

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BRECKNOCKSHIRE COMMITTEE
HELD AT NEUADD BRYCHEINIOG, BRECON ON
MONDAY 7th MARCH 2016**

Present: County Councillor H. Williams – Chairman

County Councillor P.J. Ashton, S. C. Davies, M.J. Dorrance, M.B.J. Davies, L. Fitzpatrick, M.R. Harris, J.C. Holmes, G.G. Hopkins, S. McNicholas, D.W. Meredith, E.T. Morgan, W.D. Powell, D.R. Price, K.S. Silk, D.A. Thomas and D.G. Thomas.

In attendance:

Councillor J. Powell - Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Environment and Sustainability, Nigel Brinn - Head of Highways, Transport and Recycling, Ashley Collins – Waste and Recycling Strategy Manager, Dai Davies – FYI Brecon, Pippa Davies– FYI Brecon, Mark Evans – Head of Business Services, Nichola Williams – Schools Cashless Systems Project Manager and Shane Thomas – Clerk.

1.	APOLOGIES	BS1-2016
-----------	------------------	-----------------

Apologies for absence were accepted from County Councillor W. Jones – Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Finance and Councillors J.G. Morris, G.W. Ratcliffe, T. Thomas, S.L. Williams and E.A. York.

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 21st DECEMBER 2015	BS2-2015
-----------	--	-----------------

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on Monday 21st December 2015 as a correct record subject to amending the reference in minute 6.a. on page 3 to read that the UK would accept up to 20,000 refugees over five years (not Wales) and 6 h. to read Hay, Brecon and Talgarth Support Group as opposed to Hay, Brecon and Telford Support Group During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Brecon Amenity Site** – the Chair had visited the site as requested at the last meeting and was in agreement that steps at the site were very steep and potentially dangerous. It was reported that the site had been risk assessed in terms of access. Members were informed that staff on site had a duty to help residents in disposing of waste, and in particular where they have mobility issues. A member reported that on occasion staff had been unhelpful and rude to residents

3.	CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	BS3-2016
-----------	---------------------------------	-----------------

The below matters were raised under this item of business:

- a. **Assistance Vice-Chairman of Powys County Council** – the Chairman reminded members that it was the turn of the Shire to nominate a member for the position of Assistant Vice-Chairman of Council. Following due process members agreed to nominate Councillor Mrs. M.R. Harris for the position

- b. **Brecknockshire** – a number of members questioned the value of Shire meetings given the absence of decision making powers and it was felt by some that shire meetings continue to be a legacy from when the Council operated differently. Given that the requirement to hold meetings remains it was felt that meetings should be used to identify issues of concern/relevance to the shire for raising as appropriate i.e. at a higher level within the Council. In the light of discussion it was agreed to hold an informal shire meeting to consider school matters on Wednesday 13th April 2016 which would be followed by a formal meeting when minutes could be taken to record a shire view for appropriate referral/consideration

4.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	BS4-2016
-----------	---------------------------------	-----------------

There were no declarations of interest from members relating to items to be discussed on the agenda.

5.	FYI BRECON	BS5-2016
-----------	-------------------	-----------------

Members welcomed Dai Davies and Pippa Davies, FYI Brecon to the meeting to provide an update in relation to the venture. During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Funding** – the Welsh Government had provided initial grant funding to support the FYI project which is a web-based approach to promoting community activities. More recently funding had been provided jointly by Swansea University and the Welsh Government to develop FYI web-based sites. The success depends on communities accepting the idea and showing an appetite to engage in the spirit of the approach
- b. **FYI Sites** – FYI sites operate in Brecon, Talgarth, Neath and Carmarthen and were established around 2 ½ years ago
- c. **Site Content/Localism** – content is community owned and provided by the communities from the areas which sites serve. Local trade would be supported through site development and there would be a strong focus on support local traders in getting the best from sites
- d. **Performance/Monitoring** – activity is monitored, the number of hits to each site has been significant and demonstrates an appetite to engage with the project. Personal profiles can be built and preferences loaded so that those who access sites can obtain specific information in relation to areas of interest
- e. **Development** – the site has potential for development and the next phase would be to engage with public bodies to look to include information which they provide and the public access on FYI sites. Using sites to publish information could also save the public purse i.e. using sites to provide public notices etc. (legislation allowing)
- f. **Data Protection** – since the community would be managing site content there would be no data protection issues unlike if an organisation was to manage contents
- g. **Red Kite (Residents Newsletter)** – a member referred to the residents newsletter which had been withdrawn some years back due to cost and requested clarification in relation to whether the impact of withdrawing it had been assessed and evaluated. The matter would be taken back to the Authority with a request for feedback

6.	BUSINESS SERVICES/CASHLESS SYSTEM FOR SCHOOLS PROJECT – UPDATE	BS6-2016
-----------	---	-----------------

Members welcomed Mark Evans – Head of Business Services and Nichola Williams, School Cashless Systems Project Manager to the meeting to provide an update in relation to their areas. During discussion particular reference was made to:

Business Services

- a. **Service Improvement/Review** – reviewing functions to achieve best value, improve operations/processes and deliver on very challenging savings remains a priority. Services include income and awards, pension administration, employment services, business support and customer services
- b. **Activity Overviews** – the above services bill for the collection of council tax and business rates, manage a £500 million pension fund and annual staff pay bill of £170 million, administer social care income payments of in the region of £8m and manage 330,000 calls/e-mails through customer services per annum. Delivering on Welfare Reform and meeting obligations also sits within Business Services
- c. **Compliance** – whilst accepting the challenges of delivering business services there's a strong focus on ensuring that processes comply with relevant legislation i.e. management of the pension fund, processing pay etc.
- d. **Change and Transformation** – employees within Business Services have engaged with service reviews etc. to identify areas for improvement. A transformation team would be reviewing needs for future service delivery

Cashless System for Schools

- a. **Introduction** – members were reminded that school audits had identified the handling of cash at schools as a particular risk. Most other UK authorities use cashless systems for managing payments. Funding had been identified by the Authority to introduce systems into schools
- b. **Award** – Nationwide Retail Systems Ltd partnering with Parent Pay had secured the contract for providing a cashless system for the authority's schools
- c. **Pilot** – a pilot would be operated at Crickhowell High School on 14th March and its four feeder primary schools after the Easter break. There would be appropriate evaluations etc. to learn from any teething problems before wider roll out
- d. **Credit** – there would be a range of ways to apply credit to i.e. from the web to use of community pay points. Minimum and maximum transaction rates could be set and parents could view a range of information in relation to the use of credit i.e. what children were eating at school
- e. **Payments** – biometric systems would be used at secondary schools (thumb prints), picture ID would be used at primary schools
- f. **Additional Benefits** – in addition to removing the risks associated with handling cash at school sites there would be additional benefits in terms of reducing queuing times, removing stigma for free school meal entitlements, controlling diet for those with particular dietary needs, removing the potential for bullying etc.
- g. **Roll Out** – it's the intention that all schools would be cashless within the next two years. There would be due regard to changes proposed under the school modernisation programme. Systems, hardware etc. would be transferrable and able to be relocated. The local member for St. David's Within, Brecon reported that he had been provided with conflicting information regarding arrangement for installing systems at Brecon High School

7.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO CABINET PORTFOLIO	B7-2016
----	--	----------------

Members welcomed the opportunity to receive reports from, and to put questions to, Cabinet Portfolio Holders.

7.1 Councillor John Powell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Environment and Sustainability

During discussion particular reference was made to:

- a. **Waste and Recycling 2015/16 Target** – it is very likely that the 58% statutory recycling target would be met
- b. **Budget** – significant savings are still to be made from the waste and recycling budget in due course
- c. **3 Weekly Collections** – there had been some issues, however, generally the roll out had been positive. It has become the norm for authorities to introduce three weekly collections. Despite suspicions regarding increased fly tipping and burning of waste as a result of moving to three weekly collections there had been no evidence that it had
- d. **Bulking Sites** – providing in-Powys facilities remains important and there are plans to create three Powys bulking sites. The site in Brecon is up and running with the Rhayader site currently under development. Sites are currently being considered in north Powys. In-county bulking sites would save on transport, save on processing costs and maximise any income available
- e. **Best Value for Waste** – to a greater or lesser extent everything could be recycled, however, there was a fine balance to be struck in terms of recycling items that would provide a good return and recycling that would incur costs
- f. **Waste Awareness and Enforcement Officers** - the Authority has three shire based waste awareness and enforcement officers
- g. **Enforcement** – the Authority operates a staged escalation process where residents don't recycle in accordance with the Authority's scheme and consistently present side waste for collection (from material being left with advice on how to recycle to being issued with fix penalty notices and potential for court proceedings)
- h. **Collections** – members referred to issues regarding damage to collection boxes and boxes being blown around in inclement weather. The kerbside box system is the Welsh Governments preferred option. There had also been reports of wagons losing waste because doors had not been properly secured after being opened. Members were informed that a very strong message had been provided to operatives in that they were to secure doors at all times when not loading or unloading. Action had been taken to discipline operatives who had not complied with the instruction (as 50 vans use 500 routes to serve 65,000 households, it is important that Members can give officers as much detail as possible if this is witnessed)
- i. **Assisted Collections** – the Authority operates an assisted collection scheme. The process would normally require a letter from a doctor or from social care to support an application. Some elderly residents who don't need the services of either might find it more difficult to apply for help with their collections. Where

there are particular situations direct contact with the Authority to discuss matters would be important. A member suggesting use local members to support the process i.e. local member determination of who should qualify given that the member would have local knowledge

- j. **Medical Waste** – there had been issues with regard to the collection of medical waste and in particular incontinence pads. Some members were of the view that three weekly collections of medical waste in the hotter weather would need to be reviewed. Where there are issues members/residents were encouraged to contact the Authority direct
- k. **Performance** – officers are confident that performance against targets had improved but would be looking to use evidence to confirm positions and would report on performance in due course
- l. **Communication** – it continues to be important to keep residents informed and updated and especially where changes occur i.e. the change in relation to the recycling of plastic waste
- m. **Household Recycling Sites** – in order to contribute to achieve savings in the MTFs, there is a proposal to close two sites, leaving one in each shire. The matter had become an issue of local concern in Ystradgynlais given that if the site at Lower Cwmtwrch closed, household waste from the area would have to be transported to Brecon. Members were informed that sites for consideration for potential closure had not been determined

7.2 Councillor Wynne Jones, Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Finance

Having presented apologies due to Cabinet commitments members accepted the written update report from the Portfolio Holder as presented to the meeting. Members wanting to discuss matters relating to finance were encouraged to contact the Portfolio Holder direct

8.	REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS SERVING ON OUTSIDE BODIES	BS8-2016
-----------	--	-----------------

There were no reports from or questions to members serving on outside bodies

8.1 Local Development Plan Working Group

Having noted that meetings of the LDP Working Group were not as frequent as they had been members would welcome Councillor Ratcliffe continuing to represent Brecknockshire on the group.

9.	CORRESPONDENCE	BS9-2016
-----------	-----------------------	-----------------

There were no items of correspondence.

10.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	BS10-2016
------------	-----------------------------	------------------

The next meeting would be held on Monday 20th June 2016.

County Councillor H. Williams

Chairman