

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2024

PRESENT

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)

County Councillors J Berriman, J Charlton, R Church, S Cox, S C Davies, M J Dorrance, P Roberts, D Selby and D A Thomas

In attendance: County Councillors A Davies, AW Davies, J Brignell-Thorp, A Kennerley and G Thomas

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Nina Davies, Director of Social Services and Housing.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported.

3. DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25

Proposed Amendment to the 2024-25 Draft Revenue Budget

Cabinet considered an amendment to the draft revenue budget for 2024-25 to be presented for consideration by Full Council following information received from Welsh Government advising of potential additional funding for Welsh Local Authorities. Powys' share of the funding was estimated to be in the region of £570k. It was proposed that any additional revenue funding received be allocated in full to the schools delegated budget and that any additional grant funding transferred into the final settlement be allocated at an equivalent value to the service areas currently in receipt of those grants.

The additional funding was welcomed.

RESOLVED to approve the following for inclusion in the Revenue Budget for 2024/25 proposed to Council on the 22nd February 2024:-

- 1. Any additional revenue funding received as a result of the £14.4million consequential and included in the final settlement is allocated in full to the schools delegated budget.**
- 2. Any additional grant funding transferring into the Final Settlement is allocated at an equivalent value to the service areas currently in receipt of those grants.**

- 3. A review of how the funding under 2 above is utilised is undertaken during 2024/25 to ensure that the use of funding meets the objectives and priorities of the Council and where this is not the case an exit plan can be established and actioned and any virement of the funds can be considered.**

Scrutiny Committee recommendations on the Budget and Cabinet Responses

The Scrutiny Committee recommendations on the Budget and Cabinet responses were considered. The Chair of the Finance Panel, County Councillor Aled Davies, and the Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee, County Councillor Gwynfor Thomas, highlighted the issues that had been raised by the Panel and the Committee.

Expanding on the response in the document to the Finance Panel's comment on the transformation of services, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation rejected the claim that this was a holding budget, noting that it ensured that the Council was able to work with its budget for the next four years. He pointed out that the budget included savings as a result of Sustainable Powys. He further noted that Sustainable Powys was continuing at pace and a number of reviews and the engagement process were underway. He also rejected the call for a 10 year capital programme given the uncertainty over the national financial picture.

Cabinet did not accept that there was a crisis in Welsh medium education and noted the progress that had been made. The Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee explained that the word crisis had been used in the meeting. While he was content to remove it from the recommendation, the point the Committee was making was that with budgets so tight, individual schools would not be able to concentrate any efforts or finance on developing Welsh language in their schools or to promote TROCHI. The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys noted that proposals on Bro Caereinion and WESP would be brought forward in the near future. There was a clear commitment to bring forward transformational reports at pace.

The Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee also referred to the pressures in schools' budgets and said that there was a desperate need for more funding. The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys referred to the decision taken earlier in the meeting to passport any additional funding received to schools' delegated budgets.

The Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee said that the Committee had not seen any evidence that the proposals for the reduction in swimming and the proposals for the Pupil Referral Units would lead to achievable savings or what the outcomes would be for pupils as the business cases had not yet been developed.

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)