

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BRECKNOCKSHIRE COMMITTEE  
HELD AT NEUADD BRYCHEINIOG, BRECON ON  
MONDAY 21<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2015**

**Present:** County Councillor H. Williams – Chairman

County Councillor P.J. Ashton, M.B.J. Davies, R.M. Harris, G.G. Hopkins, E.T. Morgan, J.G. Morris, D.W. Meredith, D.R. Price, D.A. Thomas, D.G. Thomas and W.D. Powell.

**In attendance:**

Councillor Darren Mayor, Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Property, Building and Housing – **via video link**

Councillor Graham Brown, Deputy Leader/Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Commissioning and Children's Services **via. video link**

David Powell – Strategic Director: Resources, Yvette Kottanu – Senior Investigator, Simon Inkson, Head of Housing and Shane Thomas – Clerk.

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>	<b>BS46-2015</b>
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Apologies for absence were accepted from County Councillors S.C. Davies, M.J. Dorrance, L. Fitzpatrick, J.C. Holmes, S. McNicholas, G.W. Ratcliffe, T.J. Van-Rees, S.L. Williams and E.A. York.

<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2015</b>	<b>BS47-2015</b>
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The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015 as a correct record. During discussion particular reference was made to:

a. **Brecon Amenity Site** – having been informed that the Strategic Director: Place (Paul Griffiths) visited the site following the previous meeting members requested additional information in relation to:

- The role of staff at the site and whether they are there to supervise and/or to help when residents visit to dispose of waste
- Whether the site had been risk assessed and in particular the area where steep steps have to be climbed for access in some areas
- Arrangements for helping residents with disabilities

The Chairman agreed to visit the site with the local member to view issues.

b. **Lake View Close Footway, Llangors** – the local member thanked members for their support in including the programme with in the programme for future works

c. **Local Development Plan Working Group** – given the number of apologies presented to today's meeting it was agreed that appointing to a vacant position on the LDP Working Group should be a matter for the next meeting. In the interim the

clerk would e-mail Brecknockshire members with details for forthcoming meetings with a request that members interested in attending should advise him direct

<b>3.</b>	<b>CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>	<b>BS48-2015</b>
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The Chairman reported that he had received an e-mail from representatives of Blaubeuren regarding their intention to visit as part of exchange arrangements in 2016. The contact included an expression of interested in attending the 2016 National Eisteddfod. Members would be kept advised and updated on arrangements.

<b>4.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	<b>BS49-2015</b>
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There were no declarations of interest from members relating to items to be discussed on the agenda.

<b>5.</b>	<b>CORPORATE FRAUD</b>	<b>BS50-2015</b>
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Members welcomed Yvonne Kottaun, Senior Investigator to the meeting to provide an update in relation to Corporate Fraud. During discussion and update particular reference was made to:

- a. **Cost to the Tax Payer** – public sector fraud has been estimated to cost the UK Government in the region of £21 billion per annum (money which could be used to support public service delivery). The mind-set amongst people should be that fraud is unacceptable
- b. **Team/Unit** – the Powys team is in its infancy but is already proving to be very effective. Since April 2015 the team had identified £2,700 per week of previously fraudulently claimed monies which were no longer being paid (£144k per annum) out and had avoided paying out an additional £171k 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** – since the introduction of SFIS an increasing number of authorities 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. **Intent to De-fraud** – there are a range of sanctions that could be used to recover payments. Cases need to be evidence based. The Authority could exercise due discretion
- e. **Single Occupancy** – it was felt by members that highlighting prosecutions and actions taken in relation to Single Occupancy benefit fraud could act as a very powerful deterrent. Members would welcome more publicity
- f. **Links** – the fraud team work closely with those involved in providing support and benefits. There are links with housing and adult social care which have proven very positive. Where there are suspicions or concerns they are investigated
- g. **Crime Prosecution Service (CPS)** – it is widely recognised that there's a backlog of cases with the CPS. The Authority's legal team could act to address fraud and recover costs etc.
- h. **Elected Members** – Councillors could play a very important part in helping identify fraud and with linking with communities to improve understandings

- i. **Fraud Awareness** – it would be the intention to roll out an e-learning package

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.

<b>6.</b>	<b>SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS</b>	<b>BS51-2015</b>
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Members welcomed Simon Inkson, Head of Housing and Councillor Darren Mayor, Cabinet Portfolio Holder to the meeting for this item of business. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Welsh Government/Powys Response** – the Welsh Government had planned for a national response to the crisis. Wales would accept up to 20,000 refugees over five years. Powys had committed to playing its part
- b. **Accepting Areas** – there would be two Powys accepting areas (Ystradgynlais and Newtown). The areas had been chosen because of a number of factors that would support the settling in of four to five Syrian families in each area
- c. **Engagement with Communities** – it would be very important to listen to the views of accepting communities, to respond to any queries and to put in place sound arrangements for allowing for there to be open and frank discussion about matters prior to families moving to communities. Longer term contact would also be important
- d. **Multi-Agency Approach** – the inaugural meeting of a multi-agency Powys group to plan for and oversee arrangements for settling refugee families had been held on 13<sup>th</sup> November and there had been a media release after the meeting. That night there was significant media attention regarding the Paris concert bombing
- e. **Home Office Funding** – the Home Office would provide funding for five years. The initial grant would be £8k per person payable to each public authority in an accepting area. There would be a sliding payment scale over the five year period
- f. **Leave to Remain** – each refugee would be granted leave to remain status
- g. **Selection** – there would be a selection process. It would be for accepting areas to determine who gets accepted for settlement in their areas. Members would welcome details of the process
- h. **Community Activity** – officers had been made aware areas where there are very proactive communities who recognise the importance of supporting efforts. Members praised the work to-date of a Hay, Brecon and Telford Support Group. The Head of Housing reported that he would like to build on the goodwill of communities and look to use community resource in a more co-ordinated way to support the accepting areas. The Multi-Agency Planning Group would give further consideration regarding a more strategic approach to community support
- i. **Negative Statements** – there had been a number of negative statements made via e-mail and using social media. Council had committed to supporting the crisis and in playing its part to home refugees who are fleeing conflict and in fear for their lives

<b>7.</b>	<b>REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS</b>	<b>B52-2015</b>
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Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, Cabinet Portfolio Holders.

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

Having been provided with a written activity brief particular reference was made to:

- a. **Joint Venture Company** – expressions of interest were being sought. It is not clear what the appetite to engage with the Authority to deliver services in partnership would be. Hopefully the Authority would make an appointment in June 2016 with the intention that the company (which would manage the Authority's stock, provide repair and maintenance services and provide a building function and design service) would come into operation in November 2016. There could be scope to include schools within the arrangement but that would sit outside of the initial tender
- b. **Brecon Learning Campus** – there would be a period of non-activity whilst the Assembly determines its position regarding plans and processes. It would be important for due process to be followed
- c. **Housing and the Brecon Beacons National Park** – authorities are meeting with the BBNP to consider arrangements for an agreement to provide affordable housing in the area. The proposal to-date would be that the BBNP holds the grant and would work with neighbouring authorities to deliver on the requirement. There would be a further meeting of a liaison group on 14<sup>th</sup> January to consider matters. The Head of Housing would report back on relevant issues after the 14<sup>th</sup> January meeting and call a meeting to update members on matters. A report outlining positions would be provided prior to the meeting for members to consider
- d. **Glossary** – future briefings from the Portfolio Holder to the shire committee would include a glossary of terms to help clarify abbreviations

## 7.2 Councillor Graham Brown, Deputy Leader/Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Commissioning and Procurement/Children's Services

Having been provided with a written activity brief particular reference was made to:

- a. **Commercial Services Team** – the team had been operating for a year and had been very proactive. Members were surprised to note the spend which had been avoided via. the non-essential spend freeze
- b. **Cleaning Consortium** – a member expressed concern in relation to the Brecon High School consortium not having received contract details regarding a potential local arrangement for providing a school cleaning service
- c. **Leisure Service Transfer** – there had been no significant issues following the transfer of leisure services to freedom leisure. Any review of levels of provision would be undertaken with the involvement of the Authority and not in isolation
- d. **Youth Service Review** – a review was being undertaken. There could be scope to use the YFC to deliver a wider range of youth services. The current arrangement with the YFC being that the Authority provides funding to support club organiser and admin positions. The proposal would be to bring the posts under the umbrella of the Authority's staff and provide grant funding to support

other areas of activity. Officers continue to engage with the YFC federation. Members urged caution if considering to move to provide youth services from schools when looking to support young people who take issue with school settings

- e. **Brecon Cultural Hub** – there had been a delay in progress which had recently been resolved, the project would move forward
- f. **Neuadd Maldwyn** – a member expressed concern regarding the cost of bedding plants used at Neuadd Maldwyn and public perception at a time when savings are having to be made. There could have been a much cheaper, alternative option
- g. **Community Delivery/Transfer of Services** – a member requested that the Authority tracks increases in precept rates which would be needed to raise money to deliver services locally (services which had previously been delivered by the Council)
- h. **Library Service** – operating a library service is a statutory function. The service had been identified for savings in the 2017/18 financial year. Members expect that same levels of service would be retained in 2016/17. The Strategic Director would clarify the position

Having noted that there had been no update report in relation to the operation of Children’s Services the Portfolio Holder agreed to provide an activity update to the next meeting.

<b>8.</b>	<b>REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES</b>	<b>BS53-2015</b>
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There were no reports from or questions to members serving on outside bodies

<b>9.</b>	<b>CORRESPONDENCE</b>	<b>BS54-2015</b>
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There were no items of correspondence.

<b>10.</b>	<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>	<b>BS45-2015</b>
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The next meeting would be held on Monday 7th March 2015 and quarterly thereafter (with the exception of the May Annual General Meeting). Items for the March meeting would include an update in relation to FYI Brecon (Councillor Powell would provide contact information to the clerk for linking).

**County Councillor H. Williams  
Chairman**