

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ECONOMY, RESIDENTS, COMMUNITIES AND GOVERNANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT BY TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 28 JANUARY 2021**

PRESENT: County Councillor M J Dorrance (Chair)  
County Councillors D Selby, G Jones, K W Curry, D O Evans, J Pugh, L Skilton,  
J Charlton, K Laurie-Parry, K Lewis and S L Williams

Cabinet Portfolio Holders In Attendance: County Councillors Aled Davies (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transport), Heulwen Hulme (Portfolio Holder for Environment), Iain McIntosh (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Planning and Housing), Rachel Powell (Portfolio Holder for Young People and Culture), Graham Breeze (Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Engagement and Regulatory Services), Rosemarie Harris (Leader), Phyl Davies (Portfolio Holder for Education and Property).

Officers: Dr Caroline Turner (Chief Executive), Matthew Perry (Head of Highways, Transport and Recycling), Nigel Brinn (Corporate Director - Economy and Environment), Paul Bradshaw (Head of Workforce and OD), Gwilym Davies (Head of Property, Planning and Public Protection), Nina Davies (Head of Housing and Community Development), Emma Palmer (Head of Transformation and Communications), Clive Pinney (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Diane Reynolds (Head of Digital Services), Jane Thomas (Head of Finance) and Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services)

<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>
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There were no apologies for absence.

<b>2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST</b>
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There were no disclosures of interest by Members relating to items to be considered at the meeting

<b>3. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPS</b>
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The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

<b>4. DRAFT 2021 - 22 BUDGET</b>
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**Documents Considered:**

- Draft 2021 – 22 Budget including:
  - A copy of the Cabinet report to provide the overall context for the budget setting process
  - A copy of the Mid Term Financial Strategy and Finance Resource Model
  - A copy of Services' cost reduction proposals
  - A copy of the Fees and Charges Report which provides an overview to Service proposals for income generation
  - A copy of the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy.

- A copy of the Reserves Policy
- A copy of the Future Proofing Powys Survey
- Individual Impact Assessments relating to the proposals

**Issues Discussed:**

- Draft Budget accepted by Cabinet with a 3.9% increase in Council Tax. Overall net spending would increase from approximately £270m to £280m. The budget includes significant investments as well as £12m of cost reductions.

- **Legal and Democratic Services**

- Savings – Registration Service £31k; Members Travelling Budget - £28k and Increased webcasting of meetings £40k.

- Questions:

Members Travel budget – it is hoped that the future norm will be for Members to meet remotely. Is there and work being undertaken with Democratic Service to review how the Council operates.	A review for staff as well as members is being undertaken. It will not be possible to rule out all face to face meetings. Hybrid meetings are also being considered where Members can participate in meetings from the Chamber and from their localities.
Member Travel budget - how much have we saved in last 12 months	This information can be circulated to members of the Committee - <b>Action.</b>

- **Financial Services**

- Savings – SWAP contract £26k; Card Terminal Merchant provider - £54k; Corporate Saving – pooling arrangements between the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the General Fund as well as savings in borrowing - £200k.

- Questions:

Will there be additional costs to the HRA to assist the General Fund	This is about both aspects of the Council picking up appropriate costs. Neither fund should suffer due to the activities of the other fund and that assurance was provided by the Head of Finance.
Fees and Charges which the Council makes	This does not relate to Financial Services and falls within the budget of the Head of Property, Planning and Public Protection.
Regarding the £54k saving for card payments - Why would we not have made this saving previously	The numbers of transactions have changed since the contract was first let. This is first opportunity the Council has had to revisit this and seek another provider.

- **Workforce and Organisational Development**

- Savings – there is a proposal to reduce the workforce by 2.5 staff in 2022-23. For 2021-22 – saving on Leadership and Development £10k.

- Questions:

<p>What will the reduction in funding mean for the Council workforce and how the Service will invest to make sure that female employees and those from under-represented groups in the Council's workforce can access training opportunities.</p>	<p>Leadership training was reviewed some 18 months ago. There are several layers of training now rather than the two that were in existence previously and these increased numbers of steps will make training more accessible to individuals. Hopefully be able to obtain greater funding from Welsh Government through apprenticeships programmes. An Equalities Group has been established which could look at how the Council can promote more leadership training to a greater number of individuals.</p>
<p>Could the Committee receive a presentation about the leadership programme and apprenticeships.</p>	<p>This can be scheduled into the Committee's work programme - <b>Action.</b></p>

- **Economy and Digital Services**

- Savings – Customer Services post - £16k; Reduction in Postage Cost - £47k; Digital Solutions across the Council - £400k; Reduction in contract costs - £65k; Organisation systems rationalisation £75k, Reduction in numbers of small systems - £53k; Using grant for core services - £12k; Reduction in staff in FOI team - £13k.

- Questions:

<p>Reduction in customer services posts - is this a reduction in staff who respond to telephone calls.</p>	<p>This is a saving in the back office function dealing with post, printing and scanning. The Council is investing in an omni-channel approach which integrates the way that individuals contacts the Council, upgrading the telephony and moves to a more customer centred approach.</p>
<p>The £400k customer centred digital solutions – can you provide more detail.</p>	<p>This is about using digital tools to automate processes so that the Council can focus on customer centred services and reduce transaction costs e.g. early years support – individuals can find the information they require and book this service themselves with less input from service with processes being automated. This is for people who want to help themselves, but there will also be support for others</p>

	who do not wish to use automated systems.
In the Head of Service's presentation, it indicates that the costs will be less but services will be improved. However, IT developments traditionally run late due to the complexity of those projects. What degree of confidence is there that these projects can be delivered in the next financial year. Can you provide an assurance that the digitally excluded are not being left behind by the proposed changes.	Targets for the end of the current year have been met by the end of Quarter 3. One of the targets was an increase in the number of individuals with a My Powys Account. There is confidence that the savings can be achieved. This target has been achieved and exceeded. The automated systems are there for those individuals who want to use them but traditional contact methods are not being removed. There will be an opportunity for individuals to do those elements that they want to do online e.g. amending their Council Tax or Business Rates direct debits online. This reduces the number of people required to deal with these matters and those individuals can deal with other areas of work.
Postage - how have we been able to achieve this.	This is moving from Royal Mail to another provider who can send out information in bulk far cheaper than the Council can by doing this itself.
Is there a tracking system for any post going missing	There are assurances from the company and they are used by many local government organisations and central government. The company does have a very good, secure reputation.
In relation to post reductions due to automation. What modelling has been undertaken by the Council to work out for the next five years how many jobs could be lost due to automation	The Service is still working with services to set out the areas of work for the next year. The level of posts which could be lost is not known at present. The Council is also working with other Councils who are ahead in this respect and monitoring numbers of reductions happening elsewhere due to digital automation processes. Within the Service where there has been automation there have been opportunities to re-skill staff to undertake other roles.

- **Transformation and Communications**
- Savings - £116k – staffing changes in performance area and Communications / Welsh Language Translation.

- Questions:

<p>Welsh Translation - concern that the efficiency and accuracy of translations may be affected. Will external documents be proof read before they are released. If there is a delay of a day for services needing translation has consideration been given to this effect on them.</p>	<p>There is already a vacancy in the team with a half time post not currently being used over the past year. Any external translation or publication would need to be dealt with by the translation team rather than by the automated system. The automated system could be used to translate documents such as emails coming into Council.</p>
<p>With regard to the cost savings for both heads of Service - what were the Services hoping to save and could they save more or less. If more why could this not be achieved.</p>	<p>Transformation and Communication - Services were given a target, but Heads of Service were asked to put forward what they believe could be delivered with a minimal impact. Additional savings could have been made in the Transformation and Communications service but this was at a greater risk e.g. savings in the performance team in the past meant that reports could not be produced. The Head of Service was confident that savings could be delivered and a good service provided. The base budget had been reduced to 70% with 30% coming from income generation.</p> <p>Economy and Digital Services - a further saving identified was a reduced costs of Microsoft licences. However, this was not taken forward as individuals do use the tools in Microsoft on a day to day basis and the effect of withdrawing these elements of licences on staff and Members was not known.</p>
<p>What sort of investment is coming from elsewhere e.g. MWGD. Is any of that investment coming in the forthcoming financial year.</p>	<p>Economy and Digital Services – there is one item from MWGD – which is moving a staff member to the programme team which would provide a £25k saving.</p> <p>Transformation and Communications – income is already being achieved such as through the North Powys Well-being programme, the Regional Partnership Board, the Public Service Board and collaboration with other organisations and</p>

	Councils.
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- **Highways, Transport and Recycling**

- Savings – Workshop efficiencies - £100k; Public and School Transport - £549k; Recycling and Waste service efficiencies - £50k; Recycling and Collection Efficiencies - £114k; Public Convenience Reductions / Transition - £43k; Funding removed for conveniences - £24k; Countryside Access restructure and reduction associated costs - £60k; Outdoor Recreation - £40K. Total £980k.

- Questions:

Concern about the impact of the possible closure of depots and services on local communities e.g. flooding in Ystradgynlais, and without the local teams there could have been a problem with the Council's response with teams having to travel from elsewhere in poor conditions and with landslips, this could mean that a response was delayed.	A Council presence in Ystradgynlais should be retained. Although the waste function may be removed from Ystradgynlais due to the implementation of centralised facilities, there is no proposal to remove the highways function.
This area of service affects every single resident in a way which is not the case for other services. Why does this service have the greatest level of service reductions? Why are things like school transport, waste collection and public transport such a low priority for the Council. Can it be confirmed that during the next financial year there will be no move to four weekly collections.	There is no proposal to go from 3 to 4 week collection in next year's budget. It is anticipated that all of Wales will move to a four weekly residual collection in future. There are other aspects such as the collection of AHPs (nappies) which are a challenge for a rural authority to support four weekly collections and there is also an issue of bin sizes. The Council is required to achieve a 64% recycling target. Taking AHPs out of the waste stream is key before considering changing the frequency of collections. Residual waste has gone up by about 15% this year with people working at home. For 2021-22 – the Council cannot consider four weekly collections of residual waste.
Members are told that a service has to be the same across the Council area. However, what other efficiencies can be gained by adapting the service for particular areas and has this been considered in looking at service reductions / Adaptions.	2021-22 is the year where the Council needs to review all options, optimising routes and looking at different ways of collecting waste. Welsh Government's blueprint is kerbside collections but if there are other means of collecting recycling which Members could suggest then the Service would welcome those

<p>The broader question put earlier related to the burden of reductions faced by HTR – this requires a response by the Portfolio Holder or a member of the Cabinet.</p> <p>Why is the Service being asked to make disproportionate levels of savings and reductions in the service offered to residents each year.</p>	<p>suggestions.</p> <p>The service has to be provided efficiently. There are targets to be met and difficult decisions to be made. There are no reductions to road maintenance this year, this was removed from the budget. Efficiencies are being considered here as well to improve the road network rather than maintain it at a basic level.</p> <p>Cuts have been made to highways but the Council had little choice in that when the Council was 22nd in Wales in the level of funding received and having to invest in other services such as social care and education. The Cabinet is aware of the significant level of cuts in highways. There are also Wales wide changes going on such as for transport and recycling. Powys has a significant amount of capital funding in HAMP to improve roads. A presentation on what's going on in highways, waste etc would be useful to all members.</p>
<p>Recycling - understand how people feel about a four weekly collection but we cannot go on producing as much waste as we do. How much information or awareness raising is being done as this is an area where the public can take responsibility for their own actions. The producers of waste i.e. businesses should bear the brunt of costs on waste. Where are we as a Council in teaching people how to deal with their waste and consider what they are purchasing and the waste this will generate.</p>	<p>Education with residents is the key. This has been taken up with WRAP who have offered financial assistance to get communications out to the public through general enforcement or advice. The Council is aware that 60% of black bags continues to contains recycling within it. The Council does rely on the public to do their part to use the recycling services whilst the Council goes through its changes and will need to monitor tonnages to see if they are going down. The new green waste service has gone very well during the year.</p>
<p>Could there be more savings if we raise awareness with the public</p>	<p>The Council does well in relation to targets. Communications is also very strong but much of this will be national. The Portfolio Holder had also asked for roadshows to be held to encourage recycling but due to the pandemic this has not been possible.</p>
<p>Grateful to hear that the four weekly</p>	<p>The Impact Assessment will need to</p>

<p>collection has been delayed at present. Could there be an assurance that if Wales moves to a four weekly collection that officers will look at bin sizes for any new orders placed.</p> <p>HTR seems to be bearing the brunt of reductions. The Portfolio Holder did say that there had been no reduction in road maintenance this year – most people think this budget should be should be increased.</p> <p>The assurance is that the Council is not going to 4 weekly collections if budget approved. However the risk assessment continues to include this detail. Is this a future aim rather than being undertaken imminently.</p>	<p>be updated to reflect the removal of the four weekly collections.</p>
<p>Public transport – there have been many empty buses during the pandemic. Has any work been undertaken to look at the numbers using bus services, could some bus services be reduced which could provide funding elsewhere.</p>	<p>The Service is looking at public and school transport figures. A review will be undertaken this year efficiency can be identified which could lead to savings</p> <p>Public transport – it has been a difficult year for the public transport network in Wales. It is a very important service for some people. However, the Council needs to be aware of the costs of delivering this service as there has been a significant increased cost due to social distancing.</p>
<p>Maintenance of roads – if storm water could be kept off roads and ditches clear this would help the quality of roads. Could the Council work with the Probation to get people on community service to assist by clearing ditches and drains.</p>	<p>Gully scheduling needs to be reviewed to ensure that resources can be maximised to empty gullies more regularly and this is an issue with more frequent flooding in the county.</p>
<p>Should these efficiencies have come to scrutiny sooner to know whether they could be delivered. The amount of waste is likely to increase as people are shopping differently during the pandemic and people's way of life has changed. The reductio of support for toilets / closure of toilets – this is important for tourism in the county. With more cuts to this service there is a danger of ending up with a service that's not</p>	<p>In relation to transport efficiencies, there are many changes coming across Wales, so the Service is confident that those savings can be achieved. The amount of waste collected on the kerbside has increased including carboard which will impact on the Council's recycling figures. However, residual waste has also increased. Therefore there is a need to take everything which can be recycled out of waste</p>



fit for purpose.	stream. Closure of toilets is a last resort and the Service will be working closely with Town and Community Councils about those Councils taking on responsibility for those toilets specified.
Will we continue the grants to Town and Community Councils who have taken over toilets? If the grant stops then toilets will close which will seriously affect tourism	This is why the proposal has been split into 2 sections, the first element to transition Town and Community Councils taking on the operation of toilets and the second element to support them in doing so. The full saving would only be achieved if the toilets closed which is hoped will not happen.
How does this proposal regarding toilets fit in with the Council's toilets strategy which was published in May 2019	Discussions will go on with the two Town Councils. It is hoped these toilets will be taken on by local Councils. These are the only two toilets in the county that have not been taken on by local Councils at present. In relation to the strategy as long as one is provided, it does not matter who makes that provision.
What discussions started with the two Town Councils as their precepts will already have been set.	Discussions are ongoing and due to the issue of precepts this is why grants being offered to assist those Councils. <b>Information to be provided to the Committee about state of ongoing discussions.</b>
Toilets are important for people travelling through Powys. Outdoor recreation - £40k - what is this	The proposal is £76k over two years with a £40k reduction for 2021-22 and £36k in 2022-23. For 2021-22 this is a reduction in third party spend. For 2022-23 the reduction is staffing and third party spend. Most of reductions is third party spend e.g. equipment, contractors used to maintain facilities
Would there be a list of what is included in the £40k	<b>Action - The Head of Service agreed to provide additional information regarding the detail for the £40k reduction in 2021-22.</b>

- **Property, Planning and Public Protection.**
- Savings – Strategic Property – reduce business rates costs - £183k; Planning Service – Income - £75k; Trading Standards – Savings – Savings - £98k; Environmental Health – Savings - £120k.
- Questions:

<p>Only increases in four licence costs which is surprising. Savings on Environmental Health - concern whether these changes could lead to reduced enforcement. Can the Committee receive an assurance that these changes will not contribute to future unsustainable environmental damage such as landscape damage and effects on wildlife.</p>	<p>There is no reduction to staffing in the Environmental health Team with the exception of the contaminated land team due to a reduction in officer hours. There is a need to retain staff in the Public Protection area as there is important work to be done such as dealing with fly tipping.</p>
<p>Is the Head of Service confident that when enforcement is needed it can be undertaken.</p>	<p>Yes is enforcement is needed it can be undertaken but it is reactive service rather than proactive service.</p>
<p>Reductions to staffing levels in Planning Service has had an affect on service delivery. Will the lack of resource affect the income that the Council achieves.</p>	<p>The savings last year were achieved by regrading many of the planning roles, which resulted in a number of planning officers leaving the Council. That had an impact on the ability to process planning applications. Currently staffing levels are back to appropriate levels, but the impact of the staff changes and staff being redeployed to assist other services has had an effect and the impact of this will take between six months to a year to recover, assuming staffing levels remain as at present.</p> <p>In respect of the team processing planning applications the savings last year were mainly at the higher level – Professional Lead roles merging into one role and in relation to Planning Policy. For staff dealing with applications is was a reduction form 13.47 FTE to 13.28 FTE, so not a large fall in staff numbers, but the reduction in grades led to some staff leaving and this impacted on performance. All services within the Service area will need to be monitored to ensure that the Council delivers its statutory duties. The new Planning staffing structure will need time to bed in, but it is now at full capacity.</p> <p><b>Action - Committee to look at performance of the Planning Service including enforcement in the future.</b></p>

<p>Enforcement – it is understood that prior to 2017 Powys had an agreement with Carmarthenshire to use their enforcement officers. Is this still continuing and is it value for money.</p>	<p>The Council has a service level agreement with Carmarthenshire and the North Wales mineral groups to undertake the minerals and waste duties for the Council and that is continuing. Either Carmarthenshire or the North Wales Minerals Group is used where enforcement activity is required. The Head of Service indicated that this is value for money. These Councils are paid for the amount of work that they do and they have greater capacity to address workloads.</p> <p><b>ACTION – the Head of Service can circulate the service level agreement to Members.</b></p>
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- **Housing and Community Development**

- Savings – Reduced revenue funding for commissioned arts services - £63k; Housing General Fund – remove support for RWAS gypsy and traveller site - £25k; Library service – review mobile provision, community hubs - £150k; Archives and Information Management – increased income generation - £18k; Reduce the Sport Powys core budget - £9k; Cleaning Service – increased income generation - £45k.

- **Questions:**

<p>Library hubs - what is meant by community hubs. Are these in schools and who pays for this, the Council or the school.</p>	<p>Each library is unique. The Service is working with communities to support libraries and keep them open. The mobile library service has not been operating during Covid. The vehicles are not suitable to operate within the restrictions imposed during the pandemic and this is why this is being reviewed. A call and collect system was implemented and is being driven as this can reach more vulnerable people.</p> <p>Community hubs – the Service is working out an individual and bespoke response for individual areas. The Service is working with communities and local groups. Additional support may come from Town and Community Councils or from partners (both internal and external) sharing spaces in libraries creating income generating opportunities for the Council to support the running costs of the</p>
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	libraries. The cost of the mobile library provision is £75k.
<p>There has been positive engagement between the Portfolio Holder and libraries. In relation to cuts for the Arts services - 27% cuts has hit arts venues hard. It has been acknowledged that it will take 6 years for the arts to recover from the pandemic. With the pressures on the arts service due to the pandemic which was not foreseen when the decision was originally made, can the Council revisit this decision and also and how additional support for the arts can be achieved. Is the Council pressurising Welsh Government about introducing a second round of cultural recovery fund which has already happened in England but not in Wales.</p>	<p>The Portfolio Holder met with commissioned arts venues last week with the Service. Some arts organisations are able to grasp looking at different ways of connecting with people. Information has been to arts centres on where additional sources of funding are available, and some have been able to claim additional funding from Welsh Government. The reduction is not a surprise to arts. However, Powys in better position as it does support arts organisations by comparison to other Councils who do not support arts as all. The commissioning principle is what is key now – with centres having to demonstrate what that they do with funding. Money is also needed from elsewhere such as for the preventative agenda and there is an officer working for both the Council and the health Board who can highlight the importance of this.</p>
<p>Community hubs is the start of the work rather than the end. There are also questions about investment rather than savings. There is no increase in fines in libraries. There is also a costs for assisting people search for information through libraries – should people be paying the full cost of this, in other words people paying for direct costs of services they are receiving rather than everyone paying the overall costs through the precept.</p>	<p>This is difficult for the library service as it is a free service. This is not the start of the process. The Council is at an advantage in that communities and volunteers are willing to engage. Work is ongoing to discuss all options for libraries which includes discussions with partners.</p>

Scrutiny made the following observations:

**Legal and Democratic Services**

- The Committee was pleased that the opportunity to learn and reduce Member travelling costs has been undertaken during the pandemic, but some concern was expressed at the probable use of hybrid meetings in future as opposed to remote meetings.
- The Committee asked for details of savings in the member travelling budget to be circulated to Members. **(Action – information Request)**

**Finance**

- A Member questioned why has the £54k savings on switching card providers not been undertaken previously. The head of Finance explained that the number of card transactions had increased and this was the first opportunity to revisit the contract since it was let.

**Workforce and OD**

- The Committee expressed concern regarding the reduction in the leadership development budget by £10k but received assurances that it was hoped that the same or more training could be achieved with the same budget, with an opportunity to seek grant funding from Welsh Government through the apprenticeships programme.
- The Committee was pleased that the Council had introduced several layers of leadership training rather than the 2 originally provided which would make it more accessible for individuals. The Head of workforce and OD suggested that the Equalities Group, recently established could consider how this training was promoted to attract more individuals accessing it.
- The Committee asked that a briefing be provided to a future meeting on apprenticeships and the leadership programme. **(Action – Work Programme)**

**Transformation and Communications**

- The Committee was concerned that with a reduction in Welsh Language translation staff there could be delays in work being completed for departments and also that any documents translated using automated software was checked before being issued. The Committee received assurances that the post being deleted was currently vacant and would not impact on service delivery and any external information would be translated by the translation staff rather than by automated processes.

**Digital Services**

- The Committee received an assurance that with the changes in digital access to services, traditional methods of contacting the council would remain for those who were digitally excluded. The improvement in digital access would provide a range of digital services for people who wished to use them to self-serve and the intention was to also provide services to a wider target audience.
- The Committee asked whether the Council had undertaken any modelling on the potential numbers of jobs that could be lost in future due to automation. The Committee was advised that the Council was working with other Councils who were further advanced than Powys in their automation of services and that any current jobs lost were due to staff leaving. Opportunities were also being taken where work was automated to retrain staff to undertake other work. The Committee suggested a briefing on automation and the retraining of staff in future. **(Action – Member Development)**

### **Highways, Transport and Recycling.**

- Members expressed concern regarding the proposal to close highways depots such as at Ystradgynlais following the need for a rapid response to recent flooding issues. The Committee received assurances that local highways depots were not being closed, and the proposal was to centralise waste recycling at 3 depots in the County.
- The Committee received clarification that there was no proposal to move to 4 weekly black bin collections in 2021-22, and the savings target was an indicator for future years once a full review of waste collection had been undertaken during the forthcoming financial year. The Impact Assessment would be amended to reflect this.
- The Committee expressed concern regarding what was considered to be the disproportionate level of cuts falling on the Highways, Transport and Recycling budget by comparison to other services as these services affected all residents. The Leader explained that the Council had little choice over preceding years about funding other services and there were also Wales wide changes being proposed which could affect the Council in relation to transport and recycling. Powys also invests significantly in the HAMP to improve roads. It was suggested that a briefing to members on the Highways, Transport and recycling Service would be beneficial for Members. **(Action – Work Programme)**
- The Committee asked what work was being undertaken to educate the public to assist in increasing recycling and reducing residual waste. The Head of Service advised that the Council had been offered assistance in communicating with the public regarding recycling.
- The Committee received an assurance that the Service was reviewing the numbers using public and school transport to see whether efficiency savings could be made.
- Concern was expressed regarding any possible further closure of public conveniences as it could affect those travelling through Powys and tourism in the County. It was noted that discussion were ongoing with two Town Councils regarding public conveniences next to bus terminals. The Head of Service agreed to provide the Committee with information regarding the level of grant funding to Town and Community Councils for public conveniences. **(Action – Information Request)** The Leader suggested that the Cabinet have a further discussion regarding public conveniences.

### **Property, Planning and Public Protection.**

- The Committee was surprised that only a few fees and charges were being increased. However it was explained that a number of fees and charges were set nationally and beyond the control of the Council.
- Concern was expressed regarding the saving for Environmental Health and if that would lead to a reduction in enforcement activity. The Head of Service assured the Committee that there would not be a reduction of staff except for some reduced hours in the contaminated land team and that enforcement activity would be undertaken although this was reactive rather than proactive.
- The Committee was concerned about the impact of last year's changes to the Planning Service on the delivery of the service. The Head of Service clarified that there had been a change in some staff, as well as staff being redeployed during the pandemic. However staffing levels were now as required but it would take some months for the team to return to the previous level of service. The Committee suggested that it reviews the position regarding the planning service and enforcement in the future. **(Action – Work Programme)**.
- In response to a question regarding Minerals, the Committee was advised that this services was provided to the Council through a service level agreement with other Councils. Members asked if the Head of Service would provide information regarding how the cost of this service level agreement was determined. **(Action – Information Request)**

### **Housing and Community Development.**

- The Committee expressed concern regarding the saving in respects of Commissioned Arts Centres although the centres had known that this reduction would be forthcoming. The Committee asked that the Cabinet lobby Welsh Government for additional Cultural Support Funding to be made available. The Portfolio Holder and Head of Service advised that the Service was seeking opportunities for income generation such as preventative funding and information was being provided to centres on possible opportunities for additional funding.
- The Committee welcomed that work was ongoing to develop library hubs and a continuation of the Call and collect system for book lending. In addition the Committee welcomed that additional means of income generation were being explored.

<b>Scrutiny's Recommendation</b>
<b>1 That the Committee welcomes the Leader's suggestion of a further Cabinet discussion on public conveniences.</b>
<b>2 That the Cabinet lobby Welsh Government for additional Cultural Support funding to be made available.</b>

**County Councillor M J Dorrance (Chair)**