

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RADNORSHIRE HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM  
A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON  
MONDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor PJ Medicott

County Councillors G R Banks, K W Curry, W J Evans, D O Evans, J Gibson-Watt,  
E M Jones, H Lewis, MC Mackenzie, W J T Powell, GD Price and K F Tampin

**In attendance:**

Ann Benyon, Sarah-Jayne O'Kane and Noel Hughes - Severn Trent Water, Mark  
Evans - Head of Business Services, Nicola Williams - Cashless Schools Project  
Manager and Shane Thomas - Clerk.

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>	<b>RS45-2016</b>
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Apologies for absence were accepted from Amanda Lewis – Strategic Director and  
County Councillors J.H. Brunt and G. Williams.

<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b>	<b>RS46-2016</b>
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The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the  
Committee held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2016 as a correct record. During discussion  
particular reference was made to:

- a. **Action Logs** – members had been e-mailed an updated action log and following  
review agreed that all actions had been taken forward. It was felt that the  
approach of keeping action logs for review should continue
- b. **Radnor Roller (Aveling Roller EP3339 and Living Van)** – it would be important  
to keep track of arrangements for storing and maintaining the roller and living  
van. The matter would continue to be reviewed by the shire. Members  
requested an update
- c. **Highways, Grounds and Street Scene** – members had been e-mailed updated  
contact information which should help them in linking with officers and operatives  
regarding local matters

<b>3.</b>	<b>CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>	<b>RS47-2016</b>
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The Chairman reported on:

- a. **Welsh 2 Day Enduro** – having attended functions with the Chairman of Council
- b. **Knighton Carnival** – having attended the show which included a reception for  
the French town of Varades which is twinned with Knighton

<b>4.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	<b>RS48-2016</b>
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There were no declarations received in relation to matters to be discussed on the  
agenda.

5.	<b>ELAN VALLEY CONNECTION PROJECT (10.15 - 10.45)</b>	<b>RS49-2016</b>
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Members welcomed Ann Beynon, Sarah-Jayne O'Kane and Noel Hughes, Severn Trent Water to the meeting to provide an update in relation to works being undertaken at Bleddfa and works planned for Nantmel and Knighton. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Current Estate** - water companies were privatised in 1989 and the current network had been determined at that time. There are 11 water and sewerage companies that operate within England and Wales
- b. **Regulation/Policy** – the Environment Agency and National Resource Wales regulate operations. The regulations and policies that apply to each authority area are determined by the country they wholly or mainly operate in. Severn Trent is in a very good position because it spans both England and Wales and is able to influence policy on both sides of the border
- c. **Severn Trent Water** – those serviced by Severn Trent receive the lowest averaged combined bills in England/Wales. Services are provided to 33,000 Welsh customers and 2,000 Welsh business premises
- d. **Hardship/Payment Difficulties** – there are schemes operating to support those who would have difficulty in paying for their water/sewerage
- e. **Elan Valley Connections** – lines connecting Elan Valley to Birmingham run for 72 miles and works took 12 years to complete. During its 110 years of operation there had been very little refurbishment/repair works undertaken
- f. **Refurbishment/Repair Works** – the need to undertake repair and maintenance works to retain supplies had been recognised as important. The current network would only allow for a three day shut down. Improvements being undertaken would add to the infrastructure and allow for periods of shut down to reach thirty days. There would be site work at Bleddfa, Nantmel and Knighton
- g. **Reinstatement** – all areas disturbed for works would be put back to the condition they were prior to works
- h. **Cost** – the total budget for the scheme which included works at Bleddfa, Knighton and Nantmel was in the region of £300 million. Ann would provide area breakdowns for each community area so that they could be quoted by the local members to their communities
- i. **Bleddfa** – the tunnelling machine would break through at Bleddfa in November. There would be a ceremony to mark the occasion and communities invited. Members would be welcome to attend
- j. **Community Engagement/Schools** – the project had an education team attached to it and they were active in engaging with schools. Wider community engagement is recognised as very important and there had, and would continue to be, a range of activities

6.	<b>BUSINESS SERVICES / CASHLESS SYSTEM FOR SCHOOLS (10.45 - 11.30)</b>	<b>RS50-2016</b>
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Members welcomed Mark Evans, Head of Business Services and Nicola Williams, Cashless Schools Project Manager to the meeting to update on matters. Members

had agreed to bi-annual updates. During discussion particular reference was made to:

### **Business Service Functions**

- a. **Budget Reductions** – Business Services functions (income and awards, business support, employment services, customer services and Powys pensions) had been subject to significant budget reductions. Vacancy management, process/service improvements, redesign and moving to a commercial approach are ways in which the service had, and would continue to, meet its saving requirements
- b. **Statutory Requirements** – activities support statutory requirements i.e. to bill and recover business rates/council tax and operate a payroll system. The focus across all business services must be to protect the Council in delivering such functions
- c. **Project Management/Spend to Save** – in order to drive improvement/change funding had been secured against a business case to recruit to project management positions
- d. **Payments for Goods/Services** – billing and payment arrangements use significant resource. There's scope to improve systems that would deliver savings and make best use of resource i.e. by working with suppliers we could reduce the number of invoices that need to be processed or could introduce purchase cards that would remove costly paper/electronic processes
- e. **Income and Awards (Council Tax)** – in response to demand and customer preference the unit had focused on resolving issues at the point of contact. The length of individual contacts would be longer, however, the outcome would, overall, be better for the Council and customer in terms of resolving issues without lengthy repeat contacts/exchanges. Council Tax collection rates remain very high, contacts are usually in relation to queries, change of contact details etc. (there are limited contacts regarding payment difficulties). A member explained an experience where he had waited five months to be able to change contact details and felt that there should be more of a focus on dealing with issues quickly. There had been an investment last year which had provided resource to clear a backlog of Council Tax queries, the investment had been a one off arrangement which had worked well. A member expressed concern regarding the safety of personal information held in relation to members and their Council Tax positions, the member reported that a member of staff claimed to have seen some personal detail
- f. **Lease Car Scheme** – a member queried the application of the lease car scheme in terms of insurance cover. It was his understanding that Council had agreed that individuals accessing the scheme would need to arrange for their own insurance covers. It was confirmed that the Council continues to operate an insurance pool scheme for those employees who wanted to enter into it. All employees within the scheme would contribute to scheme at a determined level and the scheme would be self-funding. The member would discuss matters with the Business Services Manager
- g. **Customer Services** – the function had not been within Business Services for long, however, there would be a review of functions to ensure that contacts to the Authority are responded to in the best way for the resident. Members urged reviewing the telephone system to ensure that calls are answered quicker and by the service as opposed to being taken by operatives outside of services. Members would also welcome removing lengthy standardised automated telephone messages. Members would welcome a review and in being updated

- h. **Tell Us Once** – the ‘tell us once’ process which would update systems in the event of death still operates
- i. **Commercial Approach** – DBS checks have been very successful and the way in which Powys approaches them has been held in very high regard. Seven local authorities have bought into Powys for processing its checks and there’s potential for Powys to provide a service across Wales. Links are being made with the Welsh Government. There are also options to provide fraud and payroll services to others that could generate income for the Council (the Powys payroll includes processing and paying over 6,500 staff and processing 4,000 pension payments)

### Cashless Systems for Schools Project

- a. **Roll Out** – members will be aware from previous updates that a contract had been awarded in two parts to introduce cashless systems into schools
- b. **Biometric/Photo Identification** – in secondary schools systems would be biometric via. use of thumb prints, in the primary sector photo recognition would be used
- c. **Pilot** – a 73 school day pilot had been undertaken in the south of the County (Crickhowell High School and its feeder primary schools) and had been very positive. The positives included greater take up of school meals (88 more meals had been provided at the high school), reduced queuing time due to the speedy nature of payments in comparison to cash handling and there had been an increase in take up of Free School Meals, however, there would need to be further work undertaken to review whether the increase in FSM had been as a direct result of the cashless system. There were similar successes for the primary schools but to a lesser extent given there being fewer learners on roll
- d. **Roll Out** – due to the success of the pilot and in particular in relation to the benefits for the secondary sector it had been agreed to roll out to high schools first then to primary schools (it is hoped that roll out to high schools would be completed before the Christmas break 2016.. The provider had been working to develop a bi-lingual system for roll out to Llanfyllin High School, Caereinion High School and Bro Hyddgen. Due to the need to develop the system roll out to those high schools would be later in the programme. The Welsh Government had been informed and had accepted the position and confirm that it would satisfy requirements under the Welsh measure
- e. **Debt** – there would be a facility to enable meals to be purchased up to a value of £5 where cards have no credit. There would be reminders sent to parents/carers when credit is getting low which would, hopefully, avoid such situations. Where credit remains in deficit parents would be asked to ensure that they provide meals for their children i.e. a packed lunch
- f. **Cashiers** – the system would remove the requirement for cashiers to manage payment systems and remove cash handling and its risks from school sites
- g. **Radnorshire Launch** – there would be an event to launch the system at John Beddoes Campus of Newtown High School on 15th September. Members would be welcome to attend. It would be important to review the event protocol to ensure it’s been followed

Members would welcome regular updates with regard to business service issues.

7.	SHIRE REVIEW	RS51-2016
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Members were reminded that the pilot arrangement which had been agreed by Council to move to a bi-monthly arrangement for shire meetings was due for review by the Council in January 2017. Given the need to report to Democratic Services in November members had been asked to complete an individual questionnaire with regard to their views on shire meetings and functions. To date 18 returns had been received from Council.

<b>8.</b>	<b>REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES</b>	<b>RS52-2016</b>
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Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, members serving on outside bodies.

- a. **Police and Crime Commissioner's Panel** – there would be a Panel meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Items to consider would be to confirm the appointment of the Chief Constable and to determine the appointment of two independent Panel members

<b>9.</b>	<b>CORRESPONDENCE</b>	<b>RS53-2016</b>
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There were no items of correspondence.

<b>10.</b>	<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>	<b>RS54-2016</b>
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The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

It was noted that due to the change of meeting date Cabinet had not been represented at the meeting. A member requested that the Leader be reminded of the importance of Cabinet member attendance and to ensure that those scheduled to attend prioritise attendance over other matters.

<b>11.</b>	<b>ANNUAL GARDEN AWARDS (12.30)</b>	<b>RS55-2016</b>
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Members attended the annual garden award ceremony.

**County Councillor PJ Medlicott  
Chairman**