

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT BY TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 2 MARCH 2021

PRESENT

County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, G Breeze, P Davies, A W Davies, H Hulme, I McIntosh and R Powell

1.	APOLOGIES
-----------	------------------

There were no apologies for absence.

2.	MINUTES
-----------	----------------

The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting held on 16th February 2021 as a correct record.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
-----------	---------------------------------

The Monitoring Officer advised that all Councillors had a general dispensation to speak and vote with regard to the report on the Estyn Review of the Council's support for Schools and Pupil Referral Units.

4.	HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) THIRTY YEAR FINANCIAL BUSINESS PLAN STARTING 2021-2022
-----------	---

Cabinet considered the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Thirty Year Financial Business Plan Starting 2021-2022 which

- 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 WHQS for current homes.
- Supports the development of at least 250 new homes by 2025.
- 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.

Cabinet was advised that as of January 2021 there were 3,326 people registered with Homes in Powys for affordable, rented homes. A new build housing programme was underway which would deliver at least 250 new council homes by 2025 and provision had been made in the HRA Business Plan to fund a potential increase to 425 homes both newly built and acquired (subject to land and development opportunities and any planning and regulatory consents being secured) by 2026. Cabinet noted the emphasis in the Plan on Green Powys programme designed to increase fuel efficiency and reduce fuel poverty for

tenants of the Council and make tangible improvements to the wider environment.

RESOLVED to approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Thirty Year Business Plan Starting 2021-2022.

5.	COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS FROM THE COUNCIL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
-----------	---

Cabinet was advised that by February 2021, 118 Council house units were under construction with a total contract value of £20,193,053. In addition to helping address the rising demand across the county for affordable homes, the housing construction programme brought wider economic and social benefits to communities including:

- The appointment of 35 sub-contractors, 31 of which were Welsh based and 14 were Powys based.
- Details of employment created for more than 70 persons.
- A high number of training and educational opportunities offered including for apprentices.
- A wide range of community engagement and benefits offered and planned for each of the sites.

RESOLVED to note the contribution the Council's Housing Development Programme is making to Vision 2025 and the social and economic wellbeing of communities in Powys.

6.	ESTYN REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S WORK TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS AND PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS MARCH - AUGUST 2020
-----------	---

Cabinet noted the very positive report from Estyn on the Council's support for schools and pupil referral units during the period of lockdown from March to October 2020. Estyn had found that the Council had been quick to respond to the challenges of the pandemic and had implemented operational changes swiftly to ensure schools, parents/carers and pupils had access to information and support. Estyn had commended the effective arrangements made to communicate with schools and parents, and the regular meetings with schools attended by the Interim Head of Education. Estyn noted that Powys was one of few local authorities in Wales to offer an extra weeks teaching in June which had helped in the preparation for the full re-opening in September. The Leader, Portfolio Holder for Education and Property and Cabinet paid tribute to the leadership of the Interim Head of Education and her team and to all services for their contribution.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7.	COVID RECOVERY PROGRAMME
-----------	---------------------------------

The Leader advised that she had received a request that the report should be considered by Scrutiny and she agreed that it would.

On 25th February, Council had agreed to set aside £1.8 million of the one-off funding available to create a Powys Recovery Fund. The report before Cabinet set out the principles of the fund with the two key themes being to support communities and council services.

On support for communities it was proposed to

- combine with the existing Community Development Fund to create a fund that community groups, charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations could apply to for funding;
- provide grant support for groups providing public conveniences;
- provide additional dedicated officer support for businesses to ensure they receive specialist support and make full use of the recovery schemes available to them, with particular emphasis on advising enterprises that have fallen through the gaps of existing support packages;
- provide a highway recovery fund for enhanced road cleansing activities and additional pot hole repairs and maintenance activities;
- Financial recovery support through an enhanced income and award scheme, an additional Covid support officer and strengthening the existing Money and Advice Team.

On Council services specific support, it was proposed to provide additional funding to support small scale recovery initiatives and activities, focussing on organisational resilience.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8.	DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS
-----------	---

Details of the delegated decisions taken by Portfolio Holders were noted.

9.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
-----------	-------------------------------

Cabinet noted details of the forward work programme.

10.	EXEMPT ITEMS
------------	---------------------

RESOLVED to exclude the public for the following item of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under category 3 of The Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007).

11.	16+ ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT IN POWYS
------------	---

Cabinet considered the confidential report on 16+ accommodation and support.

RESOLVED

- 1. To support Option 2 and establish a closed, 3 year (+1) Framework of 3 lots for 16+ accommodation and support, including management of Springboard properties and Training flat, provision of semi-independent accommodation with a variety of tailored support levels and provision of floating support for independent tenancy accommodation, if needed.**
- 2. Framework Agreement specification states unit expectations of contract, i.e. proposed number of semi-independent placements required and requests pricing from prospective providers rather than state a contract value.**
- 3. Due to forecast increased demand, current out of county only provision of semi-independent accommodation plus Children's Services potential savings linked to 16+, to note the proposed timescales and urgency for the commencement of formal tender process. This includes the production of Framework specification, publication of contract notice, meet the buyer event, evaluation of tender, award of contract for 16+ accommodation within this financial year in order to commence new contract and provision of 16+ accommodation and support to Powys young people in Powys from early in the next financial year.**

County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)