

Radnorshire

Meeting Venue
**Committee Room A - County Hall,
Llandrindod Wells, Powys**

Meeting date
Wednesday, 13 January 2016

Meeting time
10.00 am



County Hall
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5LG

For further information please contact
Shane Thomas

7th January 2016

AGENDA

1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	RS1-2016
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To receive apologies for absence.

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	RS2-2016
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To receive the minutes from the previous meeting held on Wednesday 11th November 2015.
(Pages 3 - 8)

3.	CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	RS3-2016
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To receive announcements from the Chairman.

4.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	RS4-2016
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To receive declarations of interest from members in relation to matters to be considered on the agenda.

5.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS	RS5-2016
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To receive reports from and to put questions to Cabinet Portfolio Holders.

5.1. **Councillor Wynne Jones, Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Finance**

5.2. **Councillor Avril York, Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Regeneration and Planning**

5.3. **Councillor Stephen Hayes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Adult Social**

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6.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES	RS6-2016
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To receive reports from and to put questions to members serving on outside bodies.

- 6.1. **To consider a request to appoint to a vacant shire position on SACRE**

7.	CORRESPONDENCE	RS7-2016
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To receive items of correspondence.

8.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	RS8-2016
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To note the date of the next meeting – 18th March 2015.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RADNORSHIRE COMMITTEE
HELD AT POWYS COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS
ON WEDNESDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2015**

PRESENT: Councillor T. Turner, Chairman

County Councillors J.H. Brunt, K.W. Curry, W.J. Evans, D.O. Evans, J. Gibson-Watt, E.M. Jones, H. Lewis, M.C. Mackenzie, P. Medicott, K.F. Tampin and G. Williams.

In attendance:

Mark Evans – Head of Business Services, Nicola Williams – Cashless Schools System Project Officer and Shane Thomas – Clerk.

1.	APOLOGIES	MS52-2015
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Apologies for absence were accepted from Councillors G.R. Banks, W.J.T. Powell, G.D. Price and P.C. Pritchard (Cabinet Portfolio Holder).

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 9TH SEPTEMBER 2015	MS53-2015
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The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday 9th September 2015 as a correct record subject to ensuring that appropriate amendments were made to a number of spelling mistakes. The clerk would ensure that the corrected version would be held as the public record. Particular reference was made to:

- a. **Rhosgoch School Site** – the local member for Glasbury clarified that the reference he made at the last meeting was in relation to the condition that the Council had left the site in prior to sale as opposed to upkeep after
- b. **Aveling Roller and Living Van (EP3339)** – it would be important to confirm whether the owners of the Gore Quarry would agree with the commitment to maintain and store the roller and living van. It is not clear whether the living van remains at the site

3.	CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	MS54-2015
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The Chairman reported on

- a. **Centenary Parade (Welsh Guards)** - having attended an event in Brecon to celebrate the centenary of the Welsh Guards
- b. **Remembrance Sunday** – having attended and laid a wreath at a local remembrance service
- c. **Citizenship** – having officiated over his first citizenship ceremony
- d. **Christmas Lunch** – the majority of members would welcome a Christmas lunch following a December shire meeting. The Chair would make arrangements with the clerk

4.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	MS55-2015
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There were no declarations of interest from members in relation to items to be discussed on the agenda.

Members welcomed Mark Evans, Head of Business Services and Nicola Williams, Cashless System for Schools Project Officer to the meeting. During an update and discussion particular reference was made to:

1. Business Services

- a. **Paperless Powys** – all services continue to look at ways to remove paper from processes to improve efficiency and reduce costs
- b. **Business Services** – comprises of income and awards, pension administration, employment services, business support and more recently customer services
- c. **Pension Administration** – the Authority is one of only eight Welsh authorities which administers a pension fund. There would be additional legislative requirements to meet under forthcoming pension reform. There are in the region of 19,000 current and previous employees drawing from the scheme. Under new legislation employees are able to remove larger sums of money. To date there has been no mass-withdrawal which could, potentially, have an impact. Positions would be monitored
- d. **Customer Services** – in July 2015 the customer services function transferred to Business Services
- e. **DBS Checks** – a particular success had been operating an electronic system for managing DBS checks. Processing times had been significantly improved. Five Welsh authorities had bought into using the Powys service
- f. **Welfare Reform** – it would be appropriate for there to be specific member updates in relation to the roll out of initiatives and support arrangements
- g. **School Partnership Agreements** – revised specifications had been agreed with schools and issued. Agreements allow for flexibility and for purchase options. 25% of schools had signed up to agreements
- h. **Income and Awards** – processing times had improved. Staff and customer satisfaction levels had improved as a direct result. There seems to be a customer preference for face-to-face contacts
- i. **Period of Change/Budget Position** – there continues to be a strong focus on engaging with staff to consider options for change and improvement. Since 2013 60 full time equivalent positions had been removed from Business Services. The savings target over the next three years would be £1.5 million
- j. **IT Systems** – there are in the region of 170 IT systems operating and associated compatibility issues. Controls had been re-introduced to ensure that IT have control over future purchases
- k. **Spend to Save** – the Portfolio Holder for Finance would provide funding to support improvement activity. To drive the pace of change within Business Services funding had been identified to support two full time change positions
- l. **Business Rates** – a member urged reviewing introducing business rates for bed and breakfasts. There seems to be a feeling amongst publicans that the system is very unfair given that they have to pay business rates whilst bed and breakfasts don't
- m. **Council Tax (Mis-billing)** – Council Tax billing systems are being reviewed to identify issues. The cost of mis-billing needs to be addressed and officers are looking to identify the extent. Members would be kept advised
- n. **Budget Impact / Reduction in Positions** – there seems to be public perception that whilst services are being lost or considered for withdrawal the Council and its staffing levels etc. remains untouched. This is not the case and it would be important to ensure that the general public are aware of actions taken to remove positions etc. via. media releases
- o. **Payments** – systems for removing the cost of paying for goods/services would be reviewed. There are significant costs associated with payment processing and

recovery. Payment cards could reduce costs (there would need to be appropriate monitors/safeguards in place to monitor use)

- p. **Removing Positions** – when looking to review staffing there are a number of factors that would determine outcomes and a range of individual circumstances to consider. It could be that staff and others feel that there's an element of secrecy which is not the case

Cashless System for Schools

- a. **Project** – members were reminded that the project would remove cash from the school system. Payments for school trips, music tuition, school meals etc.
- b. **Engagement** – there had been, and would continue to be, good engagement with all stakeholders including parents and pupils. The appetite to engage and support for the project would be very important
- c. **Cashless Systems** – Powys is the only Welsh authority not operating a cashless system. A member queried whether the Authority could partner with another authority to provide the service and share costs etc. It was noted that there were procurement requirements which would need to be observed in relation to tendering
- d. **Learning** – officers had engaged with those who operate systems to identify learning that would, hopefully, avoid any issues/blockages to roll out
- e. **Specification** – the market had been tested, there had been five providers expressing an interest in bidding for the tender. A preferred supplier had been identified and further work would be undertaken with the preferred supplier to arrive at a final specification
- f. **Payment Options** – there are options to use payment cards and biometric systems. There would be a range of ways to apply credit to accounts. The system would allow for an overdraft facility and would flag when credit was getting low. The Authority would provide the credit for those who were entitled to free school meals
- g. **Pilot Period** – a number of schools would be engaged in a pilot after Christmas
- h. **Roll Out** – officers hope to have rolled out the scheme to all schools by July 2017

6.	CORPORATE ANTI-FRAUD	MS57-2015
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Members welcomed Yvette Kottaun, Senior Investigator to the meeting to provide an update in relation to the work of the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team during which particular reference was made to:

- a. **Everybody's Business** – the mind-set amongst people should be that fraud is unacceptable. Each false or fraudulent benefit claim reduces the money available to support public funded activities. It is estimated that fraud costs the UK government in the region of £2.1 billion per annum. Those who fraudulently claim don't pay same levels of Council Tax
- b. **Powys Anti-Fraud Team/Unit** – the Powys team is in its infancy but is already proving to be very effective. Since April 2015 the team identified £135k of fraudulently claimed monies and avoided paying out £120k that would have been fraudulently paid out or granted in exemptions. It's expected that the work of the team moving forward would become more important
- c. **Fraud Teams** – an increasing number of authorities since the introduction of SFIS don't retain fraud teams and seem to accept fraud or believe they do not have any fraud. There could be scope for the Powys team to provide services for other authorities and/or public bodies
- d. **Anti-Fraud Champions** – it's the intention to create area based champions
- e. **Elected Members** – Councillors could play a very important part in helping identify fraud and with linking with communities to improve understandings
- f. **Fraud Awareness** – it would be the intention to roll out an e-learning package and provide face to face fraud awareness sessions tailored to the service area needs
- g. **Member Training** – it was felt that the work of the team and raising awareness of the importance of reporting fraud would be an appropriate matter for member development training. The Clerk would advise those who run the training schedule

Members wanting to discuss issues were encouraged to contact Yvette and/or her team. Members thanked Yvette for a very helpful and informative presentation and discussion session.

7.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS	MS58-2015
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Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, Cabinet Portfolio Holders.

7.1 Councillor Phil Pritchard – Cabinet Portfolio Holder: HR and IT

Due to the meeting overrunning Councillor Pritchard had been unable to join via video link, however, a written update report would be provided and members wanting to discuss portfolio matters were encouraged to contact the Portfolio Holder direct.

7.2 Councillor John Brunt – Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Highways

- a. **Portfolio** – the portfolio includes very visible highways and transport services, Nigel Brinn is Head of Service
- b. **Traffic Regulation Orders (Closures to Allow for Abnormal Loads)** – the Portfolio Holder confirmed that areas of highway would be closed at times from 18th November to allow for very large vehicles to pass at pinch points. Disruption would be kept to a minimum

- c. **Damage to the Highway** – where damage is caused to the highway the Highway Authority could look to reclaim repair costs if blame could be evidenced
- d. **Trunk Roads** – the Minister views the trunk road network as her responsibility and personally considers all works. The Authority has an obligation, under contract with the Welsh Government, to maintain the trunk road network
- e. **Bridge Improvement Programme** – the network of bridges is not fit for current use, it was designed for use 30 years ago
- f. **Design Team** – the design team generates income for the Council
- g. **Rail Crossing Improvement Programme** – the Welsh Government had provided funding to support a rail crossing improvement programme. There are known risks and needed works. The Portfolio Holder would welcome a review of the rail crossing in Llandrindod Wells
- h. **Newtown Bypass / Dyfi Bridge** – both schemes would be progressed, Welsh Government funding had been secured to undertake works
- i. **Pay and Display Car Parks** – currently 35 of the Authority's 75 car parks are pay and display. It is likely that charges will be introduced across more sites
- j. **Parking Enforcement** – enforcement remains a priority. In 2014/15 in excess of 6400 enforcement actions were taken by the Council's officers
- k. **Penybont Depot** – plans to remove the workshop function from Penybont depot would be progressed. Formal consultation would commence on 12th November. The depot as a store would remain
- l. **Depot Reviews** – Llanfyllin, Llanbrynmair, Presteigne and Crickhowell depots are under review for possible closure
- m. **Budget Position** – over the next three years the budget would be reduced by 56% from the controllable spend (the controllable spend is in the region of £14million per annum). It would be important to reshape service delivery and to maximise income streams. Non-mandatory services would be targeted, public transport is a non-mandatory service and very visible. It is likely that there would be significant public objections to removing services. There are no alternatives other than to reduce provision. There would be appropriate public consultation
- n. **Commissioning/Sub-Contracting** – it would be important for there to be sound monitoring processes in place. Quality of works should be retained. Supporting the local economy would be important. There are concerns with regard to whether companies would consider operating in Powys given the costs associated and the relatively small profits companies might make
- o. **Over 60's Bus Pass** – the Portfolio Holder urged members to help maximise the uptake of the Welsh Government's free bus pass scheme for the over 60s. The Authority receives income based on uptake
- p. **Young Person's Bus Pass** – the Welsh Government would meet a third of the cost of the use of public transport by young persons between the ages of 16-18. The Powys approach to encourage use would be to set a £1 flat day rate for use of public transport anywhere within the county for 16-18 year olds
- q. **Winter Maintenance Programme** – the budget position would have an impact on the winter maintenance programme and there would be less grit available for spreading this year in comparison to other years. The Authority had entered into an agreement to hire equipment to grit which would, hopefully, be better value for money. A member expressed concern about the potential impact of the position in that unlike more rural areas Powys could grind to a standstill without the highway network being kept open
- r. **Bronrevel Bridge** – ownership continues to be disputed and there are maintenance issues. It is a known matter and unlikely to be resolved. It is also unlikely that the Authority would fund repair work in the light of the budget position. There's an alternative route which residents can use for access. In general terms highway works would be likely to focus on statutory requirements

- s. **Planning Decisions/Impact** – increased use of highways and the need to undertake maintenance work can arise as a direct result of granting planning permission i.e. heavy vehicles using lanes, demand for gritting in inclement weather. However, businesses generate income and support communities

8.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES	MS59-2015
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Members were informed that:

- a. **Police and Crime Commissioner** – the Commissioner had confirmed that air cover would be retained through alternative arrangements. Issues raised at the most recent Management Board meeting included concerns in relation to the A487, the introduction of a community initiative to support traffic calming where residents monitor traffic speeds and issue notices and Dyfed Powys had been ranked 15th in terms of instances of anti-social behaviour in the UK
- b. **Powys Byways User Group (PBug)** – there had been four meetings of the re-convened Powys Byways User Group. Minutes are available for public viewing
- c. **Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP)** – there would be a 20% cut to staffing to achieve budget savings

9.	CORRESPONDENCE	MS60-2015
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Members noted receipt of a letter from the Radnorshire Federation of Young Farmers sent to the Chairman in mid-September expressing concern about the impact of reducing funding. It was noted that since the letter had been sent representatives from the Youth Service had been discussing matters with the three Powys federations. Members would be kept updated.

10.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	MS61-2015
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There would be an additional meeting in December followed by Christmas lunch for those who wanted to attend. The Chairman would make the necessary arrangements.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR T. TURNER
CHAIRMAN**