

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BRECKNOCKSHIRE HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM, BRECON - NEUADD BRYCHEINIOG ON WEDNESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2017

PRESENT: County Councillor MJ Dorrance – Chairman

County Councillors I McIntosh, J Charlton, S C Davies, E Durrant, J Evans, L Fitzpatrick, M R Harris, K Laurie-Parry, S McNicholas, WD Powell, E Roderick, D A Thomas, D H Williams and R Williams

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Lewis, D Meredith, J Morris, D Price, J Pugh, G Ratcliffe, K Silk, TJ Van-Rees and S Williams.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday 19th July 2017, subject to amending the reference on page 7 'appointments to outside bodies' to read Industrial Alliance not Countryside Alliance.

3. BRECON CULTURAL HUB

Brecon Cultural Hub (Y Gaer) – members welcomed an update/position paper in relation to the Brecon cultural hub which had recently been named Y Gaer and noted that an officer would attend the next meeting to update and take questions/queries.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in relation to items to be discussed on the agenda.

5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported on:

- a. **Annual Garden Awards** – members were urged by the Chair to stay on after the meeting for the annual garden award presentation
- b. **Blaubeuren Twinning** – members welcomed ex-County Councillor Paul Ashton and two residents to the meeting for this item of business. Members were reminded that the decision to twin Brecknock Borough with Blaubeuren was taken back in the 1970s. The arrangement being that each town would host a delegation from the other every other year. More recently it had become difficult for the shire to contribute equally to the arrangement. It was noted that the Burgermeister had written to the shire with an offer to meet the costs associated with twinning arrangements in order to preserve the relationship. It was agreed that a working group comprising of Councillors W. Powell, M. Dorrance, J. Evans, K. Laurie-Parry and R. Harris would meet and produce an options paper for consideration at the next meeting when a representative from tourism would be in attendance. It would be important to determine the position.

EMERGENCY SERVICES (9.45 - 11)

Members welcomed Geraint Griffiths, Inspector – Dyfed Powys Police to the meeting to update on local policing matters. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Brecon Jazz** – the event is growing and important to the town and wider community. The request to close streets to allow for floats to take part would need to be submitted three months prior to the event in order for appropriate consideration and response. The local member for Llangors (Councillor Emily Durrant) would pursue the matter. It was reported that had been 12 arrests during the 2017 festival period (there was no way of confirming whether the arrests were directly attributable to the festival). It is likely that there would be additional road closures in future years
- b. **Selling of Vehicles** – the local member for Llangattock (Councillor Jackie Charlton) expressed particular concern regarding verges and areas alongside highways being used for the sale of vehicles. Members were informed that as long as vehicles were taxed, had valid MOTs and were not causing obstructions they could be left at roadsides and advertised for sale. A number of members reported similar concerns in their areas and felt that the selling of cars from verges and the like was becoming more common. Members were encouraged to report their concerns to the police for review and potential action
- c. **Parking in Built up Areas** – the local member for Builth who had been unable to attend today's meeting had raised the issue of dangerous parking in built up areas. It was reported that traffic calming and parking restrictions were a local authority function, however, where there are dangerous obstructions the police could be called to take appropriate action
- d. **Royal Welsh Agricultural Show** – the police recognise the importance of policing for the event. The Leader reported that a Safety Advisory Group had been constituted in response to a fatality at this year's show (a young man had drowned in the river). The group comprises of representatives from the Council, Royal Welsh Agricultural Show Society and the emergency services
- e. **Green Man Festival** – the festival continues to be very successful. There had been 23 tent break-ins and a few drug seizures at this year's event. The Leader reported that the festival had been awarded the BBC festival of the year
- f. **Responsible Drinking** – the drinking culture seems to be growing and it would be timely to approach relevant groups to advise of the dangers of drinking to excess i.e. YFC, other clubs and schools given the fatality at the RWAS where drinking contributed
- g. **Halloween** – in the light of disturbances in previous years policing during this year's Halloween period would be increased
- h. **Mid Wales Hospital Site (Talgarth)** – the police had been working with the site owner in order to secure it following break-ins and vandalism. It seems that groups had visited in order to go ghost hunting. There would need to be a longer term plan in order to secure the site
- i. **Housing of Ex-offenders/Threatening Behaviours** – a member reported concerns from a resident in relation to threatening behaviour from an ex-offender who had been housed close. Residents with concerns regarding threatening behaviours were encouraged to contact the police

- j. **Hay-on-Wye Festival** – a member requested confirmation in relation to a local rumour that a man had attended the town during the festival brandishing a weapon. The Inspector would report back to the member
- k. **Reporting Incidents/Concerns** – a member expressed concern regarding use of the 101 facility for reporting (the member had seen erratic driving and suspected drunk-driving which he had been reported). Although it seems that the information requested by 101 at the point of calling takes time, it is necessary and prompt actions are taken where needed. Where there are emergency situations 999 should be used
- l. **Ystradgynlais Music and Christmas Festivals** – members from the Ystradgynlais area reported good engagement and involvement between the police and other agencies (including members) in relation to plans for events in their areas
- m. **Local Engagement Sessions** – members would support local engagement meetings where information about local policing matters could be discussed/shared. A consistent approach across the shire would be welcomed

Members welcomed Steve Bryan, Mid and West Wales Fire Authority to the meeting to update on activities and discuss local matters. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Engaging with Communities** – the Fire Authority view engaging locally as very important
- b. **Mid and West Wales Fire Authority Area** – the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MWWFRS) area spans six local authorities (Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Powys). It is the largest geographical Fire Authority area in England and Wales. In Powys there are 18 fire stations and 261 uniform members of the workforce (244 of which are on-call fire fighters) and 12 non-uniformed personnel.
- c. **Prevention** – there's a very strong focus on prevention
- d. **Flooding and Water Rescue** – there is now a statutory duty for Fire Authorities to respond regarding flooding. MWWFRS has resources strategically located across its area to be able to respond effectively to flooding incidents
- e. **Medical Responding** – the Fire Authority works in partnership with the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST) to provide medical support through responder stations. Fire Authority medical response rates are up 64% since 2006. In some areas communities have fund raised and purchased responder vehicles for emergency service use
- f. **Wild Fires** – the effect of wildfires on communities is recognised. MWWFRS works with its partner agencies on prevention programmes and has been successful in reducing the number of wildfires
- g. **Fire Control** – MWWFRS Fire Control has amalgamated with South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Control. The Joint Public Service Centre is based at South Wales Police HQ in Bridgend. There would be no visible difference from the public perspective with the same level of service provided
- h. **Rural Service** – rural services and rural needs are well recognised by the Fire Authority and appropriate resources are allocated to such areas for response arrangements and prevention and protection work
- i. **Helicopter / Landing Sites** – the Fire Authority does not have a dedicated helicopter but could access one if needed for dealing with wildfire incidents
- j. **Access to Stations** - the local member for Llangors (Councillor Emily Durrant) agreed to link with MWWFRS to discuss local suggestions regarding access

- k. **Drone / Aerial Vehicle** – the Fire Authority has use of a drone/aerial vehicle which has been used to help in assessing situations and resolving incidents
- l. **Urban Search and Rescue** – MWWFRS has a facility which can be used to deal with specialist incidents and traditionally attended incidents
- m. **Recruitment and Retention** – the challenges of recruiting and retaining on call firefighters is a recognised issue locally and nationally. Members urged engaging with the youth in order to promote what could be accessed. Scouts, boy's brigades, cadets and other youth groups could be approached to promote roles and seek sign up. Re-introducing fire cadets could be positive
- n. **Service Review** – members were urged to support the pending service review and were encouraged to respond with their views
- o. **Access to Services** – a member with hearing loss reported that she had been unable to use the telephone in order to access the service. The member urged consideration of issues that would make it difficult for some people to use the service i.e. a physical or mental disability. It was reported that e-mail and written contacts were welcome. Steve recognised the point made and highlighted that arrangements are available to support persons with hearing difficulties
- p. **Home Fire Safety Checks** – free home fire safety checks are available and important in order to prevent fires occurring in the home. Fire checks are particularly important where vulnerable residents are concerned

Members thanked Steve for attending the meeting. It was agreed that the presentation would be published in order that members could use the information provided.

7.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS (11.00 - 12 NOON)
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In the light of the Welsh Government announcing provisional budget settlements the Chair took the opportunity to discuss matters during which particular reference was made to:

- a. **2018/19 Medium Term Financial Plan** – the Authority had planned for a 2.5% funding cut for 2018/19 in comparison to the 2017/18 budget. The MTFP includes an allowance for a 2% upgrade to meet inflation
- b. **Medium Term Financial Plan (Schools)** – the Cabinet had committed via. the MTFP to identify an additional £1m from the 2018/19 settlement to support schools
- c. **2018/19 Provisional Budget Settlement** - the Powys settlement has historically been poor in comparison to other Welsh authority settlements and Powys had often received the lowest percentage increase of the 22 local authority areas. The provisional settlement announced yesterday would deliver a 1.0% reduction for Powys (the 17th lowest). It will be a 1.5% reduction across local government in 2019/20. The difference between the planned for 2018/19 budget and the provisional settlement would be in the region of £2.5 million
- d. **Schools and Social Care (Top up Funding)** – the Welsh Government had announced £62 million for schools and £42 million for Social Care (it is not clear whether funding would be within provisional settlements). Previous budgets had included hypothecated funding to support schools and social care. Authorities would welcome the detail in order to understand the position better
- e. **Floor Funding** – the Welsh Government had agreed a more permanent arrangement to provide floor funding which would ensure that no authority area

would receive percentage increases below an agreed level. Powys would benefit from this arrangement

- f. **Regional Working** – there continues to be a drive to encourage regional working arrangements
- g. **Grant Funding** – it is usual for grant funding, provided by the Welsh Government to support particular areas, to transfer into the general revenue settlement after a given period of time. Authorities then have the ability to use the funding as they determine appropriate
- h. **Welsh Local Government Association** – the WLGA had taken a stance and would not support hypothecating budgets to support designated areas
- i. **Final Settlement** – the final settlement would be announced towards Christmas or in the New Year

Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, Cabinet members. During discussion and update particular reference was made to:

Councillor James Evans – Cabinet Portfolio Holder: HR, Communications and ICT

- a. **Human Resources/Workforce (Targeted Recruitment)** – there would be a period of targeted recruitment in order to recruit to vacant positions. Part of efforts would include a careers fair to be held next year. A member requested details in relation to recruitment to positions to support Children's Services. Members were aware that there would be a damning CSSIW inspection report issued next week. A member who had requested information in relation to the structure of Children's Services weeks prior today's meeting reported that he had not received a response. The Leader confirmed that there had been issues in being able to appoint to vacant positions in social care. A member suggested targeting for school based positions
- b. **Health and Safety** – there are four health and safety advisors and a secondment of a team member to the health board
- c. **Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)** – the system went live in April and allows for the local authority and health service to have joint use and access to patient information
- d. **E-mail** – the Authority's contract with the NHS for use of their e-mail system is nearing an end (it had been a five year contract). There are options to explore in terms of use of web-based 'cloud' systems
- e. **Mobile Phones** – the portfolio holder would be reviewing the position given that members had experienced issues with operating them. Members experiencing difficulties were encouraged to contact Lauren Pollard (Members ICT) for advice and support. A member reported that he would welcome use of one device rather than having to use different devices for Council and personal use
- f. **Skype** – using skype in order to modernise IT activity would continue to be explored. The telephone system had moved to being skype based. Some telephone systems were operating on technology which was 25 years or older. There are some teething problems and the position would be monitored
- g. **Events** – the Council supports a number of very significant and important events which are held in Powys each year. Events which are very important to the local economy. The Queens Baton Relay had been positive, however, the lack of media coverage had been disappointing. The Urdd proclamation would be held in Brecon this weekend. The Winter Fair at Llanelwedd

- h. **Staff Awards** - the annual staff awards 2017 would be held towards the end of the year
- i. **Intranet/Website** – the intranet would be re-vamped which would include providing information bilingually in order to meet requirements (the intranet site needs to be bilingual by 2018 in order to comply with a Welsh Government standard). There would also be an over-hall of the website
- j. **Translation Services** – there are opportunities for income generation which are being explored
- k. **Social Media** – the Council recognises the importance of social media and operates relevant accounts. There's a programme of social media staff training. Members could help in responding to matters raised via. social media
- l. **Telephony** – customer service operatives managed 10,000 calls in-year and received 2000 e-mail service contacts
- m. **Blue Badges** – customer services had processed 270 blue badge applications in year
- n. **Member Casework** – the need to support members with managing their casework has been recognised and systems would be introduced to improve current arrangements. Members would welcome support in this area
- o. **Complaints Procedure** – there would be a review of the complaints procedure. The Portfolio Holder is of the view that members could be more involved in terms of looking to resolve matters locally and before they become issues to complain about
- p. **Community/Area Meetings** – Cabinet recognise the importance of good engagement with communities and would be reviewing how to work with town and community councils
- q. **Engagement Policy** – the Cabinet view engagement with the community, businesses and other service provider partners as important
- r. **Community Awards** – Cabinet would introduce a community award scheme in order to recognise those in the community who excel
- s. **Income Generation** – the Portfolio Holder would continue to explore options for generating income from services within his portfolio
- t. **Ystradgynlais** – members from the Ystradgynlais areas would welcome more promotion of the area as being part of Powys. It is the feeling amongst residents that Powys is very distanced from its community
- u. **Engagement with Communities** – Cabinet view engaging with communities in relation to local matters and services as very important. There would be a review of engagement activities and a focus on strengthening practices
- v. **Back Up Arrangements** – the Portfolio Holder confirmed that IT systems are backed up and able to function during power outages. Moving to cloud based systems would improve access to information
- w. **Trade Unions** – the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he engages with those Trade Unions which the Council recognises and that he values their input in relation to employment matters

Councillor Liam Fitzpatrick – Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Highways

- a. **Budget Cuts** – the Highways, Transport and Recycling budget had been cut over previous four years by 56%
- b. **In house Services** – there's an appetite to run in-house services, however, all options would be considered
- c. **Grass Cutting** – considerations would include bringing the service back in-house at the end of the current contract period with an external provider. The current

position in relation to different specification of cuts in areas or land which are very close to each other but under ownership of different Council departments is a recognised issue (there can be different standards of cuts)

- d. **Fleet Vehicles** – sourcing vehicles locally would be a priority for the fleet, the number of vehicles needed to operate services is considerable
- e. **Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO)** – PAVO run a community transport scheme on behalf of the Council, considerations would include the Council operating the scheme
- f. **Public Conveniences** – the Portfolio Holder would be offering to transfer public conveniences to communities for a peppercorn payment of £1. There are 35 conveniences that would be offered. Communities that engage would need to operate and manage the transferred facilities. A member urged appropriate consideration of the potential impact on tourism of closures and to be mindful of the use of facilities for those with medical needs
- g. **Car Parking** – Cabinet would be considering a car parking review report for the whole of the County. It would be important to introduce consistency. The review had been triggered, in the main, by member concerns in relation to arrangements
- h. **Christmas Free Parking** – the previous Cabinet had offered free public parking to support local festivity events and shopping. The position this year had not been confirmed. It was noted that Brecon Town Council had requested parking for a switching on the Christmas lights event which would be held on 18th November. There would also be considerations of a park and ride scheme for Brecon town

8.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES
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Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, members serving on outside bodies. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Community Health Council** – Councillor Jackie Carlton reported that she had attended meetings of the CHC and would report back to the Shire. Councillor Charlton urged members to respond to a consultation being run by the CHC regarding the future of services
- b. **Brecon Beacons National Parks** – there had been issues regarding the use of Section 106 monies obtained by the Parks in relation to developments within the BBNP area. Meetings had been arranged so that there could be further considerations. There would be a BBNP briefing on 24th October, members serving on the BBNP Planning Committee were encouraged to attend
- c. **Dyfed-Powys Police and Crime Panel** – the Panel continue to hold the Commissioner to account for delivering on local policing. There would be another meeting on 16th November. Members with issues to raise were encouraged to do so via. their shire representatives
- d. **Theatr Brycheiniog Board** – Councillor Roderick reported that facilities had been improved and extended. Members were urged to promote and use the facility

9. ROAD SAFETY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT (12 NOON - 12.30)
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Derek Price – Senior Engineer (Structures) and Jo Lancey – Road Traffic Officer attended the meeting for this item of business.

- a. **B4560/U0171 Junction at Heolddu, Llangors (Visibility Improvement)** – members **RESOLVED** that the scheme be approved for inclusion in the Capital Programme for Road Safety and Small Schemes works. Members noted that the scheme had been raised by the community as a concern. The cost would be in the region of £10.5k. The landowner had gifted the land and the scheme had the full backing of the local member (Councillor Emily Durrant)
- b. **B4560 Llangors (Traffic Calming)** – members **RESOLVED** that the scheme be approved for inclusion in the Capital Programme for Road Safety and Small Schemes. The community and local member are very supportive of the scheme
- c. **B4601 Glamorgan Street, Brecon (Footway Provision)** – members **RESOLVED** that the scheme be approved and included in the Capital Programme for Road Safety and Small Schemes. The local member had not been able to attend today's meeting, however, it was noted that he was very supportive of the scheme
- d. **Crickhowell Parking Review** – the local member had been unable to attend today's meeting, however, he supports the scheme. The main issues to address would be inconsiderate parking. It was **RESOLVED** to initiate a TRO consultation and if no substantive objections are received the proposals for Crickhowell be implemented

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were reminded that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 24th January 2018.

11. ANNUAL GARDEN AWARDS

Members attended the annual awards presentation.

County Councillor