

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT COUNCIL
CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON WEDNESDAY, 20
JANUARY 2016**

PRESENT

County Councillor P J Ashton (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, D Bailey, R G Brown, J H Brunt, K W Curry, M J B Davies, S C Davies, L R E Davies, E R Davies, S Davies, A W Davies, M J Dorrance, V E Evans, W J Evans, D O Evans, L Fitzpatrick, R I George, J Gibson-Watt, P Harris, M R Harris, S M Hayes, A Holloway, J C Holmes, G Hopkins, E A Jones, D C Jones, M J Jones, E M Jones, Eldrydd M Jones, G M Jones, J R Jones, W T Jones, F H Jump, H Lewis, MC Mackenzie, D Mayor, S McNicholas, P J Medlicott, DW Meredith, ET Morgan, G Morgan, JG Morris, W J T Powell, WD Powell, GD Price, D R Price, P C Pritchard, G W Ratcliffe, K M Roberts-Jones, J G Shearer, K S Silk, K F Tampin, D A Thomas, W B Thomas, A G Thomas, D G Thomas, R G Thomas, T Turner, T J Van-Rees, G P Vaughan, D H Williams, S L Williams, J M Williams and G I S Williams

1.	APOLOGIES	CC1- 2016
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors G. Banks, GJ Bowker, LV Corfield, DE Davies, DR Jones, PE Lewis, RH Mills and EA York.

2.	MINUTES	CC2- 2016
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2015 as a correct record subject to the following amendments: the inclusion of County Councillor KF Tampin in the list of members present and the deletion of County MJ Jones from the list of members present.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	CC3- 2016
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There were no declarations of interest reported.

4.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	CC4- 2016
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The Chair of Council reported on some of the activities he had undertaken since the last meeting. He had been pleased to host the staff awards ceremony in December and he congratulated all those who had been nominated. He had also presented a number of silver kite awards including one to Lloyd Crawley from Penycae who had won gold and silver medals representing Great Britain in badminton at the Special Olympics in Los Angeles.

The Chair also advised that before the start of the meeting he had received a petition containing over 2,000 signatures calling for the day care centre in Llanidloes to be kept open. He would pass the petition on to the Leader of the Council.

5.	LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	CC5- 2016
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The Leader reported that since the announcement of the provisional settlement he had been in contact with the county's AMs seeking their support for a better deal for Powys. Work on the budget was continuing and Cabinet would meet on 18th February to recommend a budget to Council on 25th February. The Leader also mentioned the RWAS Winter Fair where the Council had hosted a number of events.

6.	CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING	CC6- 2016
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The Chief Executive referred to the opening of the new Welsh medium primary school at Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd in Newtown. This £8.4m investment had been supported by a 50% contribution towards capital costs from the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools programme. The Chief Executive also advised that the Council had received £300,000 from Welsh Government as a contribution towards the set-up costs of integration and that Julie Rowles had joined the Council on a 12 month secondment to help progress integration. Integrated care pathways for older people had been introduced in Ystradgynlais and would be rolled out in Machynlleth and Llanidloes. The Chief Executive also reported that work was due to start on the Newtown bypass in February and that work on the new Dyfi bridge would begin later in the year. Finally, he reported that the Council was supporting an event being held by the Seren Network to encourage high achieving pupils to apply for Russell Group universities including Oxford and Cambridge. 80 Powys pupils would be taking part in the project.

7.	VIREMENTS REQUIRING COUNCIL APPROVAL	CC7- 2016
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In response to a question about the virement for the Housing Revenue Account, the Portfolio Holder for Property Buildings and Housing advised that clarification was being sought as to whether it could be used to build council houses. In response to a question on the virement for Brecon Cultural Hub he advised that he had received notification that the Heritage Lottery Fund Executive Board had approved £750k funding for the scheme.

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
To approve the virements set out in the schedule filed with the signed minutes.	As required by financial standing orders.

8.	APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES BY POLITICAL GROUPS APPROVED BY THE MONITORING OFFICER	CC9- 2016
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Council noted the following appointments made to committees by political groups and approved by the Monitoring Officer under the general power of delegation granted by Council:

County Councillors David Price and Gillian Thomas appointed to the Audit Committee by Powys Independent Alliance to fill vacancies.

County Councillor Garry Banks appointed to Place Scrutiny Committee by Labour in place of County Councillor Matthew Dorrance.

County Councillor James Gibson-Watt appointed to People Scrutiny Committee by the Liberal Democrats to fill a vacancy.

County Councillor Graham Jones appointed to Place Scrutiny Committee in place of County Councillor Gwilym Williams.

9.	CHAIRS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES	CC8- 2016
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Council considered the report of the Solicitor to the Council and noted that it fell to the Conservative Group to hold the position of Chair of the Place Scrutiny Committee. The Conservative Group had nominated County Councillor Graham Jones to the position.

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
To allocate the Chair of the Place Scrutiny Committee to the Conservative Group and to appoint County Councillor Graham Jones to that position.	To comply with statutory requirements (including those concerning the need for political balance) and the Council's Constitution in relation to the allocation and appointment of committee seats and Chairs.

10.	APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT (LAY) MEMBER ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE	CC10- 2016
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Council considered the report of the Solicitor to the Council on the appointment of an Independent (Lay) Member to the Standards Committee and the recommendation of the Standards Committee Appointments Panel that Mr Stephan Hays be appointed.

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision
That Mr Stephan Hays be appointed as an Independent (Lay) Member of the Standards Committee for a period of 6 years from 26th January 2016.	To comply with the requirements of the Independent (Lay) Members of the Standards Committee as required by the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001 (as amended).

Council placed on record its thanks to Mr Ralph Miller for his years of service on the Standards Committee as an Independent (Lay) Member.

11.	WYE NAVIGATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE	CC11- 2016
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Council considered a letter from the Environment Agency asking for the appointment of a member to serve on the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee.

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
That County Councillor Kelvyn Curry be appointed to the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee.	To fill a vacancy.

12.	COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME	CC12- 2016
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Council considered its forward work programme for 2016.

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision
To approve the Council forward work programme for 2016.	To set the Council's work programme for the year.

13.	NOTICE OF MOTION - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN COUNCIL MEETINGS	CC13- 2016
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Council debated the following motion proposed by County Councillor Gemma Bowker and seconded by County Councillor John Morris:

Powys County Council

- believes that we should do more to encourage residents of Powys to have a greater say in all council meetings
- thinks that public participation provides a means by which those with a view to express are able to do so at meetings where particular issues are being raised
- believes public engagement would be improved by offering a structured format at the start of all meetings of the council and its committees for members of the public to address councillors
- notes that a large proportion of Welsh local authorities already make provision for public participation at meetings

This council resolves

1. to empower the Democratic Services Committee to look at ways in which public participation operates successfully across Wales.
2. to explore options for introducing public participation and make proposals aimed at introducing a system to allow members of the public to contribute in council meetings.

More than ten members present called for a recorded vote.

M.C. ALEXANDER	FOR
P.J. ASHTON	FOR
D. BAILEY	AGAINST
G.R. BANKS	APOLOGY
G.C. BOWKER	APOLOGY
R.G. BROWN	FOR
J.H. BRUNT	AGAINST
L.V. CORFIELD	APOLOGY
K.W. CURRY	FOR
A.W. DAVIES	FOR
D.E. DAVIES	APOLOGY
E.R. DAVIES	AGAINST
L.R.E. DAVIES	ABSTAIN
M.J.B. DAVIES	FOR
S.C. DAVIES	FOR
S. DAVIES	AGAINST
M.J. DORRANCE	FOR
D.O. EVANS	ABSTAIN
V.E. EVANS	ABSTAIN
W.J. EVANS	AGAINST
W.A. FITZPATRICK	ABSTAIN
R.I. GEORGE	FOR
J. GIBSON-WATT	FOR
M.R. HARRIS	AGAINST
P. HARRIS	ABSTAIN
S.M. HAYES	AGAINST
A. HOLLOWAY	ABSTAIN
J.C. HOLMES	AGAINST
G.G. HOPKINS	AGAINST
D.C. JONES	FOR
D.R. JONES	APOLOGY
E.A. JONES	FOR
ELDRYDD M. JONES	AGAINST
E.M. JONES	AGAINST
G.M. JONES	FOR
J. JONES	AGAINST
M.J. JONES	ABSTAIN
W.T. JONES	AGAINST
F.H. JUMP	FOR
H. LEWIS	AGAINST
P.E. LEWIS	APOLOGY
M. MACKENZIE	FOR
D.J. MAYOR	FOR
S. MCNICHOLAS	FOR
P.J. MEDLICOTT	AGAINST
D.W. MEREDITH	FOR
R.H. MILLS	APOLOGY
E.T. MORGAN	FOR
G. MORGAN	FOR
J.G. MORRIS	FOR
W.J.T. POWELL	ABSTAIN

W.D. POWELL	FOR
D.R. PRICE	AGAINST
G.D. PRICE	FOR
P.C. PRITCHARD	AGAINST
G.W. RATCLIFFE	ABSTAIN
K.M. ROBERTS-JONES	ABSTAIN
J.G. SHEARER	AGAINST
K.S. SILK	FOR
K.F. TAMPIN	AGAINST
A.G. THOMAS	AGAINST
D.A. THOMAS	FOR
D.G. THOMAS	AGAINST
R.G. THOMAS	FOR
W.B. THOMAS	FOR
T.G. TURNER	FOR
T.J. VAN REES	AGAINST
G.P. VAUGHAN	AGAINST
G.I.S. WILLIAMS	AGAINST
D.H. WILLIAMS	FOR
J.M. WILLIAMS	FOR
S.L. WILLIAMS	FOR
A.YORK	APOLOGY

The resolution was passed by 31 votes to 24 with 10 abstentions.

RESOLVED

- 1. to empower the Democratic Services Committee to look at ways in which public participation operates successfully across Wales.**
- 2. to explore options for introducing public participation and make proposals aimed at introducing a system to allow members of the public to contribute in council meetings.**

14.	QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION	CC14- 2016
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14.1. Question to the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Children's Services from County Councillor Huw Williams

How many fully qualified dedicated Social workers are employed within Children Services in Powys and where are they located? Also, what is their current average 'case work' load and how does this compare to other authorities and national guidelines?

Children's Services is currently operating 4 social work teams that are responsible for the day to day handling of the referral and assessments process,

and the ongoing case load management of Child in Need, Child Protection and Looked After Children caseloads. Social workers hold generic caseloads and the mix of these caseloads would be dependent on their experience and the complexity of the cases.

The following table shows a breakdown of social workers in the 4 operational child care teams as per the current structure at the start of November 2015. It should be noted that a Team Manager would not hold cases, and the Principal social worker would hold a reduced caseload due to other responsibilities.

	Team Manager	Principal Social Worker	Senior Practitioner	Social Worker
Brecon and Ystrad Children's Team	1	1	2	7
Radnor Children's Team	1	1	2	5
Newtown Children's Team	1	1	2	5
Welshpool Children's Team	1	1	2	5
Total worker	4	4	8	22
Total case open cases 12.11.2015		561 open cases		
Average cases load		16.5 cases per worker		

The following County wide teams who have bases both in the North and South of the County have been excluded from the average case load calculations. In relation to the Children With Disabilities Team, and the 16 Plus Team cases are held by both qualified and unqualified workers (we can provide a breakdown of this upon request). In relation to the IFST/TANS teams they are crisis intervention teams who respond to immediate crisis and offer short term intensive support. Workers in these teams do not hold case responsibility as this remains with the allocated social worker. Finally the Fostering Teams and Adoption teams undertake assessments however do not work directly with children and young people accessing services, again the case responsibility for children and young people will rest with the allocated social worker.

	Team Manager	Principal Social Worker	Senior Practitioner	Social Worker
Children with Disabilities	1	1	2	3.5
Open Cases as at 12.11.15		169		
16 Plus	1	1	2	3
Open Cases as at 12.11.15		124		
IFST/TANS	1	1		6
Fostering Team	1	1	2	6
Adoption	1			5.1
Total	5	4	6	23.6

The Welsh Assembly does not publish any national figures on average caseloads and therefore no direct comparisons are available with other Welsh Authorities. This said there have been a number of reports that have been produced in recent years that attempts to answer this question.

During 2012 Community Care undertook a survey covering 925 social workers from across the UK. This research suggested the UK average case load for a Child Care social worker was 25 cases.

More recently the Department for Education produced a report entitled "Children's Social Work Workforce during year ending 30 September 2014". This suggested that 16 child in need cases were held per full time equivalent.

In answer to Councillor Williams' supplementary question regarding the proposal to cut 20% from the Children's Services budget, equivalent to 7 social worker posts, the Portfolio Holder explained that the 20% reduction would be from the service as a whole and not just the staffing budget so it did not follow that 7 social worker posts would be cut. A review of Children's Services was underway tasked with implementing budget savings while keeping a safe service. The Portfolio Holder let members have details of the budget proposals when available.

14.2. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Finance from County Councillor Bob Mills

It is very important that we keep council tax to a minimum so why not move the appropriate personnel into the Shires and get rid of County Hall?

Keeping Council Tax as low as possible for our residents is something that we all as Councillors would like to achieve. However, in recent years achieving a low level of Council Tax has proved impossible due to the very poor funding settlements that has been received by the Council from Welsh Government. The position for next year is that we have received the lowest settlement in Wales with a cut in our AEF of 4.1% for 2016/17, which equates to £7.147 million. In addition to this the Council has around £5million of unavoidable growth pressure (e.g. Pay inflation, increase in employer's national insurance contributions, increased contributions to pension fund) which in total means that there are savings required of approx. £13million. Further significant savings will be required to be found for at least the following three years.

Cabinet have been working on a 3 year budget plan since June 2015, and have made substantial progress, but all calculations have been done on the assumption of a 3.75% Council Tax increase, and with the settlement we have received, it is looking extremely unlikely that it will be possible to provide a legally balanced budget for 2016/17 without some use of reserves. If Council was to set a low Council Tax increase at say 1%, that would mean that a shortfall in funding of income of £1.550million, and that shortfall would either have to be found either from further cuts in service or by a very large call on reserves. The problem with using reserves is that you can only spend them once, but the shortfall in funding outlined above will be repeated each and every year as we move forward. There are no easy choices in the situation facing our Council.

With regards to the issue raised of County Hall. The Cabinet have clearly set the Council on a course of reviewing the entire property portfolio, and the Councils Office accommodation throughout the County is not exempt from that process. With the planned changes to service delivery the Council needs to evaluate what office space it will need for future and to rationalise accordingly. There may come a time when County Hall may indeed not be needed, but that point in time

certainly has not yet arrived. It may well turn out that County Hall may be one of the most difficult buildings in Powys to actually dispose of, and a quite different solution may be therefore needed.

There was no supplementary question.

14.3. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Property, Buildings and Housing from County Councillor Gwilym Williams

Can you please tell me how many County Council houses, that would include flats and all residential properties, that are currently unoccupied and how many of these have been unoccupied for more than six months?

As at 4th January 2015, there were 106 empty council homes in Powys, managed by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Of these 24 had been vacant for more than 6 months.

The HRA manages 5,397 properties so the number of empty properties represents 1.96% of the housing stock, and the number empty for more than 6 months represents 0.44% of the housing stock.

There was no supplementary question.

14.4. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance

In November 2015, the Cabinet Member informed Brecon's County Councillors that the planned cultural hub was delayed partly because of a funding shortfall.

Will the Cabinet Member provide Council with an updated position statement, details of the financial shortfall and how the Council plans to close this funding gap so that this regeneration project can proceed?

The Brecon Cultural Hub is a flagship project for the County Council and is part of a major regeneration opportunity for Brecknockshire. The project has taken longer than expected to deliver, largely due to the Grant Funding process, Planning and Built Heritage requirements and ensuring affordability prior to tendering the work to the market through redesign but is now on the cusp of becoming a reality.

There is concern that with an industry increase in building costs running at an average of 6.5% per annum since the submission of the HLF bid (April 2013) that the budget set aside will not be sufficient. This, however, is now dependent on how the market responds to the tendered opportunity following the extensive cost reduction exercise and progression of the detailed design.

In addition to the cost reduction exercise, every effort is being made to close the funding gap including securing £300,000 of additional funding from local partners, Trusts and individuals and the submission of an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a grant increase of £373,457. The support from local partnerships has been crucial in attracting significant additional funding

from organisations such as the HLF and we are optimistic that the scheme will be affordable without putting undue pressure on the Councils resources.

Subject to a full cost analysis of the market response alongside the support from funding partners; if the costs remain greater than the budget allocated, the Cabinet will consider how to fund the gap. The Cabinet is aware of the importance of this project to Brecknockshire and the effort, resource and partnership support that has enabled it to reach this stage.

In answer to Councillor Dorrance's supplementary question as to what plans were in place if financial backing from the HLF did not materialise, the Portfolio Holder advised that the funding was in place for the project to proceed. If funding did fall through other capital funding would have to be sought.

14.5. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Education from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance

Does the Cabinet think it's fair to ask Learning Support Assistants in Schools to fund a £15 registration fee to enable them to do their jobs?

The Council, in common with the majority of other councils in Wales, responded to the Education Workforce Council's consultation on this proposal by making it clear that it did not support the introduction of registration fees for Learning Support Assistants and the additional financial burden that it would bring, either to the Council or the Learning Support Assistants themselves. The Cabinet has yet to make a formal decision on this matter but the Council's policy on the payment of professional and registration fees is currently being reviewed to ensure that whatever decision is taken, there is equity in the provisions for all staff.

In answer to Councillor Dorrance's supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder said that the Cabinet had yet to consider the matter.

14.6. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care from County Councillor Graham Jones

In the face of deep concerns from your electors, is Powys County Council willing to re-think its funding priorities in order to safeguard both day care, and the vital day centres, for its vulnerable elderly; taking into account that the professional care currently provided by Maes-y-Wennol Day Centre, Llanidloes, for example, could not guaranteed by the voluntary sector? What positive alternative measures are you considering to help this situation, I feel as an authority that we must try our utmost to look after our elderly residents?

Councillors will recall that in the 2014/15 budget debate, Council resolved to 'reconfigure day time activities for older people and withdraw from Council direct delivery and invest in new models of care'.

Subsequently, funding pressures have increased substantially and both Cabinet and Council have expressed a clear expectation that Adult Social Care should

bear its share of funding reductions, reinforcing the pressure to consider alternative models of day-time activity for older people. The model followed hitherto, of direct provision of day care by the council from council buildings, is not affordable within the resources now available.

In the wider context, models of provision are changing nationally, with discussion taking place in many forums about the best way to meet older people's needs and provision increasingly moving away from traditional fixed-base day care. The future service will need to address the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act

On 20th October Cabinet agreed to a detailed consultation on older people's day-time services, preceded and shaped by a 'listening and learning' discussion with stakeholders. On the conclusion of the consultation and its evaluation, a further paper will be brought to Cabinet with options for decision.

I know all members share your concern that day time provision for older residents in Powys should meet identified needs and help keep residents active and independent. The challenge of the consultation is to arrive at and evaluate different options for service development which meet the reduced budget, cater for a wider audience and fulfil the requirements under the new Social Services and Wellbeing Act. There is no preferred model at this stage, and councillors will appreciate that it would run counter to the effectiveness of the review and consultation if undertakings or guarantees were to be given in advance in respect of any part of the current service provision.

At the budget setting process, I must remind Councillors, that it was agreed in February 2013 that the budget for Day Centres was to be substantially reduced. This reduction in budget decreases the available funding from circa £4,000 per client to circa £800 from 2018.

In his supplementary question Councillor Jones asked what plans were in place to meet increased demand for residential accommodation if day centres were to close. The Portfolio Holder explained that the Cabinet was still long way from taking a decision on this and that the listening and learning exercise was underway, after which there would be a formal consultation. As part of the listening and learning exercise, Members were invited to a seminar on the afternoon of 29th January and the Portfolio Holder urged everyone to attend.

14.7. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability from County Councillor Gemma Bowker

Could the portfolio holder please provide reassurance that, following the significant increases in fees for bereavement services to full recovery rates, the bereavement service is being as well and efficiently run as possible and offering those having to meet these charges at a difficult time are provided with high levels of care and value for money?

In 2015, a review of the fees for bereavement services was undertaken. The review concluded that the existing fees did not cover the cost of the service. Furthermore when compared with other Welsh authorities, were found to be in the lowest quartile. Although significant, the increased fees introduced in January

2016 will not mean that the service is achieving full cost recovery, but will result in considerable progress being made towards achieving this in the future. The existing service will continue to offer an efficient but considerate service to bereaved families during their difficult time.

There was no supplementary question.

14.8. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability from County Councillor Graham Jones

Now that higher burial charges may be imposed by Powys County Council re: Cemeteries, concerns are that some families simply cannot afford these extra charges.

Has the Council considered that if these excessively high increased charges are implemented, this could well lead to an environmental problem?

What measures are the Council proposing, to address this?

It is acknowledged that the increases in burial fees are significant. However they are necessary in order for the Council to make significant progress towards full cost recovery in the future.

It is acknowledged that some families may struggle to afford a burial given the extra charges. This fact was taken into account when revising the new fees and this is why the Council did not go for full cost recovery at this present time.

In answer to Councillor Jones' supplementary question about public service funerals, the Portfolio Holder explained that the service was only recovering 72% of costs. He also advised that since 2012 there has been a fall in the number of public service funerals.

14.9. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Education from County Councillor David Meredith

In view of the significance that the uptake of Free School Meals has on the Family of Schools in which a School is situated. What action is the Authority taking along with ERW in order to provide better promotional material for schools to send out to parents in order to encourage them to apply? Furthermore when is the Authority likely to introduce a Cashless System which will avoid any embarrassment for those pupils receiving Free School Meals?

The authority has previously provided schools with letters to send to parents around the benefits to the Child, Parent, School and Local Authority of receiving free school meals. The award of free school meal entitlement is now undertaken by the council's income and awards team who undertake the assessment for other benefits such as Housing Benefit and Council Tax reduction etc. The service also undertakes a full check of entitled families in the first 2 – 3 weeks of January to ensure that all entitled children are given the Free School Meal entitlement in readiness for the PLASC return.

The roll out of the cashless system is expected to commence in February.

In response to Councillor Meredith's question on what the authority was doing to compliment the publicity work being undertaken by Erw to improve the take-up of free school meals, the Portfolio Holder said he would let the member know.

14.10. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Education from County Councillor David Meredith

When is the Authority going to take the decision on Welsh-medium Education in the Secondary Sector in the South of the County and, if not in the foreseeable future, when does the Authority intend notifying parents, especially of those who currently have children in Year 6 of where their children are going to receive their Welsh-medium Education with effect from September, 2016?

The future of Welsh-medium secondary education in the South and Mid Powys is being considered as part of the on-going Secondary School Review – which includes Builth, Llandrindod, Brecon and Gwernyfed High Schools. It is anticipated that the review will be completed soon. However, the Authority will be writing to parents of primary and secondary Welsh-medium pupils within the next week about the specific availability of Welsh-medium provision in September 2016.

In response to Councillor Meredith's supplementary question as to when a decision would be taken so that governing bodies could plan ahead for 1st September, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Cabinet would be taking a decision soon.

**County Councillor
PJ Ashton
Chair**