

Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Venue
By Zoom

Meeting Date
Thursday, 11 January 2024

Meeting Time
3.00 pm

For further information please contact

Rachel Pugh - Scrutiny and Democratic Support Officer
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County Hall
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5LG
04.01.2024

Mae croeso i chi siarad yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg yn y cyfarfod. Rhowch wybod pa iaith rydych am ei defnyddio erbyn hanner dydd, ddau ddiwrnod gwaith cyn y cyfarfod.

You are welcome to speak Welsh or English in the meeting. Please inform us of which language you wish to use by noon, two working days before the meeting.

AGENDA

1.	APOLOGIES
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To receive apologies for absence.

2.	DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST
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To receive any disclosures of interests by Members relating to items to be considered at the meeting.

3.	DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPS
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To receive 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.

(NB: Members are reminded that under Section 78 Members having been given a prohibited party whip cannot vote on a matter before the Committee.)

4.	MINUTES
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To authorise the Chair to sign the minutes of the previous meeting held as follows as a correct record: 11.12.2023.

(Pages 3 - 10)

5.	RENT SETTING OVERVIEW
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To receive the Rent Setting Overview.

(Pages 11 - 34)

6.	CAR PARKING REVIEW UPDATE
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To receive the Presentation.

(Pages 35 - 40)

7.	CLIMATE REPORT
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To receive the Report.

(Pages 41 - 50)

8.	SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME
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To note that future meetings of the Committee:

Monday - 29.01.24 -pm	Budget
Thursday - 08.02.24-am	Alternative Budget
Wednesday 14.02.24 - am	Pre-meeting
Monday - 19.02.24 - am	Committee – Public
Friday- 15.03.24-am	Pre-Meeting
Monday - 18.03.24 -am	Committee – Public
Wednesday - 15.05.24 -am	Pre-Meeting
Monday - 20.05.24	Committee – Public
Friday - 12.07.24 - am	Pre-Meeting
Monday 15.07.24 – am	Committee – Public

Committee Reflection

Following the close of the meeting the Committee is asked to take 5 to 10 minutes to reflect on today's meeting.

Public Document Pack

Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee Monday, 11 December 2023

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ECONOMY, RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT BY ZOOM ON MONDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2023

PRESENT

County Councillor A Davies (Chair)

County Councillors A Jones, C Kenyon-Wade, E A Jones, G Mitchell, G Preston, K Lewis, L Rijnenberg and S Williams

James Gibson-Watt Cabinet Member for and Open and Transparent Powys

J Berriman Cabinet Member for a Connected Powys

M Dorrance Cabinet Member for a More Prosperous Powys

D Selby Cabinet Member for a More Prosperous Powys

D Thomas Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation

J Charlton Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys

Jane Thomas – Section 151 Officer

Marie James – Account Manager

Diane Reynolds - Interim Director of Economy & Digital Services

Ellen Sullivan – Interim Head of Economy and Digital Services

Betts Ingram - Strategic Equalities and Risk Officer

Matt Perry – Interim Director of the Environment

Nina Davies – Director of Social Services and Housing

Andy Thompson – Interim Head of Housing

Richard Batt - Service Manager - Housing Communities

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies received: Cllr B Davies and P James.

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

3.	DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPS
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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.

4.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the Minutes of the previous meeting on 30 October 2023 as a correct record.

5.	STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER
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Background:

- The report contained fifteen strategic risks which were presented to the Committee to inform of the latest results for quarter two.
- Most risks presented were in the higher brackets of the heat map which represented a major or severe score.

- The report provided details of the risk implications which were reviewed, monitored, and managed on a regular basis.

Points raised by the Committee:	Responses received from Officers or Cabinet Members:
How were the risks monitored to ensure actions were carried out as frustrations were felt that progress was not shown.	It was explained that the policy contained six key stages. Risk owners provide actions against the mitigation/control stage which was a significant part to the process. It was further added that detailed information and challenge could be sought directly from risk owners. The Portfolio Holder added that some risks would remain on the register and migration was required due to the nature of the risk for example the ICT0010 GDPR due to the size of the organisation and individuals involved.
A query was raised around the terminology used within the risk register and the consistency of officer standards. And asked if sufficient monitoring was undertaken.	Definition and clarification were provided for 'actions completed' and 'actions withdrawn,' reassurance was provided that work was ongoing with officers around risk management and the Section 151 Officer seeks assurance to ensure risks were actioned appropriately.
It was asked how scoring took place and if guidance had been followed.	It was explained that there was a policy and framework containing a matrix in place and that scoring, and moderation took place with officers to keep the risk relevant which provided assurance to the Committee.
Email received from Ellen Sullivan (risk owner) A query on risk was raised, as the residual rating of risk number ICT0010 remained the same even though there were mitigating actions.	Email received - Risk ICT0010 If the Council is found non-compliant with either UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and or the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 then, it could be subject to monetary penalties or other regulatory action, data protection audits, civil action, and associated consequences, including suffering reputational damage, and resultant detriment to the affected data subjects. Response Even with mitigations staff can still cause a breach of the legislation or a personal data breach through not following instruction or through human error. The mitigations enable us to argue our position as a controller of personal data committed to processing personal data appropriately and in line with the individual's rights, with the

	right measures in place. This can help us with Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) decisions over taking regulatory action. The breach is still the same, the impact on the individual is still the same, but the decision of the ICO can be improved by the measures being in place. The risk of the event happening is the same it is the outcome that can be assisted by the measures in place.
It was asked if a general trend had been identified and if registers remain static as the summary received.	As each risk was so different and with an overview of service and project risk registers, it was emphasised that there was no pattern to risks being added and removed from registers.

- The committee felt that the risk register document provided a fair, accurate account with scoring profiles being produced with the support of the policy and guidance in place.

Resolved: The Strategic Risk Register be noted.

6. HOMES IN POWYS - OVERVIEW

Background:

- A summary was provided to the Committee and background provided on how the scheme impacted on meeting housing needs across Powys.
- The Portfolio Holder expressed that a robust policy was in place for officers to make informed decisions despite the unprecedented demand.

Points raised by the Committee:	Responses received from Officers or Cabinet Members:
Concerns were raised that even though priority needs were being identified, accommodation was not available.	200 empty homes within the council portfolio were confirmed and explained that several properties were planned for demolition. Officers would provide more detail and numbers of empty properties within partner groups and the community housing sector for the Committee.
It was asked how long a void process would take to achieve a tenant moving in.	Turnaround times for voids including historical empty properties was 21 weeks, since April 2023 it had reduced to 12 weeks demonstrating efficiency within Council Services.
A question was raised on how support was provided to those without online facilities.	Wherever possible, self-service online was encouraged, however an application could be carried out over the phone, or an officer visit was possible.
It was asked if the shortest and longest waiting times for homes could be provided to the Committee for more	Officers would feedback on the range of times taken on average waiting times for each band.

understanding.	
It was asked if the council was ambitious enough to look into alternative accommodation methods e.g. office blocks.	The Portfolio Holder explained that the service was determined to increase the number of properties, however best value for tenants was the highest priority and costs must be considered. Corporate properties had been explored, without any viable options to date.
It was asked if the support mechanism from other agencies could be explained.	Reassurance was provided to the Committee that regular multi agency meetings and wider organisations were held. Awareness was raised through the Homes in Powys allocation policy along with regular thorough checks.
Concerns were raised around the length of time people were waiting for a home with only 5000 homes and 4000 people/families on the waiting list.	The Portfolio Holder explained that high demand areas had less turnover and therefore the demand remains high. Officers offer the search to be widened for accommodation needs. It was emphasised that the waiting list was actively managed to review housing needs and that people were in the correct banding.
Concerns were raised that with 122 temporary units becoming permanent homes, was the service actively seeking a further 122 units.	45 households were currently in Bed and Breakfast accommodation with a further 14 in the private rented sector and with the need increasing units are constantly being sought.
Was the number of homelessness increasing.	The number of homeless presentations were increasing, driven by various elements including the economy, legislation changes, and wider needs, and reflected in the Rapid Housing Transition Plan. Prevention rates had improved as the key intention was to avoid homelessness.
Did the same regulations and standards apply for temporary accommodation to permanent housing.	It was confirmed that the standard of the accommodation must meet housing quality standards with white goods also being provided if needed.

- The Committee agreed that an incredibly detailed report had been produced.
- The band priorities were explained within the presentation with additional clarity from officers.
- The Committee were reassured that work progresses at pace and all considerations were met.
- It was asked if rural wards with family care needs (members moving to help and support family needs) could be considered to help both the family and to elevate pressure on services.

Resolved: The Homes in Powys Overview be noted.

7.	POWYS RAPID HOUSING TRANSITION PLAN - UPDATE
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Background:

- The report provided an update to the Committee of the delivery of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
- It was explained that a five-year plan was in place.
- And the key focus was to prevent homelessness where possible, where it cannot be prevented it was vital to minimise the time spent in temporary accommodation until the right home could be provided.
- Initial priorities of the plan included instant access triage centres, two interim supported accommodation schemes and the provision of modular temporary accommodation.

Points raised by the Committee:	Responses received from Officers or Cabinet Members:
<p>It was asked if more detail could be provided around the modular housing units and if planning permission was required.</p>	<p>The temporary accommodation units would be self-contained flats connected to all utilities and would require planning permission, all opportunities for potential sites were being explored. The units were planned to be used for 'meanwhile use' while assessments were being carried out. It was stressed that all services and support mechanisms would need to be in place before hand.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder added that supporting people into accommodation could reduce costs in other areas and produce beneficial outcomes.</p>
<p>It was suggested that a lot of rural areas could provide opportunities for off grid sites and to ensure that services had community involvement. It was asked that care and consideration was taken in the design phase to ensure a comforting look and feel.</p>	<p>Off grid would be investigated and cost factors considered.</p>
<p>How far had the project progressed and would Powys manufacturers be considered for the temporary accommodation units.</p>	<p>It was explained that sites were key and once identified, the process of tendering for production could begin.</p>
<p>It was asked if staff would be redeployed from other areas into the triage services. And noted that support could be gathered from other multi agencies and partners to help with costs.</p>	<p>There would be some redeployment of staff and stressed that Bed and Breakfast and privately provided accommodation would be used less so the overall cost would go down. A safe environment would be provided, and professional expertise would be brought in if needed to enable the individual to tell their story just once.</p>
<p>More detail was requested around what the triage centres would look like.</p>	<p>The centres would be self-contained flats with their own front door and would have private facilities and if they were not required for homelessness could be used for permanent homes which would arise from new builds or conversions including commercial buildings.</p>

It was acknowledged that a Recognition and a Trauma Informed Working Ways strategy was in place and more detail was requested.	A bundle of support was in place for staff and the need to decompress after challenging interactions was recognised for staff to give the best version of themselves. Regular reviews were undertaken to ensure the strategy was kept up to date.
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- The Committee showed appreciation for an ambitious paper with positive plans and the units would provide a positive resolution to an increasing problem.
- It was commented that with limited availability across the county challenges would arise however the project was long term and would provide tenants with secure accommodation with their own front door.
- It was asked if timescales could be added to the plan to provide reassurance that sites had been identified.
- And noted that it would be a worthwhile spend to save exercise to provide the council with ongoing vital assets.

Resolved: That the Powys Rapid Housing Transition Plan Update be noted.

8. WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL

Background:

- Advice had been provided to the current Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny County Farms Working Group that their work was evolving out of remit and must move into a more formal forum.
- The proposal was for the current Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny County Farms Working Group to disband.
- And for the Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise any upcoming related topics.
- For a Cabinet Advisory Group proposal to go to Cabinet and if established would seek future opportunities for the County Farms Estate.
- It was confirmed that any member within the Cabinet Advisory Group as well as being part of a Scrutiny Committee would declare an interest to any related subject matter.
- It was noted that previous recommendations to the Cabinet around the current asset policy and framework had been accepted for action.
- It was confirmed that members would not transition automatically, and a process would be followed to seek nominations and additional secondments.
- The Portfolio Holder had gained guidance from the Legal and Monitoring Officer and stressed that inclusivity was important to the group.
- The Leader added that a comprehensive review of the policy framework around the county farms estate was to be undertaken quickly and hoped it would be completed by the advisory group if the proposal were accepted.
- It was emphasised that both a political and geographical balance was needed.
- The next steps would be to draft the proposal to Cabinet which if approved would generate a task to develop a term of reference for the group.

Resolved: The recommendations on the proposal be approved.

Recommendations

1. That the ERC Scrutiny Committee considers the proposal of the ERC County Farms Working Group to disband.

2. For the Council's County farm and woodland estate scrutiny, be undertaken by the ERC Scrutiny Committee.
3. For the establishment of a Cabinet Advisory Group be proposed to Cabinet.

9.	SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME
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Resolved: The scrutiny work programme be noted.

County Councillor A Davies (Chair)

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Committee:	Economy, Residents Communities
Date:	11.01.24
Subject:	Rent Setting 2024-2025

1. Who will be the Lead Officer(s) / Lead Cabinet Member(s) presenting the report?

Name:	Role:
Cllr Matthew Dorrance	Portfolio Holder for a Fairer Powys
Andy Thompson	Interim Head of Housing

2. Why is the Scrutiny Committee being asked to consider the subject?

To provide an update on the proposals for the rents and service charges to be charged by the Council for tenants and other users of Housing Revenue Account services, in 2024-2025.

The Scrutiny Committee is being presented with the draft report to be considered by Cabinet 16.01.24. The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2014 requires the Council, like all landlords, to notify all tenants of any changes in rents no more than two clear months before the changes take effect.

3. Role of the Committee:

The role of the Committee in considering the subject is to:

Consider the appropriateness the proposed changes in rents and service charges, including the revised approach to the provision of Careline community alarm services.

4. Key Scrutiny Questions:

What Key areas should the Committee focus on:

The affordability of rents and service charges in the context of maintaining a viable Housing Revenue Account and adherence to Welsh Government rent policy.

An equitable approach to the charges for the Careline community alarm service.

5. Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members:

To assist the Committee when scrutinising the topic:

5.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities :

5.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality

[focus on value]

5.3	A look at any risks	[focus on risk]
5.4	Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	[focus on wellbeing and future generations]
5.5	The potential impacts the decision would have on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protected groups under the Equality Act 2010 • those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (when making strategic decisions) • opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language 	[focus on equality and the Welsh language] [focus on equality and Welsh Language]

Key Feeders (tick all that apply)

Strategic Risk		Cabinet Work Plan	
Director / Head of Service Key Issue	Y	External / Internal Inspection	
Existing Commitment / Annual Report		Performance / Finance Issue	
Suggestion from Public		Referral from Council / Committee	
Corporate Improvement Plan	Y	Impacting Public / other services	Y
Service Integrated Business Plan	Y		
Suggestion from Members			
Partnerships			

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
Date January 16th, 2024**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor James Gibson-Watt
Leader of the Council

REPORT TITLE: Housing Revenue Account Rent and Related Charges -
Changes for 2024-25

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out a series of recommended changes for Council Housing Rents, Garage Rents and all property and tenancy related Service Charges, for the financial year 2024-25.
- 1.2 The Council's Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) has considered the options available for changes to rents for the financial year 2024-2025 and supports the recommendation set out in this report.
- 1.3 The report additionally sets out:
 - Recommended changes to the charging structure for the Council's Careline community alarm system.
- 1.4 A separate report setting out the detail of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Thirty Year Business Plan recommended for the period beginning in April 2024 and reflecting the decisions taken in respect of the recommendations made in this report, will be presented to Cabinet in February 2024.

2. Background

- 2.1 The HRA is made up of income from rents and other housing related charges. This income is used to fund all HRA landlord related services including salaries, central service recharges and all services delivered to the Council's tenants. It also underpins the Council's ability to deliver a balanced and sustainable HRA Business Plan through financing the borrowing needed to invest in maintaining existing and developing new homes.
- 2.2 An important element of the HRA Business Plan is the projected future rental income over a thirty-year cycle. Rents need to be increased annually to make sure that the Business Plan remains sustainable due to inflation affecting all aspects of the wider economy. If the Business Plan does not generate enough income to meet its commitments,

which include maintaining all homes to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and improving thermal efficiency of Powys council housing as well as providing new homes to meet growing housing needs not fulfilled by open market housing, it will not be viable. The Welsh Government will not approve a non-viable HRA Business Plan and as a consequence the Council would not receive the annual Major Repairs Allowance (MRA), worth £3,720,000 million in capital funding for 2024-2025 year, to support ongoing investment.

- 2.3 This report sets out the changes in rents and other charges that accrue to the HRA that will need to be introduced for 2024-25, to make sure the HRA Business Plan remains both sustainable and viable. If the cost of providing the Council's housing landlord service is not recovered, savings will need to be identified to reduce costs to make sure that the HRA can continue to afford the borrowing needed to deliver the capital programme and does not fall into a deficit budget position.
- 2.4 The recommendations take into account compliance with the Welsh Government's Policy for Social Housing Rents (Rent Policy).
- An annual rent uplift of up to Consumers Prices Index (CPI)+1%, each year for five years from 2020-21 to 2024-25 using the level of CPI from the previous September each year.
 - The level of an individual rent can be reduced, frozen or can rise by up to an additional £2 per week over and above CPI, on condition that the total rental income collectable by the Council across the whole of its stock increases by no more than CPI+1%.
 - Should CPI fall outside the range of 0% to 3%, the responsibility to determine the appropriate increase to be applied for the relevant year will rest with the Minister with responsibility for housing.
 - When setting rents, the Council is expected to take into account affordability for tenants of the whole cost of living in a property, including for example, rent, service charges and energy costs.
- 2.5 For September 2023 CPI was 6.7%. This means that for 2024-2025, the Minister has exercised their right to determine the maximum rent increase for social landlords in Wales. The Minister has advised that the maximum annual rent uplift for 2024-2025 will be up to 6.7%. The 6.7% is a maximum not a requirement or a target.
- 2.6 This means that the increase applies to the aggregate rent collected by a social landlord. The total rent charged by a landlord cannot exceed 6.7% but within that overall figure, there is scope for individual rents to be frozen, increased or decreased by a different percentage, subject to each landlord's own rent setting policy.
- 2.7 Social landlords across Wales in 2022 agreed with the Welsh Government the following actions to help mitigate the impacts of increases in rents and the general rise in the cost of living:
- No evictions due to financial hardship, where tenants engage with their landlord.

- A package of support for tenants who are struggling financially. Powys County Council offers a wide range of services and support for people facing financial challenges. Housing Services has three 'Financial Support Officers' who work one-to-one with tenants to resolve such challenges, a 'Cost of Living Hub', the 'Money Advice Service' and the 'Discretionary Cost of Living fund'.
- Maximising the use of all social housing homes, with a focus on helping those in the poorest quality transitional accommodation move into longer term homes that meet their needs.

2.8 Powys County Council has restructured its approach to repairs and maintenance, reducing since July 2022 by half void repair times. There is a common housing register 'Homes in Powys' covering all social housing in Powys, making allocations quicker.

2.9 Housing Services is undertaking an acquisitions programme to increase the availability of affordable, secure rented homes. The acquisitions programme is in track to increase by 13 properties the number of homes the Council will be able to offer to people registered with 'Homes in Powys'. Table One sets out the Council-home building programme from 2021-2022 through 2026-2027. In 2024-2025, the Council will start building 32 units new homes, complete four off-the-shelf acquisitions and put to market tenders to build a further 118 Council homes.

Table One: Council-home building Programme 2021-2022 to 2026-2027

Project	Homes	Completion Date					
		2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
Sarn - completed	7	Apr-21					
Brecon - completed	32	Jul-21					
Clyro - completed	13		Oct-22				
Bowling Green - completed	26		Jul-22				
Llanidloes - completed	22		Sep-22				
Red Dragon - completed	18			Dec-23			
Llandrinio Trawscoed	24					Dec-25	
Robert Owen House	32					Aug-25	
Brynygroes, Ystrad – Off the Shelf purchase	4				Apr-24		
Churchstoke	38						Jun-26
Ystrad, Ael Y Bryn / Pen Y Bryn	16					Mar-26	
Llandrhaeadr, Maes Yr Escob	18						May-26
Llanfyllin, opposite Maesydre	16						Apr-26
Welshpool, Gungrog School	16					Feb-26	
Total	282	39	61	18	4	88	72

3. Advice

3.1. The Council, like all social landlords working in Wales, is expected to be able to justify its rent increases with reference to a rigorous approach to securing cost efficiencies and by putting affordability for tenants at the core of its considerations.

3.2 Rents

3.2.1 The Council's HRA Business Plan has been stress tested to see what changes in rents and service charges need to be made to allow it to remain viable, maintain essential standards for existing homes and be able to increase the number of affordable homes available across Powys. A copy of the Self Certification Form, required by Welsh Government and attached to this report as Appendix A, sets out the housing market intelligence and housing affordability matters taken into consideration when determining the recommended rent increase for 2024-2025. Taking into account the consultation undertaken with the TSP the challenges facing the Council in managing the impacts of comparatively high inflation and challenges collecting rent, the conclusion is that a rent increase of 6.7% is necessary to make sure that the Housing Service is sustainable and able to provide homes and services for both current and future tenants. Such an increase allows rents to remain affordable and is in line with the inflation rate for September 2023. The increase also ensures that reserve levels are maintained in accordance with HRA business plan best practice.

3.2.2 It is therefore recommended that with effect from April 1st 2024 the average rent in Powys will increase by 6.7% for all 5,523 Council owned homes and 31 Gypsy Pitches. Table One below shows the average rent in 2022-2023 and 2023-24. It should be noted that the figures in Table One show rents over a 53-week rent year. In Powys rents for municipal homes are, in the event of a 53-week year, charged over a 49-week rent year with two 'rent free weeks' at Christmas and three 'rent free weeks' at Easter¹. The five 'rent' free weeks for 2024-2025 will be those commencing:

- December 23rd, 2024
- December 30th, 2024
- March 17th, 2025
- March 24th, 2025
- March 31st, 2025

Table One: Housing Rents for 2023-24 and 2024-25

	Current Rent - 2023-2024	Recommended Rent - 2024-2025	Weekly Increase
Average HRA rent for Powys County Council	£101.44	£108.24	£6.80

¹ In the case of 52-week rent years, rents are charged over 48 weeks, with two 'rent free' weeks at Christmas and at Easter.

- 3.2.3 The total rental income to the HRA from housing rents, if the recommendation is approved, will increase from £29,012,440 in 2023-2024 to £31,086,362 in 2024-2025. This represents gross income before any allowance is made for void rent loss and arrears of rent. If the recommendation is not approved, then taking into account inflation and other unavoidable cost increases faced by the landlord service, it will be necessary to reduce the level of services provided, including investment in the Council's housing assets.
- 3.2.4 The Council takes a proportionate and pragmatic approach to the collection of rent. While the 'Rent First' ethos remains the guiding principle, tenants who are facing unavoidable financial challenges linked to increases in the cost of living have been and continue to be offered additional support to secure additional income, including for example submitting claims for housing benefit and universal credit, and accessing advice via the Councils money advice team. Officers are keeping in touch with people to make sure that help is offered as soon as possible to prevent arrears climbing to high levels. The approach is proving to be successful in maintaining income to the HRA. As of rent week 39, (week ending January 5th, 2024), income recovery in accordance with Welsh Government income collection parameters, is running at 93.8% of income due; for the same period last year this was 96.22%. This rigorous but pragmatic approach will continue in 2024-2025 when it is expected to yield a similar success rate.
- 3.2.5 The average Powys County Council rent by dwelling and number of bedrooms reported by Welsh Government for 2023-2024, as of September 7th, 2023 (the latest date for which data is available) is £101.61, which is the fourth lowest Council Housing rent in Wales (only Pembrokeshire - £96.39, Carmarthenshire - £99.41 and Caerphilly - £99.89 had lower average rents). The average social rent by dwelling and number of bedrooms, according to Welsh Government for 2023-24 is £106.69 (£105.08 Council Housing rents average and £107.60 housing association average for Wales)². It is not yet possible to provide comparative data for 2024-2025 as landlords are currently agreeing rents for the next rent year.

3.3 Service Charges

- 3.3.1 Service charges will need to be amended from April 1st 2024 to allow the Council to recover the cost of providing these services. The service charges levied in 2023-24 are shown alongside the proposed charges for 2024-25 in Table Two. Service charges are set at a level to recover the estimated cost incurred in delivering the service and will make sure that income from tenants' rents will not be subsidising the additional services provided to some tenants. It should be noted that service

² Source StatsWales ([Average weekly rents in stock at social rent by dwelling type, number of bedrooms and provider type \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/average-weekly-rents-in-stock-at-social-rent-by-dwelling-type-number-of-bedrooms-and-provider-type))

charges vary from year to year, dependent on the costs of providing those services.

Table Two: Service Charges for 2023-2024 & 2024-25

Service Charge	Highest Weekly Service Charge		Lowest Weekly Service Charge (where a charge is made)		How the Service Charge is Calculated
	2023-2024	2024-2025	2023-2024	2024-2025	
Grounds maintenance	£2.47	£2.47	£0.06	£0.06	Calculated on a site-by-site basis, based on the size of the site and the cost of undertaking the work.
Communal cleaning	£1.40	£1.40	£1.40	£1.40	Based on the total cost of the work, divided by all those who receive the service.
Communal heating and lighting	£1.12	£1.00	£1.12	£1.00	Based on the total cost of the service, divided by all those who receive the service.
Fire safety work	£1.60	£1.78	£0.04	£0.12	Based on actual costs per block and divided by all residents of the block.
Maintenance to entrance doors	No costs for 23/24	No costs for 23/24	No costs for 23/24	No costs for 23/24	Based on actual costs per block and divided by all residents of the block.
Communal washing lines	£0.44	£0.44	£0.44	£0.44	Based on actual costs per block and divided by all residents of the block.
Lift maintenance	£1.62	£1.81	£0.32	£0.60	Costs split equally between all tenants (for servicing)
Repairs to communal areas in flats	No costs for 23/24	No costs for 23/24	No costs for 23/24	No costs for 23/24	Costs per block divided between all residents of the block

3.3.2 For the majority of service charges, the calculation of the charge is based on the costs incurred in the previous full year. The service charge for lift maintenance for the only block of flats which benefits from a through floor vertical lift (Maes yr Ysgol in Llanidloes), is based on the cost of the service agreement with the contractor, plus the cost of any repairs undertaken in the previous financial year.

3.3.3 Grounds maintenance service charges are based on the charges incurred two years prior to the current year. This means that the charges for 2023-2024 were based on 2021-2022 costs, while costs for 2024-2025 will be based on costs incurred for 2022-2023.

3.4 Careline

- 3.4.1 The Careline (Community Alarm) service is a discretionary service (not a condition of tenancy) that can be accessed by both sheltered housing and general needs tenants. At present a different cost model is applied to different tenant groups. The annual charge for sheltered housing tenants is £58.08 (VAT not levied) - £1.21 per week over a 48-week charging cycle, while general needs tenants who are classed as a Careline private customer pay £203.32 a year (exclusive of VAT) - £3.91 per week over a 52-week charging cycle. Careline customers living in privately owned properties also pay £203.32 per annum. The difference in cost for tenants living in housing designated as sheltered is in part funded from the wider HRA.
- 3.4.2 To improve and align service provision for all Council tenants who would like to receive the Careline service, a programme of works has been undertaken to replace static pull-cords in all sheltered housing properties with pendants, worn by the customer meaning they are always within easy reach of the alarm call button. Where a hardwired base unit needs replacing, a dispersed alarm is now provided. This means that all tenants will in the future receive the same equipment and same service, regardless of the type of property in which they live.
- 3.4.3 It is now appropriate for the charges for the service to similarly be equitable. Aligning the service to the needs of the tenant rather than the type of property they rent will address the current anomaly where sheltered housing tenants pay a different weekly charge from general needs tenants and residents for the same Careline service. It is therefore recommended that from April 1st, 2024 a standard weekly charge of £3.91 per week (exclusive of VAT) is levied for all tenants of the Council receiving the Careline service.
- 3.4.4 The recommended weekly charge for sheltered housing tenants will be an increase from the current £1.21 weekly charge (VAT not levied) to £3.91. This charge will apply to all tenants who receive the service, including those whose charge is currently funded by the HRA because the tenant is in receipt of Housing Benefit. To minimise any adverse individual financial impact, tenants will be made fully aware of how to access income maximisation advice via the Housing Services Financial Support Team.

Table Three: Careline Community Alarm Charges for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025

	Current Charge – 2023-2024	Recommended Charge – 2024-2025	Weekly Increase
Careline Community Alarm Charge – Tenants in Sheltered Housing (48 weeks)	£1.21	£3.91	£2.70
Careline Community Alarm Charge – Tenants in General Needs Housing (52 weeks)	£3.91	£3.91	£0.00

3.4.5 To take account of technological developments, the needs and aspirations of residents, current service demand and the experiences in delivering services remotely, a review of the options available for all tenants and residents to have access to Careline-style services is currently underway.

3.5 Garages

3.5.1 The Council continues to provide garages for rent. Garages are rented to people regardless of the tenure of their home. Few of the garages owned by the Council are large enough to easily accommodate modern cars, which are wider than the norm when the garages were built thirty or more years ago. Many are therefore used for general storage. In addition, many of the garages are of prefabricated construction and are, due to age and type of construction, becoming uneconomical to maintain. A review of all the garage sites and plots owned by the Council considered the demand for and suitability of garages for car parking, the condition of the buildings and the options for other uses for the sites, for example the development of new homes or car parking. Recommendations have been made for each site, which will inform options for future investment in or use of each site.

3.5.3 Table Four below shows the current rents for HRA garages in 2023-24 in Powys and the proposed rent for 2024-24. It also shows the current and proposed rents for garage plots owned by the HRA. It is recommended that HRA garage rents in Powys are increased by 6.7% which equates to £14.65 per week, and garage plots by the same percentage, which equates to £186.29 per annum, with effect from April 1st, 2024.

Table Four: Garage and Garage Plot Rents for 2023-24 and 2024-25

	Existing Rent - 2023-24	Recommended Rent - 2024-25
Garage Rents	£13.73 per week	£ 14.65 per week
Rent for Garage Plots (not subject to rate at time of letting)	£174.59 per annum	£186.29 per annum

3.5.4 The total rental income to the HRA from the provision of garages, if the recommendation is approved, income will change from £695,840 in 2023-24 to £625,140 in 2024-25. The income for Garage Plot Ground rent in 2023-24 was £25,150. In 2024-2025 this will be £26,070.

3.6 Gypsy and Traveller Sites

3.6.1 The Council currently operates three Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Powys – Leighton Arches in Welshpool, Trem yr Afon in Machynlleth and Kings Meadow in Brecon. All sites are managed by Housing Services although the costs of providing this service falls on the General Fund. Service charges for the sites cover grass cutting for the Kings Meadow Site and sewerage for all sites.

3.6.2 It is recommended that weekly occupation charges for Gypsy and Traveller sites in 2024-2025, with effect from April 1st, 2024 will be increased by 6.7%, in line with the increase in HRA rents. Table Five below shows the existing charge for occupation of a plot on the Gypsy and Traveller sites, and associated service charges, in the current year and the recommended charge for 2024-25. Income received from residents living on the Gypsy and Traveller sites is set aside for investment in those sites and associated services.

Table Five: Gypsy & Traveller Site Weekly Occupation Charge and Service Charges for 2023-24 and 2024-25

	2023-2024	2024-25
Weekly Occupation Charge for plots on Gypsy & Traveller sites	£114.42	£122.09
Grass Cutting Service Charge (Kings Meadow site only)	£0.95	£0.95
Grass Cutting Service Charge (Trem Yr Afon site only)	£2.02	£2.02
Sewerage Service Charge Trem Yr Afon	£7.30	£6.85
Sewerage Service Charge Kings Meadow	£7.30	£9.92
Sewerage Service Charge Leighton Arches	£7.30	£4.20
Other Service charge Kings Meadow	£0.54	£0.73
Other Service charge Leighton Arches	£0.53	£0.71
Other Service Charge Trem Yr Afon	£1.96	£2.51

3.6.4 The total income to the General Fund from the Council's gypsy and traveller sites, if the recommendation is approved, will increase from £180,860 in 2023-24 to £196,800 in 2024-25. Plus £8,414 in service charges.

3.7 Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households

3.7.1 It is recommended that with effect from April 1st, 2024, the weekly charge for the occupation of temporary accommodation, provided to households to whom the authority owes a statutory duty is increased by 6.7% in 2024-2025. It should be noted that the scope for setting charges for temporary accommodation is influenced by the need to recognise the low incomes of some of those who are homeless, the restrictions the social security system places on the amount of help homeless people can claim for accommodation, and the capacity of the General Fund to meet the costs for those who are unable to make full payments from their own resources. The increase recommended represents a pragmatic compromise between these external factors. Tables Six and Seven shows the current and proposed weekly charge for the occupation of temporary homeless accommodation managed by the council.

Table Six. Temporary Homelessness Accommodation Weekly Occupation Charges for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 (including Council Tax)

Weekly occupation charge for temporary homeless accommodation	Occupation Charge - including Council Tax		Service Charge		Weekly Total Occupancy Charge	
	2023-2024	2024-2025	2023-2024	2024-2025	2023-2024	2024-2025
Single person	£115.19	£122.91	£17.86	£19.06	£133.05	£141.96
Couple	£140.41	£149.82	£22.17	£23.66	£162.58	£173.47
Family	£167.50	£178.73	£31.87	£34.01	£199.37	£212.74

The 'including Council Tax' figures are the charges for people placed into shared accommodation (accommodation modified to allow separate households people to occupy a single property) example).

Table Seven. Temporary Homelessness Accommodation Weekly Occupation Charges for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 (excluding Council Tax)

Weekly occupation charge for temporary homeless accommodation	Occupation Charge excluding Council Tax		Service charge		Weekly Total Occupancy charge	
	2023-2024	2024-2025	2023-2024	2024-2025	2023-2024	2024-2025
Single person	£93.22	£99.47	£17.86	£19.06	£111.08	£118.53
Couple	£115.39	£123.12	£22.17	£23.66	£137.56	£146.78
Family	£139.24	£148.57	£31.87	£34.01	£171.12	£182.58

The 'excluding Council Tax' figures are the sum charged to people placed in self-contained accommodation.

3.8 Other Rental Charges

3.8.1 The HRA collects rent from other services and properties, albeit on a small scale. These include such things as scooter stores and sheds. It is recommended that all other rental charges, not detailed above, will increase by 6.7% from April 1st 2024.

4. Resource Implications

4.1 Financial

4.1.1 The recommended increases to housing rents and other related charges will allow Powys County Council to continue to maintain a viable and sustainable Thirty Year HRA Business Plan, continue to provide high quality services, develop more new social rented homes and support continued investment in its homes to maintain WHQS and improve thermal efficiency.

4.1.2 [The Council's Section 151 Officer has commented as follows:](#) "

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 The Principal Solicitor - Housing comments as follows: The recommendations below will ensure that the HRA Business Plan remains both sustainable and viable which is a requirement of Welsh Government.
- 5.2 **The Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows:**
- 6. Climate Change & Nature Implications**
- 6.1 There are no climate change or nature implication arising directly from the recommendations set out in this report.
- 7. Data Protection**
- 7.1 The recommendations in this report do not involve the processing of personal data.
- 8. Comment from local member(s) and other relevant bodies**
- 8.1 This matter has equal effect across the Council.
- 8.2 The Council's Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) has been consulted on changes to rents for 2024-2025, concluding in a special meeting of the TSP on November 21st, 2023. The consultation paper shared with the TSP for the November 21st meeting is attached to this report as Appendix B.
- 8.3 The TSP considered four options – +2%, +2%, +4% and +6.7%, and the impact of each option on the ability of the Council to invest in both existing and new homes. The preferred course of action of the TSP is for the rents of residential properties to increase by 6.7% and the rents of garages and garage sites to increase by 6.7%.
- 8.4 The TSP minutes from the meeting that considered the rent changes for 2024-2025 noted that a vote was taken and that with one exception TSP reluctantly accepted and approved the 6.7% rent increase.
- 9. Integrated Impact Assessment**
- 9.1 An Impact Assessment has been completed for this report.
- 10. Recommendation**
- 10.1 The recommendations set out in this report are:
- 10.1.1 That with effect from April 1st 2024 the average rent in Powys will increase by 6.7% (the average rent being £108.24 per week) for all 5,524 Council owned homes, excluding service charges.

- 10.1.2 That service charges charged to HRA tenants are amended with effect from April 1st 2024 (included in Table Two above) to allow the Council to recover the cost incurred in providing these services.
- 10.1.3 That the weekly cost from April 1st 2024 for all tenants receiving the Careline community alarm service in 2024-2025 is £3.91 per week.
- 10.1.4 That HRA garage rents in Powys with effect from April 1st 2024 for 2024-2025 are increased by 6.7% to £14.65 per week.
- 10.1.6 That garage plot charges effective from April 1st 2024 for 2024-2025 are £186.29 per annum.
- 10.1.7 That the weekly occupation charge from April 1st 2024 charges for Gypsy and Traveller pitches in 2024-2025 will be increased by 6.7%, the average rent being £122.09.
- 10.1.8 That the charge for temporary accommodation increases, with effect from April 1st 2024, for the year 2024-2025, by 6.7%
- 10.1.8 That all other rental, not detailed above, effective from April 1st 2024 will increase by 6.7%. Service charges continue to be recovered on an actual basis.

Contact Officer:	Andy Thompson (Interim Head of Housing) Tel: 01597 827464 Email: andy.thompson@powys.gov.uk
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Head of Service:	Andy Thompson
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Corporate Director:	Nina Davies
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Appendix A: Self Certification Form for 2024-2025

Welsh Government	Powys County Council
Annual Self-Certification Monitoring Return	
Name of Social Landlord	Powys County Council
Date return completed	
PART ONE (MANDATORY): Please answer all the following questions relating to your rental income.	
Questions for year APRIL 2023/24	
Q1. Please confirm the overall percentage increase you applied to your rents at April 2023 and stock numbers on the 31st March 2023.	Rent Increase for 2023-2024: 5.36% (average £101.44 per week) Stock numbers 31.03.23: 5,502 homes.
Q2. Please confirm that the level of rent for an individual tenant did not rise more than CPI+1% plus an additional £2	The rent for individual tenants was capped at 5.36%, so no individual tenant's rent was increased by more than this amount.
Questions for year APRIL 2024/24	
Q3. Please indicate the estimated gross annual rental income for 2024-25 for general needs and sheltered self-contained dwellings based on revised rents at April 2024 and stock numbers on the March 31 st 2024. (Definition of 'estimated gross annual rental income' is the rental income you expect to receive for your whole portfolio of properties, including any new builds you are anticipating in year, and regardless of whether properties are occupied or void)	Gross Rental Income for 2023-2024: ££29,012,440. Stock numbers 31.03.24: Powys County Council has 5523 homes as of January 5th 2024. There are currently eight acquisitions being processed it is unlikely that they will all be completed by 31 st March 2024 and therefore the expected number for March 31 st , 2024 is 5523 properties.
Q4. Please confirm the overall percentage increase YOU INTEND to apply to your rents at April 2024	6.7%
Q5. Please confirm you have a local rent and service charge policy in place.	Confirmed.

Q6: Please outline the factors you considered when assessing affordability when you set your rents and service charges for the 2024/25 rent year. Include details of how affordability for your tenants was taken into account and influenced the approach taken.

Housing Affordability

Proof of affordability

All applicants to join 'Homes in Powys', the Common Housing Register offering access to all social housing in Powys, who are matched to and reach offer stage for a Powys County Council (PCC) property undergo a Pre-tenancy Financial Assessment (PTA) with their Financial Support Officer (FSO) before signing up to the Tenancy. FSOs have reported that for applicants who were not considered to be under occupying the property (i.e. they had no extra bedrooms beyond requirement) 100% of them were recommended to be able to afford the property based on their financial situation at the time of the assessment. FSOs also reported that for applicants who were considered to be under occupying the property (i.e. they did have an extra bedroom beyond requirements and the bedroom tax could have been applied) there were only a handful of applicants who would not be recommended to be able to afford the property at the time of the assessment.

Anecdotally the FSOs reported that in a large amount of the PTAs carried out, the low cost and affordability of Powys County Council rents in comparison to housing associations and the private rented sector was commented on favourably by prospective tenants. There is a sense that the gap between what the Council and what housing association and private landlords charge is widening.

Support in place for impact on affordability

Powys County Council currently has 5,167 live Secure Tenancies/Contracts

Powys County Council currently has 1,504 Tenants claiming Universal Credit (UC) = 29.11% (according to DWP 2022 figures)

Powys County Council currently has 1,839 Tenants claiming Housing Benefit (HB) = 35.6%

As the Council is a social landlord the rent increase will be covered by the eligible rent figure included in the housing benefit or UC Housing Element received by 64.71% of Powys County Council tenants.

The 35.29% of tenants who will not receive financial support towards the rent increase from the social security system will mainly be those whose household incomes are high enough for them to not be entitled to income-related benefits. There may be a small minority who are entitled to claim but are not doing so and it is the Council's aim to reach these and help them to claim the HB or UC they are entitled to, with the help of their FSO.

The Council has promoted the roles of the Financial Support Officers this financial year via multiple communications methods to maximize the number of tenants they have been able to assist through the cost-of-living crisis. The Council intends to continue this campaign in the new financial year to reach as many tenants as possible to maximize their income, help with budgeting, debt, or benefits and successfully maintain their municipal tenancies.

Additional data considered:

- House price to earnings ratio in Powys: 7.9 (Wales 6.2).

For more information, please click on the link below: [Housing affordability in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

- Average household income in Powys £33,458, Wales average is £34,700 and UK average £40,257. In Powys 55% of households earn less than the average Powys household income.

For more information, please click on the link below:

[Wellbeing Information Bank: View information about Household Income - Powys County Council](#)

- In considering the affordability of municipal housing, the Council has taken into consideration the Wellbeing Overview for Powys.

For more information, please click on the link below: [Well Being Information Bank: Well Being Overview - Powys County Council](#)

This includes the changing demographics in Powys. Highlights include:

👉 Average weekly rent in self-contained general needs stock with two bedrooms at social rent in Powys is £102.18 for 2023-2024. [Average weekly rents in self-contained stock at social rent by accommodation type, number of bedrooms and provider type \(gov.wales\)](#)

👉 Total social rented stock in Powys on 31 March 2023 is 8728 [Self contained stock at social rent by year, provider type and accommodation type \(gov.wales\)](#)

👉 Around 1,900 people aged 16 and over in Powys were unemployed in the year ending June 2023. [Powys' employment, unemployment and economic inactivity - ONS](#)

👉 Overall, there were 58,300 people aged 16 and over in Powys who were employed in the year ending June 2023. [Powys' employment, unemployment and economic inactivity - ONS](#)

👉 Average house prices in Powys are 11.8 higher than the average disposable income.

👉 There are 4390 children living in absolute poverty. [Stat-Xplore - Log in \(dwp.gov.uk\)](#).





Comparisons of Weekly Municipal Rent with Private Sector Rent, Living Rent and Social Landlords in Powys (please note that more recent figures for private rents and living rent are currently unavailable)

	Median private rents (2022)	Living rent (2023-2024)	Housing association average general needs (2023-2024)	Average municipal rents general needs (2023-2024)	Proposed average municipal rents - general needs (2024-2025)
One bedroom	£83	£136	£84	£82	£85.73
Two bedrooms	£104	£176	£106	£98	£101.94
Three bedrooms	£137	£217	£122	£111	£117.91
Four bedrooms	£162	£ N/A	£143	£120	£129.56

- Source median private rents: Welsh Government rent officers.
- Source Housing Association average and municipal average: [Average weekly rents in self-contained stock at social rent by accommodation type, number of bedrooms and provider type \(gov.wales\)](#)
- Source living rents: [Living Rent Methodology.pdf \(savills.com\)](#)
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningandworkinghours/datasets/placeofresidencebylocalauthorityshetable8/2023provisional/ashetable82023provisional.zip>

Below are the private sector Local Housing Allowance rates compared to municipal rents.

	LHA April 2023 – March 2024 (Brecon and Radnor)	LHA April 2023 – March 2024 (Neath Port Talbot)	LHA April 2023 – March 2024 (North Powys)	Average municipal rents (2023-2024)	Proposed municipal rents (2024-2025)
Single room allowance	£52.50	£62.50	£52.50	N/A	N/A
One bedroom	£71.34	£79.40	£67.89	£82.01	£91.95
Two bedrooms	£98.96	£95.00	£90.90	£97.69	£104.12
Three bedrooms	£115.07	£103.56	£109.32	£110.58	£117.90
Four bedrooms	£138.08	£120.82	£136.93	£120.34	£128.40

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source LHA: https://www.gov.wales/local-housing-allowance-lha-rates-april-2022-march-2023 <p>Rent Arrears The low level of rent arrears demonstrates that Powys rental charges are reasonable – for example, very few tenants are referred for eviction. Rent collected 2023-2024 Q1 to Q3 equates to 93.25% of all income due.</p> <p>Powys as compared to the other 11 stock holding local authorities continues to have a low amount of rent arrears both overall and expressed as percentage of rent due. This is coupled with relatively low recovery action which exemplifies the ongoing focus on tenancy sustainability.</p> <p>Service Charges Service charges are recovered based on actual costs incurred in the last full year preceding 2024-2025.</p>
<p>Q7: Please outline the tenant involvement (engagement, consultation and feedback) undertaken and how feedback received has influenced your rent setting policy for the 2024/25 rent year.</p>	<p>Tenant Scrutiny Consultation The service undertook a consultation with the Councils Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) in November 2023 regarding the potential rent increase.</p> <p>The following information and summary details were discussed with TSP at the November meeting.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div> <p>Rent%20increase%20scenarios%20and%20with%20pie%20c 20average%20rents% e%20charts%202425. Email%20to%20TSP General%20Needs% rent%20setting%20pi</p> <p>Welsh Government guidance stated a maximum rental increase of 6.7%. Details provided to TSP provided expected inflationary costs and the impact on the HRA budget of +2%, +4%, +5% and +6.7% rent increase.</p> <p>TSP accepted that the Council needed to increase rents to the maximum allowed by Welsh Government and this was confirmed by a majority vote.</p> <p>STAR Survey Outcomes for 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The perceived rent value for money has improved since 2021 from 78% to 84%. Rent value for money is the strongest key driver of overall satisfaction. New tenants are still amongst the most satisfied with their rent (89%) The rent value for money rating has improved significantly since 2021 despite the cost of living crisis.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is one of relatively few measures that is higher than the benchmark score across all landlords in Wales (82% median). • 76% satisfied service charge is value for money. • Both of these scores, rents and service charges, compare favourably against the benchmarks for Welsh landlords. <p>New Tenant Surveys 83% of tenants (starting a new tenancy between 1 October 2022 and 1 October 2023) that responded to the new tenants' survey were satisfied with the condition of the home when they moved in and 93% was satisfied with the neighbourhood.</p>
Q8: Please state the date your Board/Council/ Committee made or ratified the final decision on your rent setting for 2024/25	16.01.2024
Q9: Please explain how your annual assessment on operating costs and cost efficiencies has impacted on your rent setting decision for April 2024/25	In 2022-2023, the Council in response to a detailed assessment of how repairs and maintenance services are provided for its tenants, internalised the repairs and maintenance service. The directly provided service - which started July 2022.... Since July 2022, void repair times have been reduced by a third and overall tenant satisfaction has already increased as shown in the recent STAR survey from 71% to 75%. Also following a very successful recruitment campaign during the summer of 2023, we were able to employ an extra 38 operatives the maintenance teams are now at full capacity to provide an even better service.
Q10: Please provide any other comments or raise an issue in relation to your rent setting exercise for April 2024/25	<p>There are as of January 5th, 2024, 4069 households were registered with 'Homes in Powys' for secure, affordable housing, a reduction of 652 households (13.8) from the January 2023 figure of 4721) Maintaining and increasing the rate of development for new Council-owned homes is a major priority for the Council to meet this demand, both by new build and acquisitions.</p> <p>Communities will benefit socially and economically by increasing the number of people who can enjoy secure, affordable accommodation – including current tenants who need to move and their families and friends who are no yet council tenants.</p> <p>The rent increase for Powys 2024-2025 will help support the expansion of our development programme to increase the availability of good homes for people living in our county.</p>
PART TWO – Voluntary	
a) End all evictions into homelessness	
Q11: Please confirm that you are strengthening your approaches designed to ensure you minimise all evictions and deliver on a new agreement not to evict into homelessness	Ongoing focus is continuing to minimise the threat of eviction through regular contact with tenants, maximising rent payment options and regular referrals by our Housing Officers, who are tasked with arrears case management, to our 'in-house' Finance Support Team to provide tailored financial support which has contributed significantly to ongoing tenancy sustainability.

Q12: If you would like to provide further details please do so here:	To minimise potential evictions into homelessness, in the exceptional cases where possession proceedings are needed for ongoing breaches of tenancy conditions, our Housing Officers work alongside our Housing Options Officers. This is to ensure a timely consideration of the individual household's housing and support needs, in line with current homelessness legislation, including the provision of temporary accommodation where needed while ongoing work is done to secure settled, alternative accommodation.
b) Undertake a standardised tenant satisfaction survey	
Q13: Confirm that you will complete a tenant satisfaction survey, including the core questions, for submission by 28th February 2024	Our next STAR survey is scheduled for 2025-2026. Our most recent survey reported in Q3 2023-2024.
c) Standards	
Q14: Please confirm that all new build development financed by Welsh Government Housing Capital Funding, will comply with the new housing quality standard "WDQR 2021" across all tenures on sites.	Confirmed.
d) EPC A	
Q15: Please confirm that all new build financed by Welsh Government Housing Capital Funding will achieve energy efficient standard of EPC A and above.	Confirmed.
Authorised Signatory	
Name	Jane Thomas
Position (Deputy Section 151 Officer)	Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer)
Date	

Appendix B: Rent Setting Paper for Tenant Scrutiny Panel 21.11.23

Rent Increase Scenarios and Projected Housing Revenue Budgets.

Rent setting scenarios.

The table below shows the total rent budget for this financial year (2023-24) and the projected increase in rental income by a percentage rent increase.

Budgeted Rent 2023-24	Increase in rent for 2024-25 based on % shown below			
	2%	4%	5%	6.70%
£27,924,470	£558,489	£1,116,979	£1,396,224	£1,870,939

Last year the Council did not increase rents to the maximum allowed by Welsh Government and as we know inflationary costs increased more than the percentage increase implemented. This meant that some budgets were cut in the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) business plan and that the total budgeted rent for this year is at the level shown above (£27,924,470). If the Council had increased the rent last year by a higher percentage this would be a higher figure i.e. there would have been more money available this year.

Core HRA Budgets and Estimated inflationary costs.

Below is a table of the core HRA budgets set for this financial year. The estimated impact of inflationary costs on budgets is included.

Type of Cost / Income	2023-24 Budget	Estimated Cost of Inflation
Funding set aside for vehicle replacement	322,670	16,130
Grounds Maintenance	894,190	80,480
Interest and Borrowing Costs	5,017,590	301,060
Legal Costs	200,000	10,000
Non Pay Staff Related Costs	176,570	8,830
Pay and On Costs	8,885,990	622,020
Premises Costs	523,580	26,180
Provision for Bad Debt	652,780	0
Repairs and Maintenance	5,983,905	598,390
Revenue Funding of Capital Expenditure	3,900,000	0
Services Provided by PCC Internal Departments	1,761,350	158,520
Supplies and Services	519,210	25,960
Transport Costs	483,195	24,160
Other Income	-1,193,860	0
Rental Income	-27,924,470	0
Welsh Government Grant	-202,700	0
Grand Total	0	1,871,730

If we consider the projected inflationary costs and the rent increase projections, the 6.7% increase in Page 32 is the maximum allowed by Welsh Government, almost covers the projected inflationary cost increases (£1,887,750. - £1,871,730 = £16,020 deficit).

Core HRA budgets and Expenditure to date.

The above table includes the budget set for this financial year, below is a table of the same budgets with the forecast expenditure to year end taking account of the levels of actual expenditure to September.

As can be seen we are currently forecasting an over spend on the Repairs and Maintenance budget (£876,667), we have put in measures to bring the budget back on track and we are confident that the budgets will balance by year end, however the table does illustrate how actual expenditure can vary from the set budget. The forecast also shows £564,527 less income than budgeted for, however performance in collecting rents is very good as can be seen from the details below.

Type of Cost/Income	2023-24 Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance from Budget (- overspend)
Funding set aside for vehicle replacement	286,820	286,820	0
Grounds Maintenance	894,190	899,685	-5,495
Interest and Borrowing Costs	5,017,590	4,825,663	191,927
Legal Costs	200,000	123,905	76,095
Non Pay Staff Related Costs	176,570	69,930	106,640
Pay and On Costs	8,496,870	7,759,943	736,927
Premises Costs	523,580	375,022	148,558
Provision for Bad Debt	652,780	652,780	0
Repairs and Maintenance	6,460,030	7,336,697	-876,667
Revenue Funding of Capital Expenditure	3,900,000	3,900,000	0
Services Provided by PCC Internal Departments	1,761,350	1,796,711	-35,361
Supplies and Services	519,210	601,920	-82,710
Transport Costs	432,040	303,701	128,339
Rental Income	-27,924,470	-27,359,943	-564,527
Other Income	-1,193,860	-1,370,133	176,273
Welsh Government Grants	-202,700	-202,700	0
Total	0	0	0

Rent Collection Performance

The Housing Service rent collection performance continues to be good. As of week 31, week commencing Monday 6th November our rent collection performance compared to the same period last year was:

Week 31 Income Recovery (Live Secure Tenancies only)

Income recovery is 93.36% of rent due; for the same period last year this was 94.00%.

Average rent arrears per tenant (£0.01 upwards) is £229.34 for last year this was £212.93.

Percentage of tenants in arrears (£0.01 upwards) is 54.25%; for last year this was 55.54%.

Week 31 Income Recovery (based on Welsh Government Income Collection Parameters)

Income recovery is 93.14% of rent due; for the same period last year this was 93.60%.

Budgetary pressures which will need to be considered in the HRA Business Plan.

There are additional pressures on the HRA which will need to be considered when setting the HRA business plan budgets. These include:

Compliance: Significant expenditure is required in order for the service to comply with the Fire Risk Assessments recommendations. As these works are improving the asset its likely that this additional expenditure can be capitalised, which means the work can be paid for via borrowing.

As a rough guide it costs approximately £60,000 revenue funding to borrow £1 million. So for example if the Fire Risk Assessment recommendations work was projected to cost £3 million an additional £180,000 revenue funding would be required.

Heating Services: The full costs of the contract recently entered into is still being considered however its expected that approximately an additional £300k will be required.

WHQS2: Welsh Government have recently issued guidance and details relating to the requirements for WHQS2. Currently there is no additional funding being made available by Welsh Government, the minister has stated that when considering Welsh Government Rent Setting Policy for the next 5 year period that the additional investment required by Social Landlords to achieve WHQS2 will be factored into the policy. This will however not cover all the costs that need to be factored into the HRA business plan budget setting process.

HRA Reserves

Currently the Housing Service has reserves of circa £4 million (£3,957,580.95) which is circa 14% of the total budget. This does not take into account any over or under spend in this years budgets (2023-24) as the forecast is to breakeven. HRA business plan guidance states that the minimum level of reserves should not be lower than £1 million. £1 million represents approximately two weeks rent collection.

Reserves does not include any provision for replacement vehicles, this will be calculated in the new year.

Once reserves are spent, they can only be accrued when there is a surplus. Given current inflationary pressures and the maximum rent increase allowed by Welsh Government it's unlikely that any additional reserves will be accrued in the immediate future.



Car Parking Review – Scrutiny input

Matt Perry – Interim Director (Environment)

Shaun James – Senior Manager Highways Technical, Business & Environmental Services

Tony Caine – Traffic & Travel Manager



Car Park review timeline

October 2023 – Commission Atkins



October 2023 – Car park working group to agree terms of reference and themes.



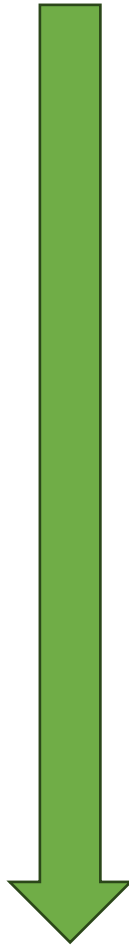
December 2023 – Three themed groups meet individually facilitated by Atkins



January 2024 – Scrutiny to review comments from the working groups

January 2024 – Working group to meet as one group and put recommendations forward

February 2024 – Cabinet to consider recommendations from Scrutiny and working group



Theme – 1 – Tariffs Structures

Issues



Solutions

Car park charges

- Cost is driving people away or onto residential streets around the town, causing congestion issues and hazards to pedestrians.
- Increase in illegal parking.
- Difficult for local businesses and professional tradesmen trying to park near a customer's home when carrying out work.
- Frustration from business owners due to reduced footfall as a result of tariff restructure.
- Cashless payment can be exclusionary.

Permits

- People are unable to afford 6-month parking permit.
- Free parking signs are too small.
- Permits don't support people working in town / people in a low-income situation.
- Annual parking permits for short-stay car parks not possible, therefore residents constantly search for parking in town centres.

Footfall

- Loss of customers since the increase in parking costs.
- Supermarkets viewed as competitors because they offer free parking.

Concessions (blue badges)

- People are reluctant to use disabled bays in short stay car parks as they don't get enough time to shop or attend appointments.
- Long stay car parks often too far away for them to walk to their destinations.

Car park charges

- Community decides on the car parking hours that are charged.
- Remove charges on Sundays to encourage more shops to open.
- Make cash and card payments available.
- Higher parking charges for motorhomes in Brecon and Llandrindod Wells.

Permits

- Seasonal tickets.
- Powys-wide tickets.

Footfall

- Better signalisation to raise awareness about the presence of car parks, as well as to clarify what the charges are for each period (1h, 2h, etc).
- Free access for a certain amount of time (e.g. 1h) to attract people away from supermarkets and into town centres.

Concessions (blue badges)

- Disabled bays in short term car parks should have longer stay times.
- Non-disabled drivers often park within disabled on-street parking and in car parks (also related to theme 2).



Theme 2 - Enforcement Resources & Service Improvement / Innovation



Issues



Solutions

Benchmark current resources

- Along A483, no residential parking, therefore residents use the free car park which is always full.
- Not enough enforcement.
- Free spaces abused.
- Removal of 1h ticket magnified problems.

Penalty charge notices (PCNs)

- Enforcement officers patrolling the same areas on the same days makes them predictable. People just know to move their cars before the officer arrives.
- Presteigne: parking outside the cashpoint causes problems for the fire engine exiting the minor road opposite and causes delay.
- Who is responsible for parking? PCC or police.
- Inconsistency between free on-street car parking and car parks.
- Disabled bays occupied by non-disabled people.

Service improvement and innovation

Opportunities for the service

Benchmark current resources

- Longer, less predictable application of rules.
- Flat rate for short- and long-stay car parks.

Penalty charge notices (PCNs)

- Ensure that enforcement is fair and consistent for all.

Service improvement and innovation

- Street parking

Opportunities for the service

- Allocate best areas of the car park to small, low emissions cars.



Theme 3 – Non-Pay & Display Car Parks

Issues

Make best use of the asset

- More information required on use of individual car parks in individual towns.
- Out of town shopping thrives because of ease which is in part due to free parking.
- Seasonal pricing difficult to implement at the moment because signage would have to be modified manually.
- Motorhomes taking up space of other users.

Identify towns where there is insufficient / too much parking

- Lack of available car parking in Builth and Hay-on-Wye, with insufficient short stay car parking.
- Shortage in Builth, Crickhowell, and Hay-on-Wye.
- Number of towns (e.g. Llandrindod Wells) where it appears there is a significant underuse of the available car parking spaces.
- Brecon has many car parks, should look into whether they are all used to capacity or not.
- Ystradgynlais has too little parking.

Car parks with no charge

- Free car parks can become car parks for abandoned vehicles.

Energy / EV hubs

- The public cannot commit to EV purchases without knowing how far they can go without the ability to recharge their vehicles.
- Are there any EV hubs? Unclear on where these are located.
- What is the minimum size to justify an EV hub?
- Is there enough capacity in the grid to have more EV hubs?
- Slow charger policy is flawed. People avoid slow chargers installed by PCC.
- EVs are expensive and unaffordable for many Powys residents.

Solutions

Make best use of the asset

- Nation-wide car parking app to make services more uniform.
- Links to active travel routes but not just to force people out of their cars. Improve people's safety.
- Transfer of assets to alternative organisations, e.g. RinGo.

Identify towns where there is insufficient / too much parking

Car parks with no charge

- Offer free parking to attract people to the town, then when the town becomes popular, introduce visitor parking fees, keep free spaces for residents and town workers.
- Make town centre parking free for a minimum of 2 hours.
- Free parking located in deprived areas.

Energy / EV hubs

- Covered car parks with a light frame and put solar panels on the roof (as another income generation)?
- Install super-fast charging hubs in all car parks.



Thank you!



Committee:	Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 th of January 2025
Subject:	Review of the council's approach to its climate programme.

1. Who will be the Lead Officer(s) / Lead Cabinet Member(s) presenting the report?

Name:	Role:
Councillor Jackie Charlton	Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys
Ellen Sullivan	Interim Head of Economy and Digital Services

2. Why is the Scrutiny Committee being asked to consider the subject?

The Committee is being asked to consider the report, to act as a critical friend to the Service in relation to the findings of the commissioned report completed by Netherwood Sustainable Futures (NSF), on the council's approach to its climate programme.

3. Role of the Committee:

The role of the Committee in considering the subject is to:

To act as a Critical friend as to whether the council has undergone due diligence on challenging our progress and setting an improved road map.

Provide feedback on whether the report covers all the elements asked for by the Climate & Nature Emergency and addresses the need to progress with the agenda for reaching Net Zero by 2030 and delivering on the Nature Recovery Plan.

4. Key Scrutiny Questions:

What Key areas should the Committee focus on:

Whether they feel the priorities are right?
 Whether the report is strong enough on delivering the leadership and governance needed?
 Has the Council been successful in Challenging our progress and setting an improved road map?

5. Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members:

To assist the Committee when scrutinising the topic:

- 5.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities :
- 5.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality
[focus on value]
- 5.3 A look at any risks
[focus on risk]
- 5.4 Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:
- Long term
 - Prevention
 - Integration
 - Collaboration
 - Involvement
- [focus on wellbeing and future generations]
- 5.5 The potential impacts the decision would have on:
- protected groups under the Equality Act 2010
 - those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (when making strategic decisions)
 - opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
[focus on equality and the Welsh language]
- [focus on equality and Welsh Language]

Key Feeders (tick all that apply)

Strategic Risk		Cabinet Work Plan	
Director / Head of Service Key Issue		External / Internal Inspection	
Existing Commitment / Annual Report		Performance / Finance Issue	
Suggestion from Public		Referral from Council / Committee	
Corporate Improvement Plan		Impacting Public / other services	
Service Integrated Business Plan			
Suggestion from Members			
Partnerships			

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date: 11th of January 2024

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor: Councillor Jackie Charlton
Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys**

REPORT TITLE: Review of the council's approach to its climate programme.

REPORT FOR: Information and decision

Note: The NSF completed report falls under a commercial contract, requiring any use of the information to acknowledge Netherwood solutions.

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information and raise awareness of the commissioned report completed by Netherwood Sustainable Futures (NSF), on the council's approach to its climate programme. The focus of the report will be on the key recommendations including feedback from the Council and stakeholders.

2. Background

2.1 Powys's Climate and Nature Board Commissioned Netherwood Sustainable Futures (NSF) in May 2023 to review and challenge the Council's current approach to our Climate programme, specifically in relation to:

- Leadership and collaboration (internal and external)
- Strategic direction, prioritisation, and pace of decarbonisation
- Actions and the financial commitments for achieving Net Zero 2030 for PCC
- Approaches to progress Net Zero Powys 2050 across partnerships in Powys
- Climate risk and adaptation for the Council and across Powys
- The capacity building and resources for an enhanced approach

The commission drew on NSF's extensive work and research at UK, Wales, partnership and local authority levels on climate change policy, practice, and governance.

2.2 The Analysis and recommendations made from this work will inform the Council's actions to address the climate emergency and support the development of a business case to seek funding.

2.3 In order to gain insight into current approaches and options for improvement, evidence was gathered and analysed, including relevant documentation and correspondence on the Council's current approach, emissions data, action plans and corporate, partnership and service specific strategies. Also views of members of the Climate and Nature Board, the Cabinet lead, Cabinet Advisors, Senior Leadership Team, managers from PCC and Powys PSB were sought.

This activity enabled NSF to develop an understanding of the complex organisational, service, financial and political contexts for working on climate change, both within and external to the Council.

2.4 NSF's full report can be found in appendix 1. It must be noted that the report should be read as strategic advice to the organisation on pursuing an enhanced, whole organisation approach to climate change, for both decarbonisation and climate risk management.

The purpose of the report is to provide Powys CC with an external expert view on scale, scope, pace, resource requirements and priorities going forward and ways to integrate climate change into the Councils core activities as it evolves to meet future service needs.

2.5 Feedback on NSF's findings has been gathered from a number of stakeholders and fed into this report. These stakeholders include:

- Climate and Nature Programme Board (Full report)
- Climate and Nature Member Steering Group (Full Report)
- Climate and Nature Member/Officer Group (Full Report)
- Climate Stakeholder Group (Full Report – feedback asked on specific priorities)
- Public Service Board (Full Report – feedback asked on specific priorities)

3. NSF Advice

3.1 Key messages highlighted in the report were:

3.1.1 **It is recognised that a lot of valuable work has been developed since PCC Climate Change Strategy was published.** Notable achievements include the development of the Climate and Nature Programme itself, annual emissions reporting, and data analysis, achieving emission reductions, and the establishment of Working Groups. The Council has also established a member group, a cabinet lead and cabinet advisors, and recently facilitated a climate change stakeholder group and engaged with Town and Community Councils.

3.1.2 It is strongly recommended that the work of the Climate and Nature Programme is **reframed to focus on both decarbonisation and climate risk** and that PCC develops its community leadership role on these issues.

3.1.3 Engaging in the 1-1s highlighted a **tension between those individuals who interpret the corporate commitment as being a strategic issue for the Council, with the need for the Council to provide strategic leadership as an organisation, and across Powys as a whole, and others, in both operational and senior positions, who see the Council's agenda through an operational lens – to reduce emissions through Councils services.**

3.1.4 The Council's current approach to climate change, has focused predominantly on addressing emissions reduction from Councils services, with Net Zero 2030 target and annual reporting to Welsh Government the core activity. **The current approach is measure led and focused on the organisation itself.** The Council is focusing on what it reports on – emissions reduction.

3.1.5 The current Climate and Nature programme is **not strategic enough to address climate change challenge**, for the Council as an organisation, or in its various roles of working across Powys through its services and community leadership.

3.1.6 Additional resources are needed for PCC to enhance its approach to the climate emergency. However, the additional costs are not solely about operational 'kit' to drive emissions down to meet the Net Zero 2030 public sector target. There are also a broad range of additional resource needs, mainly related to **building capacity and understanding of opportunities for decarbonisation and climate risk management**, across the organisation, at a critical time for service reform for the Council.

3.1.7 Efforts should be made to invest staff time, resource, evidence gathering and partnership work in the **identified key eight areas**.

3.2 It is clear from the key messages that the Council's Leadership role is key, strategic leadership from within the organisation and Leadership within the community. It is also clear that the Climate Programme needs to be re-shaped, to support a wider strategic approach and also to support the drawing down of investment which is required to progress the actions.

4 Identified priorities and findings.

4.1 The below priority areas have been identified as ways the council can improve and strengthen its approach, and delivery of its Climate change programme. It must be noted that these priority areas are not in priority order.

The eight priority areas are:

Priority 1: Sustainable Powys – ensure that climate change is central to service redesign and delivery of the Council's Transformation Programme over the next 18 months.

Priority 2: Place Planning across Powys – pursue decarbonisation and climate risk management in 13 communities across Powys through place planning, engaging the community on both issues in the places that they live.

Priority 3: Council Emissions Reduction prioritise emissions reduction in the supply chain and asset management over the short and medium term alongside carbon sequestration on the Council's land. (see priority 5)

Priority 4: Climate Risk & Adaptation: combined risk to services and place, planning service delivery in a changed climate and building community resilience to climate impacts.

Priority 5: Asset Management ensure the Strategic Property Management Review identifies and implements opportunities for carbon sequestration, emissions reduction and climate resilience for both built assets and land, alongside other well-being outcomes.

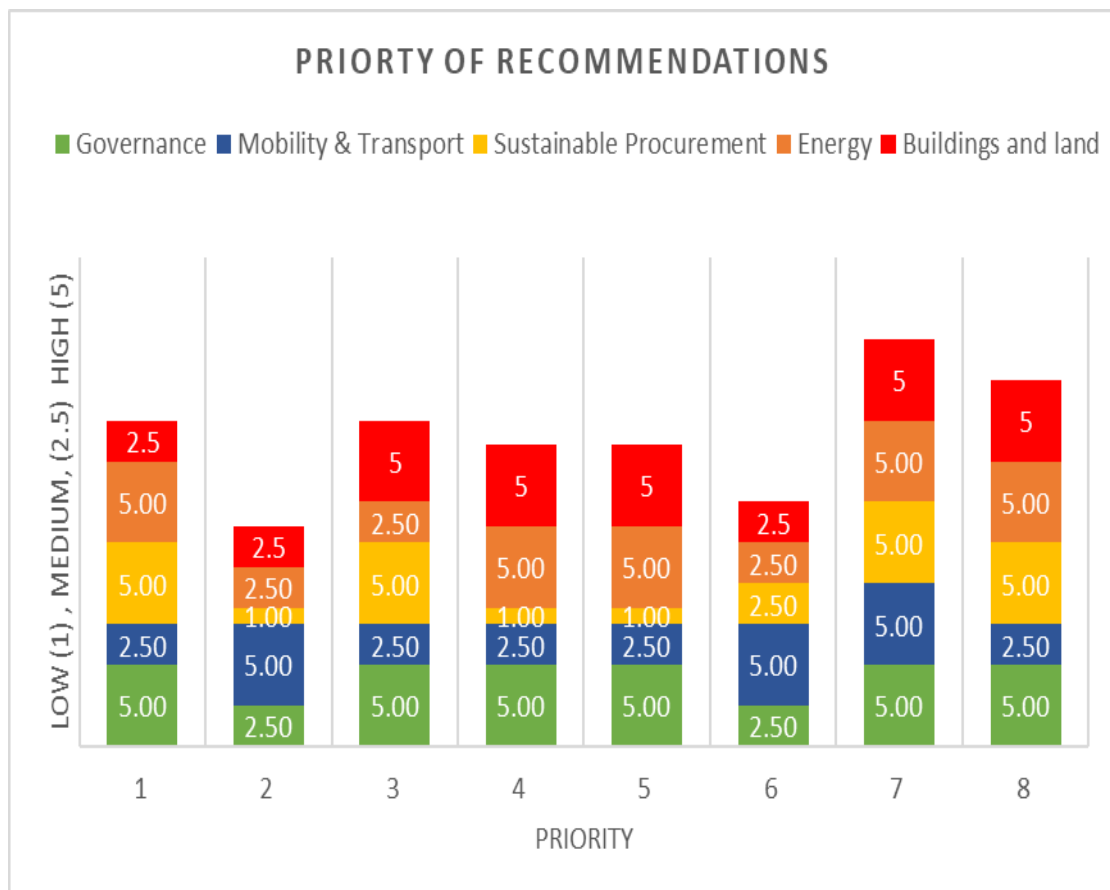
Priority 6: Powys-wide and cross border collaboration: involve key partners, stakeholders and the community in identifying specific outcomes to address decarbonisation and climate adaptation at a territorial scale.

Priority 7: Leadership on Climate Change: support senior management, members; and officers to lead on decarbonisation and climate adaptation in decision -making; service planning and community leadership.

Priority 8: Resources for climate transition: Establishing and maintaining resource for delivering an enhanced climate change programme – to pursue priorities 1- 7.

4.2 Through consultation with stakeholders listed in 2.5, we were able to conclude that **All** Stakeholders agreed with the eight priorities (apart from two stakeholder groups that were only asked to comment of specific priorities)

The below graph shows the Climate and Nature Boards feedback on which priorities they believe are low, medium or High.



The above graph shows priorities in the following priority order:

Rank	Priority (Summary-full description in 4.1)
1st	Leadership and Governance on Climate Change
2nd	Resources for climate transition
3rd	*Sustainable Powys – ensure that climate change is central to service redesign and delivery of the Council’s Transformation Programme, and Council Emissions Reduction
4th	Climate Risk & Adaptation AND Asset Management
5th	Powys-wide and cross border collaboration
6th	*Place Planning across Powys

**At the time of this report being commissioned, place-based planning was in concept stage and had not been discussed as an approach to support a ‘sustainable Powys’. It is therefore recommended that we move forward with an amalgamated priority which covers both.*

4.3 It must be noted that despite the ranking all the priorities are viewed as essential, however there are a number of key priorities that require initial focus in order to pave the way for successful, sustainable delivery.

4.4 Below is a sample of comments/observations from stakeholders:

“The commissioning of this report is a very constructive step to help PCC understand how best to practically deliver on this commitment in its own operations and across the county”.

“The phrase ‘Place Planning’ needs explaining – it used to be to help PCC with their Local Development Plans. Now it is wider – Communities are asked to notice changes needed due to the coming changes in Climate e.g. rain causing flooding, colder winters breaking up road surfaces, council buildings needing retro-insulation”.

“I welcome the support PCC has given to the PSB to take this approach. There is a need to further develop ways of working between PCC and PSB so that PCC fully contributes to the Powys-wide strategy and plan being developed”.

“I would like to have seen a document with all the mandatory CC/emissions and biodiversity goals set out”.

“I would add carbon sequestration to that list - natural carbon sinks need to be restored at very large scale for the climate to stabilise, and Powys has a huge potential as a rural county. Net zero with nature is a helpful way of thinking about the integrated approach needed to the climate and nature emergencies”.

“It was noted that the evidence-base surrounding the territorial climate risk and emissions needed to be established with partners such as Natural Resources Wales. Dr A Netherwood advised that service areas would then be able to facilitate emissions reduction and take up the community leadership role to support this”.

“The report is balanced and offers opportunities for collaboration”.

5. Challenges

5.1 Central to the eight priorities listed in 4.1, NSF identified four fundamental challenges. These are listed below and will be considered along with other identified challenges.

- The Council, as a service provider will need to plan for delivering services to Powys’ communities in a changed climate in coming decades. This will require them to plan forward to both manage the consequences of climate risks and to deliver services to meet the publics needs in a changed climate.
- The Council will need to continue to drive down its own GHG emissions in its services, reducing its contribution to further climate change for future generations – Net Zero 2030 and Net Zero Powys 2050 are commitments made by the Council on this issue.
- As a ‘place shaper’ the Council will also need to help Powys’s communities, businesses, landowners, and partners build resilience to ongoing climate change, identifying ways to make these places develop and thrive in a changed climate,
- While at the same time using its influence and relationships to help to reduce carbon emissions across Powys within these places.

6. Next steps

6.1 The Climate Programme will be re-shaped, to support a wider strategic approach, enable stronger leadership and act as a conduit to develop effective plans and draw down appropriate funding to drive forward change. To complete this at pace the Climate and Nature Board will consider utilising the current transformation funding already secured.

6.2 Reviewed workstreams and their costed Action plans will go forward into a business case to seek funding. The business case will be developed in a way that specific actions/ outcomes can be lifted to form ‘shelf ready’ projects, managing the overall cost and ensuring that the council is prepared for future external grant funding opportunities.

6.3 We will enhance climate action by strengthening engagement with our Steering group, Stakeholder Group, Climate and Nature Board, and Communities, the Councils ‘Place based’ planning model will be a key conduit to this.

6.4 Review the Governance of the Climate and Nature Programme as part of a stock take exercise in response to recent changes to the Corporate Leadership Team and upon reflections drawn from priority 8 of NSF’s report. This will provide clarity on the many internal and external stakeholder and partner working groups, forums and steering groups that are in existence.

6.5 Although the focus of this report was not the Councils Carbon accounts, they do play a key role in the next steps. The Councils 22/23 Carbon accounts have identified key areas across the council where our carbon emissions are high. These key areas will also feed into the work described in 6.2.

7. Resource Implications

7.1 There are no direct resource implications in the acknowledgment of the commissioned report. However, the next steps of this work will include the development of a business case to seek Transformation Funding. It is anticipated that such a business case will require significant amounts of funding but will also provide a pragmatic approach to manage funding such as a phased approach (SMART action plans assisting our goal of achieving Net Zero 2030 over the next 6 years), focusing on the priority areas highlighted in 4.2 and external funding.

8. Legal implications

(State here any legal implications and confirmation that the report has been approved by the Monitoring Officer) Awaiting comments.

9. Climate Change & Nature Implications

9.1 This report is for information purposes only; however, the findings of NSF's commissioned report will be considered in the re-shaping on the Climate and Nature Programme, which will contribute positively towards the delivery of the Council's Climate and Nature emergency declarations. There are no negative implications on Climate Change and Nature.

10. Data Protection

10.1 There are no data protection implications within the proposal.

10.2 The Data Protection Officer notes the proposal within the report and has no further comments to make.

11. Comment from local member(s)

11.1 Not applicable.

12. Impact Assessment

12.1 An assessment is not required as the report does not directly impact policy, our direct delivery of services to our residents or staff.

11. Recommendation

11.1 To acknowledge the commissioned report completed by NSF on the council's approach to its climate and nature change programme and to acknowledge the council and stakeholders' position on the identified recommendations.

11.2 To agree the recommendation that the Climate and Nature Programme will be re-shaped, to support a wider strategic approach, enable stronger leadership and act as a conduit to develop effective plans and draw down appropriate funding to drive forward change.

11.3 To acknowledge the Climate and Nature Boards feedback on the order of importance of the priorities detailed (4.2).

11.4 To acknowledge the Governance review of the Climate and Nature Programme, which will improve and enhance effective partnership working bringing access to more knowledge, funds, innovation, and expertise ensuring our individual and collective journeys to net zero are quicker, cheaper, and provide better outcomes to our residents and communities.

11.5 To acknowledge the development of costed Action plans. The aim is to have initial plans completed by the end of Qtr 1, 2024. The plans will provide clarity and management of the overall cost and ensure that the council is prepared for future external grant funding opportunities.

Contact Officer: Ellen Sullivan

Email: ellen.sullivan@powys.gov.uk

Head of Service: Ellen Sullivan (Interim Head of Economy and Digital)

Corporate Director: Diane Reynolds

Appendix 1

Powys County Council Climate Change Programme Advisory Review Dr Netherwood
<https://powyscc.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/services/cld/ops/SS/EcvpluAcJ2BCmaC0GkerB6MB6ZDnc6VKNKtvJsnEeNcDNg?e=LKTObj>