

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 19 MARCH 2024

PRESENT

County Councillor M Dorrance (Chair)

County Councillors J Berriman, J Charlton, R Church, S Cox, S C Davies, P Roberts, D Selby and D A Thomas

In attendance: County Councillors AW Davies, B Davies, GD Jones, GE Jones and E Vaughan.

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors J Gibson-Watt and J Brignell-Thorp (Cabinet Assistant).

2.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting held on 27th February 2024 as a correct record.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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There were no declarations of interest reported.

4.	YSGOL BRO CAEREINION LANGUAGE CATEGORY - CONSULTATION REPORT
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Cabinet considered responses to the consultation on the proposal to make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Caereinion from dual-stream to Welsh-medium on a phased basis, year-by-year. The report included the consultation document, the consultation report which detailed the responses received and the Council's response to them, minutes of meetings with staff, governors and pupils and updated impact assessments.

There had been a large response to the consultation with respondents supporting and opposing the proposal. Based on the findings of the consultation, the advice of officers was that the Council should proceed with the proposal to change Ysgol Bro Caereinion's language category by publishing a Statutory Notice.

To address the concerns about the proposed implementation in the secondary phase, it was recommended that an amendment was made to the date that the secondary transition would start, from September 2025 to September 2026. This would provide a further year for arrangements to be made for pupils to access 'Trochi' provision, and it would also provide a further year for pupils and their families to consider their choices. This would mean that pupils currently in years 5 and 6 would not be affected by the change of language category and the first cohort that would be affected would be the current year 4.

To address concerns raised in the consultation regarding transport for those pupils whose chose alternative English-medium secondary education it was recommended that, as a temporary measure, free home-to-school transport to their nearest English-medium secondary school be offered to those pupils who were (a) currently in years 4 and below at Ysgol Bro Caereinion and Ysgol Rhiw Bechan and (b) who currently access English-medium primary provision at those schools, when they transfer from primary to secondary education from September 2026 onwards. Once those pupils in year 4 and below had transferred the offer of free home-to-school transport would end. Cabinet was advised that there may in future be a need to revise the Council's Home to School Transport Policy to differentiate between a Welsh-medium secondary provider and a dual stream secondary provider, to ensure that pupils wishing to access designated Welsh-medium secondary provision are able to do so.

County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan spoke as the Chair of the WESP Partnership in favour of the proposal. He highlighted the importance of Trochi and for co-operation with Ysgol Bro Hydden.

County Councillor Gareth D Jones spoke as the local councillor. He acknowledged that while many in the community welcomed the proposal others strongly opposed it. He welcomed the proposed change to the recommendations to delay the start of the secondary transition to September 2026. He also welcomed the proposal for free home-to-school transport for year 4 and below but said that it was unacceptable for other pupils wishing to choose English medium education to pay for transport and he called for this to be looked at. He highlighted the request from the governors for a written commitment for additional funding to offset an anticipated fall in pupil numbers. Councillor Jones said that he supported the proposal but that more work was needed on transport, communications and catchment areas to give it every chance of success.

County Councillor Bryn Davies spoke as a local councillor for a ward within the Ysgol Bro Caereinion catchment area to support the proposal.

In response to questions raised it was confirmed that Trochi would be available from after Easter 2024 and that the home-to-school transport policy would be reviewed. The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys said that having considered the representations made, he was happy to move the recommendations which would provide a Welsh medium secondary school in the north east of the county.

RESOLVED

- 1. To receive the Consultation Report in respect of the proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Caereinion.**
- 2. To approve the publication of a statutory notice proposing the following:**
 - To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Caereinion from dual stream to Welsh-medium.**

- This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2025 and Year 7 in September 2026.

This would mean that:

- English-medium provision would be phased out gradually year by year, starting with Reception in September 2025 and Year 7 in September 2026 – after which dates pupils would be taught in Welsh-medium classes and become fully bilingual i.e. fluent in both Welsh and English.
 - Additional Welsh language support would be provided alongside the change e.g. Trochi provision, Welsh language training for staff / parents.
3. To approve on a discretionary basis only as allowed by the Council's Home to School Transport Policy to offer free home to school transport to English-medium pupils currently in years 4 and below at Ysgol Bro Caereinion and Ysgol Rhiw Bechan to their nearest English-medium secondary provider when they transfer from primary to secondary.

5. IRFON VALLEY CP SCHOOL OBJECTION REPORT

The Director of Social Services and Wellbeing declared an interest in this item and left the meeting while it was being considered.

Cabinet was advised that no objections had been received during the statutory objection period and therefore it was recommended to proceed with implementation of the proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School from the 31st August 2024.

The Director of Education placed on record her thanks to the staff and governors for the years of service that they had given to the school and the community.

RESOLVED

1. To approve the proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School from 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools.
2. In accordance with the Scheme for Financing Schools, to introduce the following restrictions on Irfon Valley C.P. School:
 - Spend at the school is restricted to that included in its approved budget plan and no virement of funds

between budget headings is permitted unless approved by the Authority;

- **Any staffing changes are subject to approval by the Authority;**
- **Any contracts awarded for the supply of goods or services are subject to approval by the Authority.**

6.	HRA THIRTY YEAR BUSINESS PLAN 2024-2025
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Cabinet considered the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Thirty Year Financial Business Plan Starting 2024-2025 as set out in the HRA Business Plan Narrative.

The HRA Thirty Year Business Plan starting 2024-25 for Powys:

- Supports the outcomes of the Council’s Corporate and Strategic Equalities Plan: ‘Stronger, Fairer, Greener’.
- Makes sure the HRA treasury management strategy is prudent and complies with the Council’s approach to borrowing.
- Sets a balanced budget with minimum reserve of £1,000,000 (or 3% of expenditure).
- Allows the Council to maintain the current WHQS for current homes but within current income projects is not able to cover in full the predicted additional costs arising from WHQS-2023.
- Supports the development of at least 350 new homes by 2031.
- Balances the need to keep rents affordable with making sure that homes are maintained and kept in good condition.
- Maximises revenue and expenditure efficiencies.
- Complies with the Prudential Code.

A new build housing programme was underway which would deliver at least 350 new council homes by 2031. Further schemes were being developed to expand this programme. The development of new homes by the Council was supported by the acquisition of existing homes to increase the availability of affordable, secure housing.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Fairer Powys confirmed that there were no plans to sell off the Council’s social housing stock. He thanked the Tenants Scrutiny Panel and its Chair Mr Dave O’Connor and the Head of Housing and his team for their work.

RESOLVED to approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Thirty Year Business Plan 2024-2025, as set out in the HRA Business Plan Narrative (attached to the report as Appendix A).

County Councillor David Thomas joined the meeting at 10.53.

7.	CORPORATE AND STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN SCORECARD QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE (2023-2024)
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Cabinet considered the report for quarter 3 which set out performance against the objectives in the Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan. The report also set out a number of proposed amendments to measures.

The Cabinet also considered comments and recommendations from the Scrutiny Committees. A formal response would be provided by the due date.

RESOLVED that Cabinet

- 1. Confirm they are assured that performance is progressing well, or that mitigating actions have been identified and reflected in updates to service Integrated Business Plans.**
- 2. Confirm they are satisfied that any remedial actions will effectively improve performance in line with outcomes set out in the [Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan](#).**
- 3. Note the following amendments to measures:**
 - Measure 13: ‘The percentage of people accessing leisure facilities who report positive well-being (a high number is better)’ has been removed from the reporting, as the data is not available from the provider.**
 - Measure 16: ‘Number of learners enrolled in local authority community learning per 1,000 population (a high number is better)’ has been removed from the reporting. It is considered that this measure does not adequately reflect adult learning in the county, and relevant data are not available to report accurate enrolment figures nor meaningful updates.**
 - Measure 34: ‘Number of households who are living in temporary accommodation (a low number is better)’ has been updated to add clarifying information in brackets. It now reads: ‘Number of households who are living in temporary accommodation (those owed S68 interim duty who are/may be homeless and in priority need) (a low number is better)’.**
 - Measure 35: ‘A reduction in the child poverty rate’ has been amended to ‘The child absolute poverty rate’; this clarifies that the measure is monitoring the actual rate and not calculating a reduction. The aim is to enable readers of the report to understand the actual rate of child poverty over time.**
 - Measure 37: ‘Number of households who are homeless (a low number is better)’ has been updated to add clarifying information in brackets. It now reads: ‘Number of households who are homeless**

(those owed S73 duty to relieve homelessness and final S75 duty to help secure accommodation for those in priority need) (a low number is better)'.

8. JOINT SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP - LEISURE REVIEW

County Councillor Gareth E Jones presented the comments and recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Working Group on the effectiveness and impact of the Officer Working Group processes for the Leisure Review. The Working Group had concluded that each element of the review had been considered and conducted thoroughly for the best outcome for the residents of Powys and the Council as a whole. Councillor Jones asked that each of the Scrutiny Committees be given the opportunity to scrutinise the Leisure Review proposals.

The Cabinet Member for a More Prosperous Powys thanked the Working Group and said he accepted or partially accepted their recommendations. He confirmed that officers would provide as much information as possible whilst being mindful of the commercial sensitivity of some of the information.

9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER 3 REPORT

Cabinet considered the Treasury Management report for Quarter 3. The report set out the Council's borrowing and investment strategy.

10. DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING

Cabinet noted the delegated decisions taken by Cabinet members since the last meeting.

11. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Cabinet noted the forward work programme.

12. EXEMPT ITEMS

The resolution to exclude the press and public was not passed as the exempt report had been withdrawn.

13. NOT FOR PROFIT IN CHILDREN'S CARE - FOSTERING FRAMEWORK BUSINESS CASE

This item was withdrawn.

**County Councillor Matthew Dorrance
Chair**