND FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICE	BS40-2015
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Members welcomed Sian Powell, Youth and Family Information Co-ordinator to the meeting to provide an update in relation to the service. Members were informed that it's a statutory requirement under the 2006 Children's Act for each authority to operate a Youth and Family Information Service and the Welsh Government provide a grant to support the requirement. The Powys team comprises of four members of staff. The service links residents to with relevant support services. Information can be obtained from the office in Llandrindod or via the web (information is also distributed to relevant settings). Links are made with service delivers and partner agencies. It would be important to continue to raise awareness about the service and its functions. A member suggested including a postal address on the flyer distributed to the meeting.

6.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS	B41-2015
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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 Phil Pritchard

- a. **Lync / Skype Messaging/Video Calling** – having joined today's meeting by video link the Portfolio Holder encouraged members to use technology to make best use of time/resource and reduce costs
- b. **Human Resource Workload** – work being undertaken includes 39 disciplinary investigations, 7 grievances, 25 sickness absence matters, 5 performance and capability reviews, 2 child protection issues and a PAVO issue
- c. **Integration with the Health Board** – opportunities to operate a joint HR team would be considered by Management Team on 30th September
- d. **Child Protection Investigations (Schools)** – there are concerns about the time it takes Servoca to undertake school child protection investigations. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that, as Chairman of a school Governing Body, he had decided to opt out and to use an external agency which had turned around a full investigation within three weeks. Members agreed the need for speedy resolutions at such times. HR officers had been advised of the position and would suggest using external agencies as an option when providing advice to school governing bodies
- e. **IT Systems (Control)** – a number of IT system issues had happened over recent years because of a loss of control over the purchase and order of systems. In an attempt to avoid further issues control had recently been re-introduced

- f. **Community Asset Transfers (Legal Support)** – there are particular resource needs from legal to support arrangements for asset transfers/community delivery
- g. **Question to Council (Transfer of Catering and Cleaning Staff to Schools)** – the Portfolio Holder undertook to provide a response to a supplementary question to Council in July regarding whether schools would be provided with extra resources if catering and cleaning staff were managed by them and apologised for there having been no response to date

6.2 Councillor Avril York

- a. **Planning (Wales) Act 2015** – the Act would come into force with effect from 1st October 2015. Requirements include obligations on the planning authority to consider applications within a specified time, if timescales were not adhered to there would be a requirement to pay back fees to applicants
- b. **Agent and Pre Planning Advice** – there are particular issues which would be better addressed by applicants prior to application. The provision of pre-planning advice is an important part of the planning process. Members were informed that the Authority hosts two agent advice sessions per year to advise on issues
- c. **Planning Department** – there are recognised resource needs and process issues. It is hoped that appointments would be made to two high level positions soon. Once at full complement the Professional Lead is confident that the planning department would be able to deliver to need. Members would be advised accordingly
- d. **Planning Committee Determination (Late Submissions)** – it was felt by members that the process of allowing very late submissions to support planning applications should be re-considered. All too often applications are being deferred as a result of the submission of very late supporting information at a significant cost to the Authority
- e. **Local Development Plan** – officers are on-track to meet Welsh Government submission deadlines, there would be a LDP examination towards the end of the year
- f. **Affordable Housing** – allowing for the provision of affordable housing remains important. A member referred to a development in Kerry some years ago where the Planning Committee went against policy and agreed a substantial development with no provision for affordable housing
- g. **Regeneration** – using resource to support business start-up and development is a recognised issue and would continue to be a priority for the Authority. The Minister for Economy, Science and Transport (Edwina Hart) had been positive about the Powys approach
- h. **Growing Mid-Wales** – the Authority had been working with Ceredigion County Council with regard to a Growing Mid-Wales Project
- i. **The Circuit of Wales** – Powys County Council had been very supportive of the proposed Circuit of Wales racetrack development planned for Ebbw Vale. The project would regenerate the valleys and the wider area in the immediate and longer term. It would be important to capture all opportunities for Powys
- j. **Powys Business Awards** – there had been a very high standard of entries. The annual awards ceremony would be held on Friday 25th September

- k. **Planning Department (Contacts)** – there had been occasions when members had not be able to speak with planning officers. It would be important for officers to recognise the need to respond to member contacts
- l. **Planning Website** – the website would be under regular review. Making all consultation response information available via the web as opposed to making it available at the offices of the Council requires significant resource
- m. **Planning Officers (Shire Based)** – members would urge that the department be structured in such a way to allow access to planning officers at each shire region as opposed to them being based in Llandrindod Wells. Members would be advised of structures and areas of responsibility once confirmed
- n. **Enforcement** – capacity to enforce remains an issue both with the planning department and other services that support actions i.e. legal
- o. **Brecon Museum/Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh** – there are options for there to be joint working. It had recently been confirmed that the regimental museum had been successful in securing a longer term lease on its building. The Strategic Director: Place confirmed that Cabinet would look to confirm its position in relation to the budget for the Brecon Museum project in December. There could be options to secure funding from the military covenant to support a joint venture
- p. **Farm Estates (House Stock)** – it was noted that there are different policy commitments operating in each UK region with regard to planning requirements for refurbishments etc.

6.2 Brecon Market Hall

There had been varying commitments made over time in relation to reviewing the operation and management of Brecon Market Hall. To date nothing had moved forward despite repeated attempts by Brecon Town members. The allocation of units, fees and use of space are very real concerns. Statements made had led to rumour and speculation about the future operation of the hall. The hall remains a very prominent and important feature of Brecon Town. In the light of the position the Strategic Director: Place agreed set up a meeting with relevant officers and portfolio holders to resolve matters.

7.	ROAD SAFETY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEMES	BS42-2015
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Members welcomed Jo Lancey, Area Traffic Engineer and Derek Price, Principal Engineer to the meeting.

7.1 Brecon Parking Review – Phase 2

Members **RESOLVED**, subject to moving forward with the St. John ward review at the same time as moving forward with the St. Mary's and St. David's within ward reviews, that:

- 1) proposals for parking restrictions in St Mary's Ward and St. David's Within Ward be approved, and that the proposals for Brecon be added to the list

- 2) when Brecon reaches the top of the list, initiate the TRO consultation procedure and if no substantive objections are received the proposal for Brecon be implemented

7.2 Cambrian Roundabout, Brecon

Subject to amending the name of the relevant local member to Councillor Paul Ashton, St. Mary's ward – Brecon it was **RESOLVED** that the scheme be approved and included in the County 'Road Safety and Traffic Management Schemes' Capital Programme for construction.

7.3 Lake View Close Footway, Llangors

Members **RESOLVED** that the scheme be approved and included in the County 'Road Safety and Traffic Management Schemes' Capital Programme for construction'

7.4 Neath Road, Ystradgynlais

Members **RESOLVED** that the scheme be approved and included in the County 'Road Safety and Traffic Management Schemes' Capital Programme for construction.

While discussing traffic management issues it was the general feeling of members that driving styles had changed over the years and had become more risky.

8.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES	BS43-2015
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8.1 Local Development Plan Working Group

Subject to being able to attend scheduled meetings Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe agreed to attend LDP Working Group meetings in the interim. Should there be difficulties in attending further consideration would be given to ensuring full representation from Brecknockshire. It was agreed that appointing to the position on a more permanent basis should be a matter for the next shire meeting and be an early agenda item.

8.2 Dementia Update

Members welcomed receipt of an activity update report from Councillor Dawn Bailey, Dementia Champion.

Members were informed that Brecon Dementia Support Group had recently received a runners up award in the category of outstanding contribution to dementia friendly communities (a UK National Award). Shire members congratulated the group on their achievement.

8.3 Brecon Court

The Ministry of Justice had issued a consultation paper which included the proposal to close Brecon Court. The impact for Brecon Town, the wider Powys community and those who would be required to attend court would be significant. Members were informed that there would be an Authority response to the consultation which would stress the importance of retaining the court. It was noted that the building was freehold so was not tied to any long term lease commitments. Although the consultation proposals came from Wales the final decision would be taken at a national, UK level. Given the importance of the consultation and noting that the deadline for providing comments would be 8th October 2015 it was agreed that:

- a. **Cabinet Management Team** – the matter would be raised at tomorrow's informal Cabinet/Management Team meeting by the Strategic Director: Place and Portfolio Holder: HR and ICT. Once the position and approach to responding had been confirmed the Portfolio Holder for HR and ICT would advise shire members
- b. **Authority's Submission** – Brecknockshire members would be invited to contribute to the Authority's submission and their views would be sought. The consultation deadline would be 8th October
- c. **Rural Impacts (Joint Submission)** – Cabinet would consider linking with other rural communities to provide a joint response

It was suggested that the Leader and Portfolio Holder should meet with the two Members of Parliament which cover the Powys area regarding the matter.

9.	CORRESPONDENCE	BS44-2015
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There were no items of correspondence.

10.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	BS45-2015
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The next meeting would be held on Monday 21st December 2015.

**County Councillor H. Williams
Chairman**

BS50-2015

Corporate Anti-Fraud Team

Montgomeryshire 21st December 2015

Historically, Powys County Council operated a Benefit Fraud Investigation Team, looking at allegations and incidences of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit Fraud. Transfer of Housing Benefit Investigations went back to the Department for Work & Pensions as of 1st July 2015 due to the introduction of Universal Credit rollout.

Following a pilot scheme and resultant Business Case approval for retaining a Corporate Fraud Team at Powys County Council, investigating non-Benefit fraud offences, the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team came into existence as of April 1st 2015. The team are committed to the prevention, detection and investigation of all types of fraud and corruption affecting the Council and the services it provides to the public and communities. No area of the Council is immune from fraud. A Council who looks for fraud, and looks in the right places; - will find fraud.

Fraud costs the UK public sector £20.6 billion each year, this amounts to £390 for each adult living in the UK.

Tackling fraud contributes toward delivering “well managed cost effective services”, which in turn supports “**value** for money”. Additionally, such work contributes to ensuring “safe, sustainable and cohesive communities” by aiming to decrease serious acquisitive crime.”

The way Powys County Council reacts to incidents of alleged or suspected fraud will send a strong deterrent message throughout the Council, helping to reduce the number of future occurrences. The consequences of committing fraud must be clearly communicated throughout the Council, promoting zero tolerance to fraud ethos.

When a fraud involving a Local Authority is committed, it is a theft of public money and deprives services of much needed resources. In addition, reputational damage can arise where fraud is not seen to be tackled robustly. Local Authorities throughout the Country are being urged by the Government to do more to seek out and counteract these forms of non-benefit fraud. Powys County Council takes ALL types of fraud seriously.

We have now successfully completed the migration of Housing Benefit fraud cases as of 1st July 2015. However this still means work for us to do with ongoing cases for Prosecution that we have already been working on, until they are disposed of at Court. We also are not ‘free’ of HB work as with the HB investigation can come a number of other considerations that we are *still* responsible for, under the new remit, such as Council Tax Reduction, Single Person Discounts, abandonment of properties, (such as LT cases) other forms of tenancy fraud, Direct payments for Social care and so on.

Corporate Anti-Fraud Team

Right-To-Buy has been an area we have focussed on; and upon finding weakness and opportunity for fraud in the process as was; - we have introduced a new checklist and more robust anti-fraud controls for *all* applications to be scrutinised and come via CAFT upon receipt.

We have been delivering face to face fraud awareness training with staff, identifying and working with potential fraud champions. We are continuing with fraud awareness sessions with each service area we go into as well as look at how we may be needed to assist with cases or carry out health checks re fraud opportunity; and also we have introduced a fraud e-learning package which should be available to all staff shortly on the learning pool.

We have created an Intranet page for our Team and 'launch' the CAFT in November when International Fraud Awareness week is on- 16-20 November, so 'page per day' on Intranet to provide more information and help raise profile.

We have been researching fraud software and found a partner company to provide some fraud related services (tried and tested by a number of other Local Authorities successfully). This software, along with our expertise, could be used if PCC were to undertake fraud work for other Councils or Housing Associations/Social Landlords in due course, thereby generating an additional source of income.

What type of cases we have been working on:

- National Fraud Initiative (NFI)- SPD matches and other work in this area
- NFI Mixed matches- we have reviewed a number of additional matches outside of the 'normal' matches which have created some extra cases opened for investigation
- CTRS cases- usually born out of other matches or referrals (SPD or HB)
- Business Rates (NNDR) cases- just a few identified by the NNDR team so far that they have referred but with some really good results. This is not an income generator for Councils in Wales at this time as any monies identified currently go back to the Welsh Govt, but in time this may change as we catch up with England for example who are finding this area one of priority- small numbers in referrals but high value. It is an area of work we want to continue to handle as will be a service we can offer to other potential Council partners.
- Tenancy Fraud- since we have been doing the fraud awareness training sessions the referrals are starting to come in thick and fast, with some cases in process that may involve Court action for Criminal offences
- Free School Meals- usually born out of other Benefit cases – a number of people rebilled so far for non-entitlement
- Council Tax Exemptions – for example empty unfurnished when in fact occupied, in need of extensive renovation and uninhabitable when in fact people residing
- Disabled Blue Badge misuse- issued several formal cautions already for cases taken and 2 badges returned

Corporate Anti-Fraud Team

- Residential Parking Permits
- Employee fraud- example case where alleged employee working self-employed whilst off sick (Prosecuted successfully and dismissed from position)
- Intra Familial Financial Abuse cases –working with Appointee/Deputyship team
- Direct Payments for Social Care- we have had several successful cases where the overpaid monies have been recovered in full as a result of the Investigation and a number of additional cases now in progress

Our results so far:

01/04/15- current date *weekly* savings made: £2,203.77 equates to £114,596.04 per annum we are now not paying out, in addition to this:

01/04/15- current date overpayments raised: £128,848.69

Thank you for your support.

Yvette Kottaun

Senior Investigator

06/10/15

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