

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT COUNTY HALL
AND ON ZOOM ON THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022**

PRESENT

County Councillor G W Ratcliffe (Chair)

County Councillors R G Thomas, B Baynham, D Bebb, M Beecham, S J Beecham, B Breeze, G Breeze, J Berriman, J Charlton, R Church, T Colbert, S Cox, A W Davies, A Davies, B Davies, B Davies, S C Davies, M J Dorrance, D Edwards, J Ewing, L George, J Gibson-Watt, I Harrison, K Healy, H Hulme, P James, A Jenner, A Jones, E A Jones, E Jones, G D Jones, G E Jones, J R Jones, A Kennerley, C Kenyon-Wade, P Lewington, K Lewis, P E Lewis, W Lloyd, I McIntosh, S McNicholas, DW Meredith, C Johnson-Wood, G Mitchell, G Morgan, G Morgan, WD Powell, G Preston, L Rijnenberg, L Roberts, P Roberts, C Robinson, E Roderick, D Selby, D A Thomas, J Brignell-Thorp, E Vaughan, C Walsh, J Wilkinson, A Williams, D H Williams, J M Williams and S L Williams

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors L Brighthouse, A Cartwright, G Pugh and J Pugh.

2.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting held on 13 October 2022 as a correct record.

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

4.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
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Council paused to remember Mr Gwyn Gwilym, the former Councillor for Abercraf who had passed away.

The Chair gave details of his engagements including laying a wreath on behalf the Council on Remembrance Sunday and hosting a reception at the Winter Fair at the Royal Welsh Showground.

5.	LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
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The Leader noted that the Council was currently consulting on the draft Corporate Plan and he urged fellow councillors to take part and to encourage others to do so. He also asked colleagues to publicise the Council's webpage signposting the public to support available to help with the cost of living crisis and the location of some 36 warm places in the county.

He advised that £27 million of funding for Powys from the Shared Prosperity Fund had been confirmed, although there were restrictions on what the funding could be used for.

The Leader thanked staff who had responded to flooding in Ystradgynlais. He noted that the new health and care academy had opened in Bronllys for health and social care staff and that the North Powys Bulking Facility at Abermule Business Park had been granted a permit to operate by Natural Resources Wales.

6.	CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING
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The Chief Executive reported on the actions being taken in response to the higher running costs of the Council due to inflation. In the longer term the Council would need to rethink how services were delivered. Closer collaboration was being explored with Powys Teaching Health Board and discussions were being held with Freedom Leisure on emergency cost saving measures.

She advised that the Council would be advertising soon for the Head of Adult Services and Head of Children's Services posts. Recruitment generally was proving difficult and steps had been taken to simplify the recruitment process for frontline staff.

The Chief Executive advised Members that the Council was working closely with Public Health Wales and Powys Teaching Health Board on Strep A cases which were currently at a higher than average level.

She noted with disappointment the decline in the number of Welsh speakers in the census, particularly in the 3 – 15 age range. The Cabinet had recently strengthened Welsh Medium provision in Bro Hyddgen and Ysgol y Cribarth and would be looking to further increase provision.

7.	REVENUE VIREMENT
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Council considered virements in the Highways, Transport and Recycling (HTR) budget relating to unachieved savings which would be replaced by increased income. The Executive Director Economy and Environment undertook to provide County Councillor GE Jones with a response to his question on how much of the unachieved savings would be achieved in 2023/24.

It was moved by County Councillor David Thomas and seconded by County Councillor Richard Church and by 60 votes to 1 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED to approve the virements set out in paragraph 2.3.1 of the report.

8. STRONGER, FAIRER, GREENER

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Fairer Powys and the Cabinet Member for a Connected Powys gave a presentation on the Corporate Plan: Stronger, Fairer, Greener. They explained that the Cabinet's vision was to build a Stronger, Fairer, Greener Powys building upon pledges made by their parties during the election as follows:

Stronger - We will become a county that succeeds together, with communities and people that are well connected socially, and are personally and economically resilient.

Fairer - We will be an open, well-run, council where people's voices are heard and help to shape our work and priorities, with fairer, more equal, access to services and opportunities. We will work to tackle poverty and inequality to support people's well-being.

Greener - We want to ensure a greener future for Powys, where our well-being is linked to that of the natural world, and our response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies is at the heart of everything we do.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Fairer Powys outlined the consultation process and he encouraged all members to get involved.

The Cabinet was challenged on its commitment to the Welsh language and the Deputy Leader confirmed that the Cabinet was committed to increasing the number of Welsh speakers, noting that it had just taken a decision to introduce a Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol y Cribarth from September 2023. It was confirmed that measurable targets would be included in the draft plan. The Cabinet Member offered to make pdf copies of the consultation document available to members for those who did not use digital. In response to a question raised by a member about improving accessibility to services when councillors and the public were reporting difficulty contacting staff, the Cabinet Member for a Connected Powys said that he recognised that a change was needed and that this was being worked on. It was also confirmed that the council was working with other partners on the Public Service Board and Town and Community Councils to increase response levels. A workshop had been arranged for the PSB to consider the Corporate Plan.

9. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES
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9.1. Appointment of Trustees of the Powysland Museum Trust

It was proposed by County Councillor Aled Davies and seconded by County Councillor Heulwen Hulme and unanimously

RESOLVED to appoint County Councillor Benjamin Breeze, County Councillor Graham Breeze, County Councillor Amanda Jenner and Mrs Kath Roberts-Jones to Powysland Museum Trust.

9.2. Rhayader Market Hall and Smithfield Trust

It was proposed by County Councillor Pete Roberts and seconded by County Councillor Jake Berriman and unanimously

RESOLVED to appoint County Councillor Angela Davies to the Rhayader Market Hall and Smithfield Trust.

10. PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Roger Thomas the Chief Fire Officer and Sarah Mansbridge the Interim Treasurer of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service gave a presentation on the work of the service and answered questions from Members.

11. NOTICE OF MOTION - COMMIT TO SERVE GOOD QUALITY MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCTS
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Council considered the following motion proposed by County Councillor Iain McIntosh and seconded by County Councillor Les George:

“On 14th December 2021, a full council meeting motion was passed by Oxfordshire County Council’s ruling Liberal Democrat, Labour, and Green Party alliance, banning meat and dairy products from being served at official events. This result was passed to their Cabinet for a final decision, which was subsequently approved on 15th March 2022.

This decision drew criticism from meat and dairy producing farmers across the UK, various celebrities, journalists, MPs and the public. The motion contained questionable claims that global meat and dairy production was “a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation” and that reducing consumption of these foods was “a key part of tackling climate change”. One Oxfordshire farmer who was appalled at the decision was quoted as saying – “They have taken the advice of a reduction and gone for a 100% move, which seems to me like someone is peddling a different agenda,”. He went on to say “The whole argument about the environmental impact of livestock farming is hijacked by the carbon debate and ignores any of the plus sides of red meat in the diet in a sensible proportion and of decent quality. Meat from grass-fed livestock reared in the UK has a far lower environmental impact than intensively farmed meat reared from a soya and maize feedlot system in South America.”. News source; <https://www.fwi.co.uk/news/environment/fury-after-oxfordshire-council-moves-to-ban-meat-and-dairy>

Since making this decision, there has been further concern amongst farmers throughout the rest of the country, particularly in counties with Labour, Liberal Democrat or Green Party councillors in administrative control of councils. The concern is that authorities in those counties may follow suit and introduce similar bans, which will show a lack of support for farmers, damage local meat and dairy businesses, send the wrong message to the public and damage the reputation of our agriculture sector.

Following discussions with many farmers, businesses, and members of the public, there is considerable concern that as Powys County Council is under the control of Labour and the Liberal Democrats, a meat and dairy ban may be introduced here in Powys too.

This council therefore calls upon the Labour/LibDem Powys County Council administration to:

Commit to serve good quality meat and dairy products (provided locally where possible) at all official meetings and events where food is to be served and at all council run buildings where food is served, to include all Powys schools and colleges where food is served, for the remainder of this term of administration.

Commit to serve vegetarian and vegan food as options at any of the above locations and events, for the remainder of this term of administration.”

Councillor McIntosh explained that he was bringing forward the motion as he had been approached by farmers and producers following a decision by Oxfordshire County Council to ban meat and dairy products from being served at official events. County Councillor Jake Berriman, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for catering and school meals, explained that he had made no changes to the existing arrangements to serve quality meat, locally sourced dairy and vegan products. He proposed an amendment seconded by County Councillor Angela Davies

“To request Cabinet: Commit to continuing to serve healthy nutritional meals which balance the amount of carbohydrates, good quality meat and non-meat protein products, fruit, vegetables, drinks, and dairy products, produced and provided through local supply chains where possible.”

The amendment was passed by 39 votes to 17 with 3 abstentions and therefore became the substantive motion. The substantive motion was put to the vote and by 53 votes to 3 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED to request Cabinet to commit to continuing to serve healthy nutritional meals which balance the amount of carbohydrates, good quality meat and non-meat protein products, fruit, vegetables, drinks, and dairy products, produced and provided through local supply chains where possible.

12.	NOTICE OF MOTION - FAIR'S FARE ON POWYS ENERGY AND WATER RESOURCES
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Council considered the following motion proposed by County Councillor Jake Berriman and seconded by County Councillor Geoff Morgan

“On the back of Cop 27 in Egypt, and Powys’s declaration of climate and nature emergencies, this Council calls on the U.K. and Welsh Governments to put in place the necessary legislative frameworks and provisions to enable the people of Powys to retain some of the financial benefit arising from the water and energy

resources captured and generated in Powys for export and consumption elsewhere.

Specifically, this Council seeks the ability to raise a levy on water and energy generation/supply companies on piped water and energy destined for export, and not for the direct benefit or consumption by the people of Powys. The rate of return for the shared use of these resources should initially not be less than £1 per mega litre and £1 per megawatt, uplifted by the annual rate for inflation (RPI). In return, this Council undertakes that such monies raised will be spent by Powys Council addressing, and developing resilience to, the crisis we collectively face from global warming.”

The proposer of the motion noted that Powys was a significant net exporter of renewable energy and water. The aim of the motion was for people in Powys to retain some of the financial benefits of the energy and water exported for usage elsewhere. Some Members expressed concerns that this charge would be added to the bills of users. Others were concerned that it could put windfarm schemes already paying community benefits in jeopardy.

By 40 votes to 19 it was

RESOLVED that on the back of Cop 27 in Egypt, and Powys’s declaration of climate and nature emergencies, this Council calls on the U.K. and Welsh Governments to put in place the necessary legislative frameworks and provisions to enable the people of Powys to retain some of the financial benefit arising from the water and energy resources captured and generated in Powys for export and consumption elsewhere.

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County Councillors Gareth Morgan and Gareth Ratcliffe left the meeting. County Councillor Beverley Baynham took the Chair.

13. NOTICE OF MOTION - POWYS SCHOOLS

Council considered the following motion proposed by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Bryn Davies

“Concerns have been raised by fellow council members, parents and members of the public following the possibility of reducing the schooling week down to just

4 days has and is being considered by the authority as a mitigation action against rising energy costs and budget pressures.

We note that Estyn stated in their 2021-2022 Annual report-

- Overall, learners' skills have been negatively impacted by the pandemic. This is especially the case for numeracy and literacy skills, particularly oracy skills. The social and personal skills of a minority of learners have also been affected, especially the youngest children and those who have struggled to settle back in to more 'normal' educational routines.
- Learners' use of spoken Welsh generally declined as a result of the pandemic.
- Restrictions have had a negative impact on learning involving practical elements, including work placements, practical assessments for vocational qualifications and subjects such as music, design and technology and physical education.
- Overall, the progress providers are making towards implementation of the Curriculum for Wales is too variable.
- Across all sectors, there has been a notable increase in demand for well-being and mental health support.
- Attendance, in schools in particular, continues to be below pre-pandemic levels and persistent absence issues have increased

The cost of living crisis is effecting us all and families are facing significant pressures already, this type of idea, even if just a concept at this stage, is unhelpful, ill thought out and one that if carried through would may significantly harm our young people and will only add to home pressures.

In view of these negative findings from Estyn, the importance of supporting our young people, the recognition that budget / financial pressures are not only on the council and the need to ensure a full and proper impact assessment on the Welsh language and Welsh language education in accordance with Welsh Government's School Organisation Code is carried out before making any changes -

Council accepts the importance of a 5 day attendance at our schools and that no school in Powys should be asked to reduce their school week to 4 days as a result of the councils budget proposals."

In responding to the motion, the Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys advised that a 4 day school week had not been brought forward as a budget proposal. Other members felt that the Cabinet had been slow to rule this out as an option leading to uncertainty.

A proposal to suspend standing orders was moved by County Councillor Aled Davies and seconded by County Councillor Iain McIntosh was defeated by 23 votes to 29 with 4 abstentions.

The motion was put to the vote and by 55 votes to 0 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED that Council accepts the importance of a 5 day attendance at our schools and that no school in Powys should

be asked to reduce their school week to 4 days as a result of the councils budget proposals.

County Councillor Ratcliffe indicated that he had returned to the meeting part way through the debate, but that as had missed part of the debate he was abstaining.

County Councillor G W Ratcliffe (Chair)