

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BRECKNOCKSHIRE HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM
- NEUADD BRYCHEINIOG, BRECON, POWYS ON
MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2016**

PRESENT: County Councillor G W Ratcliffe

County Councillors J C Holmes, S McNicholas, DW Meredith, ET Morgan, JG Morris, WD Powell, D R Price, K S Silk, D G Thomas, T J Van-Rees, D H Williams and E A York.

1.	APOLOGIES	BS46-2016
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Apologies for absence were accepted from County Councillors P.J. Ashton, S.C. Davies, S Davies, M.J. Dorrance, M.R. Harris, D. A. Thomas and S. Williams.

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	BS47-2016
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The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on Monday 19th September 2016.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	BS48-2016
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There were no declarations of interest from members relating to items to be discussed on the agenda.

4.	CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	BS49-2016
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The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chairman (Councillor M.J. Dorrance) for stepping in to fulfil functions because of a family bereavement.

5.	HOUSING CONTACTS (9.40 - 10.00)	BS50-2016
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Members welcomed Julie Harding, Resources Team Leader to the meeting to provide an update in relation to how the Authority manages housing contacts (repairs and maintenance and general contacts) via. its 'Housing One' telephone number. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Resource** – there are 5.16 full time equivalent (fte) first contact officers who handle enquiries and heating calls and 6.5 fte repairs co-ordinators who handle repairs calls. The unit can operate with just three operatives but in those cases emergencies would be prioritised
- b. **Performance** – in line with industry standards the unit aim to answer 88% of all calls within 41 seconds. From April – October 2016 first contact officers answered 970 calls per week, the average speed of answer being 89 seconds. During the same period repair co-ordinators answered 7214 calls from tenants, the average speed of answer being 22 seconds. There's a facility for callers to leave messages should they opt to. At the moment there are no monitoring arrangements in terms of monitoring when call backs to messages left are made. A member reported that in his experience call handling for repairs and maintenance since 'Housing One' had been introduced had greatly improved

- c. **Welsh Calls** – it's recognised that there's a need to improve provision in terms of providing a Welsh service
- d. **Further Developments** – as with all services there are reviews in an attempt to identify areas for improvement, it is likely that self-serving would be introduced and that arrangements for managing repair contacts would be transferred when the Authority moves to operating a Joint Venture Company. A member urged that good monitoring arrangements be introduced when operating through a JVC in relation to performance and in particular response times i.e. repair and maintenance call outs etc.
- e. **Report to Repair** – Housing One act as the link between the service and its operatives. Members reported issues where there had been claims from residents that the time it was taking between calls being taken and works being completed had been excessive and on occasions there had been no acknowledgment of contacts or works considered
- f. **Homelessness** – a member from the Ystradgynlais area reported that there had been an issue locally where a homelessness person had decided not to accept help and had been a cause of local concern. It would be helpful for the local members from the area to be provided with a statement which would explain to those with concerns what had been offered and how they had been supported. Julie would look to provide a statement for members to use. In general terms those members that had cause to contact homelessness officers reported a very good service received
- g. **Ystradgynlais (Siting of a Social Unit)** – the local member for Ystradgynlais reported his continued concern (and the very grave concerns of the community) regarding the use of a facility sited on an estate which is used for housing serious ex-offenders. There had been a recent very serious incident where the police had attended and people in the area and at the site had been very upset, worried and concerned. The issue is well known but remains. Julie would take the matter back to the housing office for response
- h. **Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)** – a member from the Ystradgynlais area reported local concerns from tenants regarding the scheduling and notification of works to be done under WHQS. Notifications sent are often wrong and cause issues. Julie would link with the local manager to discuss the issue of timely, accurate information to residents regarding planned works

Members thanked Julie for attending and it was agreed to ensure that members have access to the presentation.

6.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS (10-11)	BS51-2016
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Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, Cabinet Portfolio Holders.

- a. **Councillor Avril York, Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Regeneration, Planning and ICT**
 - i. **Strategic Housing Partnership** – the Portfolio Holder chairs the partnership
 - ii. **Housing and Adult Social Care** – there are good links between both departments in order to provide housing to meet the needs of the elderly

- iii. **Development and Regeneration** – there are very strong links between development management and regeneration departments within the Authority
- iv. **Information, Communication Technology (Systems)** – there had been recent activity to review the number of systems the Council uses. Reviewing the planning portal had been a priority and members could expect a new system to be introduced next year
- v. **Electronic Access (Use of Non-Powys Equipment)** – members would welcome being able to access Powys systems via. their own equipment. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the position had been recognised and that there had been movement in this area which would allow staff and members to use their personal devices for future access. There's an issue in Powys in relation to signal strengths for mobile devices
- vi. **Superfast Cymru (Fibre Broadband)** – there's a feeling locally that the programme had lost pace. It was agreed to request that a representative from Superfast Cymru attend the next meeting to provide an update on the roll out of the programme and to respond to any issues raised by members
- vii. **Economic Development Strategy** – there would continue to be a focus on supporting Powys businesses. Helping businesses to start up and operate in Powys for the benefit of Powys is very important
- viii. **Business Ambassador Scheme** – the scheme had been launched and would, hopefully, improve links between Powys County Council and the private sector
- ix. **Regeneration** – in general terms members agreed that investing in areas and regenerating them should be a very high priority for the Council. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that there's good engagement with the Welsh Government in order to maximise potential opportunities for local investment in regeneration schemes
- x. **Ystradgynlais Area** – members and residents from the area feel distanced from Powys when it comes to a range of Council functions including business support. There had been little visible support when an opencast mine had ceased to operate losing in excess of 100 jobs for the area
- xi. **Swansea Bay Regeneration** –members would hope that officers are engaging with those involved with the regeneration of the Swansea bay given the opportunities for Powys to benefit
- xii. **Brecon Beacons National Park** – the Authority had responsibility for regeneration within the park area. Those who have responsibility for the park area at the BBNP should encourage regeneration activities and support regeneration proposals
- xiii. **Circuit of Wales** – the project would be massive and very lucrative for Wales during the multi-million pound development and whilst operating as a racing circuit. It would be important to maximise the benefit for Powys
- xiv. **Development Control** – there's a comparatively young and very enthusiastic team that have dealt very well with a backlog of planning matters and would support activities moving forward
- xv. **Enforcement** – enforcement had been recognised as an issue and there had been a focus on clearing a backlog. Processes to be followed are often lengthy and it can seem that there's inaction. Acting acts as a very powerful deterrent. The local member for Llanwrytd reported that action had been proposed in relation to the erection of a cross at a graveyard, however, an on-going issue of enforcement of a very visible change to frontage of a street-front had been not

been progressed with pace, the public perception of the service had suffered as a consequence

- xvi. **Local Development Plan** – there would be a need to identify land for housing development for the next five years, at this stage in the process the draft LDP is lacking in this regard and the position had been recognised by the Council. It's a common issue across local authority areas and there had been representations to the Welsh Government regarding obligations in this regard. Information provided from a desktop exercise to identify areas for potential wind and solar use had caused concern locally (there had been areas identified and put in the public domain without any detailed considerations or engagement or contact with those communities). The Council would respond as appropriate to oppose
- xvii. **Gwenryfed School Project (Proposed Site of Talgarth Learning Site)** – there had been an issue with regard to the Brecon Beacons National Park Planning Committee and an application for a new school site at Talgarth (as part of the Gwenryfed area review) which had resulted in an unhelpful deferment of a planning decision. The issues raised had been in relation to highways matters. It would have been helpful for the matter to have been resolved or reviewed before the meeting and there was no planning officer from the Council at the meeting to respond. The Portfolio Holder agreed to raise the matter at a forthcoming BBNP/Council liaison meeting to be held on 19th December
- xviii. **Building Control (Roofing Certificates)** – a member suggested that the Authority should look to invest in enforcing payments for certificates that are needed when residents undertake roofing works. The current practice being that the requirement is not imposed and there could be a significant revenue opportunity (each certificate costs £95 per application). It was also felt by the member that routine checks should be undertaken on safety grounds and that tradesmen undertaking works should advise residents of the requirement. The Portfolio Holder would link with officers in this regard

b. Councillor Stephen Hayes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Adult Social Care

Members **RESOLVED** to exclude the public for the following item of business on the grounds that there would be information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) under category 3 the Powys Constitution (in accordance with paragraphs 14 and 19 of Schedule 12A – Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)).

During this item and the subsequent discussion the portfolio holder updated members in relation to the Residential Care Contract with BPUA, the delivery of Domiciliary Care and the Day Centre consultation. It was noted that the Portfolio Holder would make his recommendation to Cabinet regarding the Day Centre consultation on 20th December.

7.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES	BS52-2016
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Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, members serving on outside bodies. Councillor Van-Rees reported that he had attended

a meeting of the Reserve Armed Forces Association where the matter of the proposed closure of Brecon Barracks had been discussed (the proposal being to close in 2027).

8.	ROAD SAFETY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEMES (11-11.15)	BS53-2016
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Jo Lancey, Area Traffic Officer attended for this item of business.

a. Clos Castell, Llangynidr (20mph speed limit)

Members **RESOLVED** that the proposal be approved and to initiate the TRO consultation procedure and if no substantive objections are received the proposal be implemented

b. Priory Hill/Struet Junction – Pedestrian Crossing Design

Members accepted the update report as presented to the meeting. There was a very strong feeling that the area in question presented a very real danger to those crossing and in particular to children who cross for attending school. It was noted that works would cost in excess of £60k, however, there was a feeling that the cost would be a small price to pay given the potential risk of very serious incident. The Strategic Director suggested that the matter should be referred for inclusion in the capital scheme for consideration given the strong feeling at the meeting.

c. Brecon Parking Review – Cerrigcochion Road

Members **RESOLVED** to uphold the amendment to the regional proposal, and to initiate the TRO consultation procedure and if no substantive objections are received the proposal for Brecon be implemented.

9.	CORRESPONDENCE	BS54-2016
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There were no items of correspondence.

10.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	BS55-2016
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The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 25th January 2017 and would include a discussion in relation Brecon Barracks and the MOD closure proposal.

**County Councillor G.W. Ratcliffe
Chairman**