

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MONTGOMERYSHIRE COMMITTEE
HELD AT NEUADD MALDWYN, WELSPPOOL
ON WEDNESDAY 3RD FEBRUARY 2016**

PRESENT: Councillor A.W. Davies – Chairman

County Councillors M.C. Alexander, D. Bailey, L.V. Corfield, D.E. Davies, L.R.E. Davies, V.E. Evans, S.M. Hayes, A. Holloway, D.C. Jones, E.M. Jones, G.M. Jones, W.T. Jones, P.E. Lewis, B.H. Mills, G. Morgan, P.C. Pritchard, K.M. Roberts-Jones, G.R. Thomas and J.M. Williams.

In attendance:

Andrew Cresswell – Locality Manager: North (Powys teaching Health Board), John Evans – Communications Officer, David Powell – Strategic Director (Resources), Clive Pinney – Solicitor to the Council and Shane Thomas – Clerk.

1.	APOLOGIES	MS1-2016
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Apologies for absence were accepted from Councillors G.J. Bowker, G.R. Brown, E.R. Davies, F.H. Jump, D.R. Jones, J.R. Jones R.I. George, P. Harris, E.A. Jones, D.J Mayor J.G. Shearer W. B. Thomas and G.P. Vaughan.

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 2ND DECEMBER 2015	MS2-2016
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The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday 2nd December 2015 as a correct record. A member felt that the statement in the minutes which referred to the exempt item (item 5) could have made it clearer which item the matter related to (item 6). The Clerk confirmed that he had discussed matters with the Democratic Services Manager who would review future statements for use when referring at Committees to excluded items.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	MS3-2016
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There were no declarations of interest made in relation to items on the agenda.

4.	CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	MS4-2016
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The Chairman reported on:

- a. **Citizenship Ceremonies** - having officiated at two citizenship ceremonies
- b. **Sports Awards** – having attended the 2016 Montgomeryshire sports award ceremony on Friday 29th January to recognise the success of local athletes. The Chairman would write to the organisers to thank them for hosting such a successful event
- c. **Councillor Bowker** – in her absence members congratulated Councillor Bowker on recently having given birth to Minnie

5.	PRIMARY CARE	MS5-2016
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Members welcomed Andrew Cresswell, Locality Manager (North), Powys teaching Health Board to the meeting to provide an update on primary care which comprised

of GP practices, general medical practice, dentists, opticians, community pharmacists, community nursing, community hospital beds, school health services and midwifery. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **General Practice** – there's a nationally recognised crisis in terms of the recruitment and retention of GPs. In the UK two thousand GP positions remain unfilled and the position is likely to worsen as GPs retire (the age profile of the general workforce is nearing retirement). Issues are not particular to rural areas
- b. **Older Population** – the above is against a backdrop of people living longer and having more complex care needs. Expectations regarding levels of care are also high and on the increase
- c. **Newtown GP Practice** – recruiting to vacant positions had been difficult and no applications had been received, the surgery is down 50% on previous arrangements and is operating with 3 GPs as opposed to 6
- d. **Machynlleth GP Practice** – due to difficulties in recruiting to GP positions the Powys teaching Health Board had been managing arrangements. There were some initial teething problems, however, arrangements are working well and provision had been retained
- e. **Clinical Expertise** – despite the preference to be seen by a GP in many circumstances care and health needs could be assessed and treated by other clinical professionals. At Newtown and Machynlleth residents could expect to discuss matters in the first instance with a clinical nurse thus making better use of resource. Patient surveys and feedback from the Health Inspectorate Wales had viewed this arrangement as satisfactory and clinically safe. Adopting this approach has released GP time to undertake relevant function
- f. **Access to Care** – successive governments had pledged to increase access to care/medical services. The principle had been very well received by the public but the resource to deliver remains an issue
- g. **Commissioned Services** – a significant proportion of primary care services are commissioned by the Powys teaching Health Board
- h. **Welsh Government Funding (GP Practices)** – the Welsh Government had begun a process of withdrawing a grant it had provided to GPs to support the operation of practices (a seven year reduction programme)
- i. **Powys teaching Health Board (GP Practices)** – retaining GP provision remains a priority for the Powys teaching Health Board. A cluster based approach, which includes providing funding, had been introduced. Use of websites etc. to promote Powys as a place to work from and live in had helped with recruiting. Engaging with GP and student networks had also been positive. A project in Ceredigion to review 'thick files' had proven positive. Measures to support managing workload would continue to be considered. A member requested details of the number of GP positions that were filled by GPs who had been Powys educated. It was reported that the recruitment processes sits outside of the Powys teaching Health Board so educational backgrounds were not known (GPs appoint to their practices)
- j. **Healthy Lifestyle Campaigns** – national media and publicity campaigns have had a dramatic impact on lifestyles i.e. drink driving, smoking, road safety (seat belts)
- k. **Choose Well** – there would be further efforts to engage with the public via. Choose Well. Choose Well promotes a range of clinical services which residents are able to access for the most appropriate care for their needs
- l. **Concern** – a member expressed concern with regard to the care he had received following a hip replacement. The matter would be investigated outside of the meeting

- m. **Shropdoc** – shropdoc work under contract with the Powys teaching Health Board. The Powys teaching Health Board monitor Shropdoc performance which is recognised nationally as the best in Wales by Health Inspectorate Wales. There were some performance issues 2-3 years back which had been resolved
- n. **Prescription Charges** – in the wider sense introducing payments for prescriptions would not generate sufficient income. The costs associated with operating the system to administer charging were significant
- o. **Flu Vaccination** – there had been issues last year with regard to the strain of the virus and the vaccination not matching. This year there was a better match. Despite some claims to the contrary, there's no evidence that vaccination infects those injected (it does, however, take three days for the vaccination to protect)
- p. **Llansantffraid GP Surgery** – the local member had expected consultation with regard to the surgery closure. It was reported that the site was run GPs who financed it and that the Powys teaching Health Board had no responsibility or jurisdiction over the operation of the site. The financing GPs had decided to move to a base at Four Crosses
- q. **Patient Listening Events** – members were reminded that Shropshire and Telford NHS Trust had arranged for patient listening events to be held on 9th February in Welshpool Livestock Market and on 16th February in Llanidloes War Memorial Hospital (10 a.m. – 4.30 p.m. for both sessions)

Members thanked Andrew for his update.

6.	CORPORATE FRAUD PREVENTION	MS6-2016
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Members welcomed Yvette Kottaun, Senior Investigator and Nicola Clements, Investigating Officer to the meeting to provide an update in relation to Corporate Fraud prevention 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 claim for payments, exemptions, grants or services reduces the money available to support public funded activities
- 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 had re-billed for overpayments of £230k and had prevented paying out fraudulent claims which would have amounted to in the region of £184k. It's expected that the work of the team moving forward would become more important. The fraud team agreed the need to invest in this area, praise should be directed at the team for identifying fraud as an area for resourcing and development
- c. **Prevention/Detection** – preventing fraud and detection are viewed as very important. There are various sanctions which could be imposed and methods of debt recovery/repayment can vary
- d. **Fraud Teams** – since the introduction of SFIS an increasing number of public services don't retain fraud teams and seem to accept fraud or believe they do not have any. There could be scope for the Powys team to provide services for other authorities and/or public bodies (of the 22 Welsh local authorities just 9 undertake any fraud prevention activities, and some currently limited in only looking at Council Tax Reduction/Council Tax exemption fraud). There are strict controls regarding investigations and how they can be undertaken, Powys has authority under legislation and resource to meet such requirements
- 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 shortly to roll out an e-learning package and provide face to face fraud awareness sessions tailored to the service area needs
- g. **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014** – there would be additional requirements for authorities to comply with under the Act. It would be important for there to be strong fraud prevention and review safeguards

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	MS7-2016
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Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, Cabinet Portfolio Holders. During discussion particular reference was made to the below matters:

8.	COUNCILLOR WYNNE JONES – DEPUTY LEADER/CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER: FINANCE	MS8-2016
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- a. **Business Rate Rebate** –a grant provided by the Welsh Government (£1.5k per retail qualifying retail business) would be discontinued with effect from 1st April 2016
- b. **2016/2017 Budget Settlement** – the Welsh Government had yet to confirm the final settlement. It's expected that there would be additional funding provided above the provisional announcement for rural authorities to lessen the impact, it could provide up to £1.933 million for Powys. In the light of the above Cabinet had provisionally agreed two budgets (a 3% reduction and a 4.1% reduction). There would be a Cabinet meeting on 18th February when Cabinet would agree a recommendation for submission to Council on 25th February. Council Tax would be set by Council on 9th March. The budget would include a contingency and would be a three year balanced budget
- c. **Cabinet 26th January 2016 (Overview and Forecast Position)** – a member expressed concern regarding reports of over and underspends within service areas. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that as long as the global budget was balanced he would be satisfied, but all scheduled savings not achieved would be. As usual, unachieved savings would be carried over to following year, where services would have to achieve them in addition to their 2016/17 savings
- d. **Fire Authority** – the Welsh Government provides funding via. local authority revenue settlements for passporting to the Fire Authority to support its operation. This year the levy imposed by the Fire Authority on the Council had increased by £54k (the levy significantly exceeds the funding provided by the Welsh Government) when at same time funding from Government for the Fire Service had decreased by £140k. As a result the Council Tax increase this year would contain 0.3% for the Fire Service
- e. **Highways** – the savings target for highways would be reviewed in the light of the scale and potential impact. Members welcomed the review. The portfolio holder confirmed that he is looking to provide some assistance to Highways by reducing their savings target by allocating £850k of revenue to the service for 2016/17. Over the 4 year period 2015/21019, cuts of in the region of 30% would still have to be made against the current budget. The outcome would be likely to be a Commissioning and Procurement approach to delivering the service

- f. **Adult Social Care** – funding would need to be identified to meet pressures in terms of delivering domiciliary care and the portfolio holder was looking to allocate over £1m for 16/17 to this service accordingly
- g. **Williams Report (Local Authority Areas)** – there would be no change to the current composition of Powys in that 73 wards would be maintained. Proposals in the Williams Report included reducing the number of electoral wards in Powys from 73 to 64. The status quo provided a cost pressure to the forward budget of £175k per annum
- h. **Living Wage** – Cabinet remain committed to paying at the rate of the living wage which had increased to £8.25 per hour. Additional costs to meet the commitment for 2016/17 would be £292k for directly employed staff, but there would be additional cost for ‘in-direct’ staff
- i. **Income Targets** – income targets would need to be reviewed and closely monitored. A member suggested reviewing the operation of the vacant seat payment scheme with a view to securing income from school transport. The Portfolio Holder was under the impression that the Vacant Seat Scheme was to continue but with an increase in charges for April 2016, but he would check on the position and circulate the answer to all Members in next few days
- j. **Welsh Language** – there would be additional requirements to meet that would need to be funded at an estimated cost of £150k per annum
- k. **Damaging Media Reports** – there had been some recent media reports which had been misleading and damaging to the Council i.e. costs for supply teacher cover, charges for mobile phone use and benzene near a Radnorshire school. Where quotes are made they should be challenged to reflect to the true position. The Chairman requested detail in relation to the range of contracts for staff mobile phone use, including where contracts had recently been cancelled to achieve a saving. The portfolio holder informed the meeting that all mobile phones not used for 6 months had been turned off/cancelled with a saving of £80k and that in the last year there had been a saving on mobile phones of about £150k (some of that due to staff reductions). It should be remembered that mobile phones are used more for emails than for telephone calls, and that they are an essential tool for efficient working
- l. **Community Delivery (Asset Transfers - Public Conveniences)** – the Portfolio Holder referred to the decision taken to transfer public conveniences to communities. Once the decision had been taken back in 2011, the budget for the HTR service had been reduced accordingly. The costs of retaining facilities where there had yet to be transfers remains with the Authority and had, therefore, been shown as an overspend. This had been the case for every year since the original decision

9.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES	MS9-2016
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There were no reports or questions to members serving on outside bodies.

10.	CORRESPONDENCE	MS10-2016
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A483 – Garreg LLwyd, Windfarm Development – members were reminded that during the construction phase (which had commenced) turbine components would be driven from Elsmere Port through Newtown. It is expected that the increase in traffic would be during August 2016 if all goes as scheduled.

10.a Powys Independent Alliance Group

The Chairman of the Powys Independent Alliance Group referred to a matter raised by his group for discussion at today's meeting in relation to their view regarding the conduct of the shire Chairman following the last meeting. As opposed to embarking on the more formal route of referring the matter to standards it was the view of the group that the Chairman be asked to respond to two matters and, if he felt appropriate, apologise. The letter with the detail had been circulated with papers for today's shire meeting. Having considered the position the Chairman:

- a. **Apology to the Chief Executive** – the Montgomeryshire Chair unreservedly apologised to the Chief Executive
- b. **Apology to Montgomeryshire** – no apology given as the Chairman states that he did not leak confidential information as he had no knowledge what was said in the meeting as he was not present

The Chairman provided a statement to the meeting which he asked the clerk to hold with the files.

The PIA Chairman would report the above back to the group for a view. It was the view of a number of members that there should be no further discussion at the shire in relation to this matter.

As a result of the above the Leader of the PIA felt that the response was inappropriate from the Shire Chairman so he would refer the matter back to the group for their view.

It was the view of a number of members of the Shire present, that there should be no further discussion at the shire in relation to this matter, however, the Leader of PIA reminded Members that should his group wish to bring forward a motion in relation to this matter they had the right to do so.

11.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	MS11-2016
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It was agreed that the next meeting would be in April not March as per the agenda.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR A.W. DAVIES
CHAIRMAN**