

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2020

PRESENT

County Councillor B Baynham (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, M Barnes, J Berriman, G Breeze, J Charlton, K W Curry, A W Davies, B Davies, D E Davies, P Davies, S C Davies, M J Dorrance, E Durrant, D O Evans, J Evans, L Fitzpatrick, L George, J Gibson-Watt, M R Harris, S M Hayes, H Hulme, A Jenner, E A Jones, D R Jones, E Jones, G Jones, J R Jones, E M Jones, M J Jones, D Jones-Poston, F H Jump, K Laurie-Parry, H Lewis, P E Lewis, MC Mackenzie, I McIntosh, S McNicholas, DW Meredith, C Mills, JG Morris, R Powell, WD Powell, D R Price, P C Pritchard, G Pugh, J Pugh, G W Ratcliffe, L Rijnenberg, L Roberts, P Roberts, K M Roberts-Jones, D Rowlands, D Selby, K S Silk, L Skilton, D A Thomas, R G Thomas, T J Van-Rees, E Vaughan, M Weale, A Williams, G I S Williams, D H Williams, J Williams, J M Williams and R Williams

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors L Corfield, K Lewis, G Morgan, J Wilkinson and S Williams.

2.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 10th October 2019 and 20th December 2019 as correct records.

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

4.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
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The Chair advised Council that representatives from Credu were present in the foyer to provide information about the services provided for Carers in Powys.

She thanked Members who had supported her Christmas lunch and advised that the money raised would be shared between her two charities, Radnorshire YFC and Powys Samaritans.

The Chair encouraged members to visit the knife angel sculpture in Newtown and paid tribute to the efforts of Councillor Joy Jones for bringing it to the town.

Finally, on behalf of the Council she expressed condolences to the family of Bryan Rogers who had been for many years the caretaker at County Hall, who had passed away.

5. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that she had written to congratulate the newly elected MPs for the county and also Simon Baynes MP for Clwyd South, who had formerly been a Powys County Councillor.

She referred to the provisional budget settlement and acknowledged the additional funding received from Welsh Government. Powys was ranked 14th of 22 councils in terms of its increase which represented a significant improvement compared to previous years, and she thanked colleagues for their support in successfully lobbying Welsh Government for additional funding. The Leader advised that she had written to the Secretary of State for Wales and the First Minister seeking assurances that Powys would benefit from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. She congratulated Fiona Stewart on her appointment as Chair of the Economic Strategy Group and reminded Members that there would be a briefing on the Mid Wales Growth Deal at the end of the formal meeting. She had given evidence at the National Assembly's Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee on the Growth Deal.

The Leader noted the opening of Y Gaer and the new High School in Brecon and she closed by thanking Councillor Joy Jones for her work in bringing the knife angel to Newtown.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING

The Chief Executive advised Council that the budget proposals would be considered by the Scrutiny Committees and that the Democratic Services Committee would be consulted on proposals concerning support for Members. She referred to the staff awards held on 10th December which was an important opportunity to recognise the good work of staff. She was pleased to report that the Council had signed the TUC Dying to Work Charter aimed at helping employees who became terminally ill at work.

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

7.1. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Finance Countryside and Transport from Gemma Lewis

Could you please confirm how much Powys County Council pay for school transport for children from the Brecon catchment area to attend Welsh education in Calon Cymru or Ystalyfera when their closest provision is the new school in Brecon?

The children access a service bus where passengers have not been DBS checked and there have been instances where the buses are full and children stand for the duration of the journey.

If this transport was no longer funded by the council, I suspect that the numbers would increase in Brecon and therefore the subject provision and standards.

Response

The Council's Home to School Transport Policy states that we will provide free transport to learners to their nearest suitable or catchment school if they meet the eligible criteria. For learners living in the Brecon area, the nearest Welsh-medium secondary provision is at Brecon High School. However, in accordance with the Policy, parents are able to appeal decisions where transport has been refused. This is the case with learners currently being transported to Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera and Ysgol Calon Cymru.

Currently, the Council spends £132,575 per annum to transport learners from the Brecon High School catchment area to Welsh Medium education in Ystalyfera and Ysgol Calon Cymru in Builth Wells. It is the Councils' policy to convey entitled learners to school on public transport wherever possible. There are around 1200 learners who are currently taken to school by public transport on a daily basis.

The Council is committed to improving the provision of Welsh-medium education across the whole county. A new vision for education is currently being developed and Welsh-medium education is a key part of the new vision. We will be engaging with all stakeholders in February to develop this vision into reality.

There was no supplementary question.

8.	VIREMENTS
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8.1. Virements for Highways, Transport and Recycling

In response to questions from Members the Corporate Director (Environment) explained that, with the exception of gritters which were leased, the majority of HTR vehicles were purchased and replaced every 7 years. It was moved by County Councillor A Davies and seconded by County Councillor JM Williams and buy 62 votes to 1 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
To approve the virement for the Vehicle Replacement Programme, that increases the budget by £1.1 million.	To ensure appropriate virements are carried out that reflect the forecasted capital spend.

8.2. Virement from Ladywell House to Economic Development Fund

A £1,029,872 Economic Stimulus capital grant had been received from Welsh Government and would be used to support the Ladywell House project. This grant would allow £664,872 of the core capital funding for the project to be reallocated to fund Economic Development projects in future years. Members asked what projects would be funded and were advised that there were a number of projects, some of which were commercially sensitive, in development.

Any project would have to be approved by the Cabinet and be supported by a business case. Members asked about the costs of developing Ladywell House and the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Countryside and Transport offered to bring a report to Scrutiny.

A motion to defer the virement until a business case was available was moved by County Councillor Liam Fitzpatrick and seconded by County Councillor Karen Laurie-Parry was lost by 16 votes to 48.

The recommendation in the report was moved by County Councillor Aled Davies and duly seconded and by 57 votes to 5 with 2 abstentions it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
To approve the virement of £664,872 from the balance of capital borrowing to fund the development at Ladywell House to fund economic development projects in future years.	To ensure appropriate virements are carried out that reflect the forecasted capital spend.

9. LOCAL AUTHORITY ESTYN IMPROVEMENT CONFERENCE
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The Portfolio Holder for Education and Property advised that Estyn were satisfied that the authority had demonstrated it had a clear commitment to addressing the issues identified in the inspection and had put plans and resources into place to tackle them. The Post Inspection Action Plan had been approved by Estyn and the Education Service had already commenced work on the improvements. Cabinet had approved a strategic review of schools earlier in the week and consultations would commence in February that would inform a further report to Cabinet in April. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Property urged fellow Councillors to read the Transforming Education in Powys – A Vision for Powys Schools document and to engage in the consultation process. The Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee said that officers had given the committee considerable confidence in their commitment to turn the service around with the level of their engagement with Scrutiny.

Council noted the letter received from Estyn and the Post Inspection Action Plan.

10. FORTHCOMING INDEPENDENT MEMBER VACANCY ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
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Council considered arrangements to appoint a new Independent Member of the Standards Committee to replace Mrs Claire Jackson whose term of office ended on 21 June, 2020.

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
That the arrangements to make an appointment to the Standards	To fill a vacancy arising in June 2020.

Committee be approved.	
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Council adjourned from 11.40 to 11.58.

County Councillor Liam Fitzpatrick left. County Councillor Clair Mills arrived.

11. REPRESENTATION ON COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES
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1. Committee Representation.

The membership of committees needed to be revised following the election of three new County Councillors and the formation of a new political group. It was moved by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Timothy Van-Rees and by 58 votes to 0 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p>That the revised membership details for the Council's Committees as set out in the appendix to the report be approved subject to the appointment of Councillor Les Skilton to the Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor Mark Barnes, Councillor Mark Barnes to the Audit Committee in place of Councillor Les Skilton and Councillor Phil Pritchard to the Licencing Act 2003 Committee in place of Councillor Gwilym Williams.</p>	<p>To revise the membership of committees following the election of new Councillors and the establishment of a new political group.</p>

2. Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Representation.

The Council had been advised by the Deputy Minister for Local Government and Housing that the reduction in Powys County Council representation on the National Park Authority (from the current 8 members to 6 members) would take effect from 1st April 2020. Following consultation with the political groups the proposed revised representation from the Council on the BBNPA from 1st April, 2020 would be:

Independents

County Councillors Michael J Jones, Phil Pritchard and Edwin Roderick

Conservatives

County Councillor Iain McIntosh

Liberal Democrats/Greens

County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe

Labour
County Councillor Susan McIntosh

It was moved by County Councillor Timothy Van-Rees and duly seconded and by 51 votes to 6 with 3 abstentions it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
That the revised Council representation on the BBNPA from 1st April 2020 Council be approved.	To revise the Council's representation on the BBNPA in accordance with the decision of Welsh Government.

3. Powys Community Health Council.

County Councillor Edwin Roderick was nominated. A fellow Councillor on the CHC advised that Councillor Roderick had resigned from the CHC. It was moved by County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe and seconded by County Councillor Jackie Charlton that the appointment be deferred. By 26 votes to 29 with 3 abstentions the motion was lost. Councillor Roderick's nomination was moved and seconded and by 37 votes to 18 with 8 abstentions it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
That County Councillor Edwin Roderick be nominated to Powys Community Health Council.	To fill a vacancy on the Powys Community Health Council.

4. Community Chest Sportlot

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
That County Councillor William Powell be appointed to Community Chest Sportlot.	To fill a vacancy on Community Chest Sportlot.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

1. Constitution

Council considered the recommendation of the Democratic Services Committee on amendments to Section 13 of the Constitution. It was moved by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Hywel Lewis and by 60 votes to 0 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
That the amendments to Section 13 of the Constitution be approved.	To review and update the Constitution.

2. Annual Reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies

Council considered the recommendation of the Democratic Services Committee that that the Council should receive an annual report from the representatives appointed to the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Panel, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and the Welsh Local Government Association. Councillors appointed to other outside bodies could use the Members Bulletin to keep Council informed of their activities. It was moved by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Roger Williams and by 64 votes to 0 it was

RESOLVED	Reason for decision:
That representatives on outside bodies appointed by the Council at an AGM provide an annual report on the work of those outside bodies. Such reports will not be taken at the AGM but shall be programmed on the Council agenda.	To provide information from representatives on outside bodies to Council on the work of those outside bodies.

The Chair advised that she was changing the running order of the agenda to take questions next as two Portfolio Holders had to leave to attend another meeting.

13. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION

13.1. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Countryside and Transportation from County Councillor Les Skilton

I understand Powys received a grant of about £3 million from the Welsh Government.

Part of this grant was used to purchase 20 new buses for operators within Powys for public transport.

Can the portfolio holder inform me and members have Powys purchased second-hand buses from some of these operators? Could you please confirm if this is correct and why?

Response

The Council was awarded Transport Grant funding provided by the Welsh Government to purchase buses that are provided as part of the local bus service contract that exists between suppliers and the Council to provide services on behalf of the Council. The contract allows for the Supplier or the Council to provide the vehicles, and the Council opted to purchase vehicles. The reason for this is because this reduces the revenue contribution the Council makes to the Contractor to provide the service. The buses are, and remain the property of, the Council throughout the duration of the contract. At the end of the contract, they will be disposed of by the Council and any money achieved by their disposal

will be returned to the Council. The buses are operated by the successful bus companies that successfully bid to operate the contract(s).

The vehicles purchased by the Council were the same vehicles that the contractors had ordered when the contracts were awarded in July 2018 – so in effect the Council paid for the vehicles rather than the Contractor. Where operators had ordered their vehicle and had not received them, the Council secured the funding against other company assets until the vehicles had been delivered. Where the Contractor had already received the vehicles and they were being used to perform the contract, the Council simply paid for them (instead of the Contractor). In all cases, the operator is the legal 'Registered Keeper' of the vehicles, but the vehicles are owned by the Council.

In answer to Councillor Skilton's supplementary question the Portfolio Holder advised that the buses purchased were either new or just a few months old.

13.2. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Finance Countryside and Transport from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe

Following concerns raised by residents of Hay that they are seeing an increase in second homes becoming "businesses" to get around the increase in council tax will the council review the impact of second homes on communities to support the local residents as well as the business community to ensure we have a 12 month season and homes are not left empty for large parts of the year thus strengthening our community for future challenges?

Response

When a property in Council Tax is identified as a liable person's second home it means it is furnished but not the person's sole or main residence (i.e. occupied periodically). Therefore it could reasonably be expected to follow that the person or persons may spend significant amounts of time and be involved in community elsewhere where their sole or main residence actually is. There is nothing defined in legislation as to how much time needs to be spent at each home.

Therefore it follows in Council tax that someone may have a second home as defined above and use it as a holiday home for their own purposes. Some may choose to let the property out as a holiday let for others on a commercial basis.

In Business Rates legislation there is then the ability for a person who is commercially letting a property as a holiday home to be moved from the Council Tax rating list to the Business Rates rating list when they reach a threshold. This does then give the liable people the ability to receive a small business rates relief in their circumstances. The liable person(s) as a threshold have to be actively marketing their property for 140 days per year and actually let the property for 70 days per year.

The person must apply to the Valuation Office Agency for Wales (VOA) and be able to evidence the marketing and letting before the VOA would make the decision to change the property to a commercial one on the Business Rates rating list. Following that move of rating lists, it is then the responsibility of the VOA to review the lists regularly to make sure the circumstances still apply in each and any case, and they should then move a property back to Council tax rating list if they do not fulfil the criteria.

I hope you can see from the above that the local authority has very little control or ability in legislation or policy or decision to determine how second homes are managed in that sense in Powys communities.

Also as you will be aware Welsh Government allowed Councils in Wales to introduce premiums for properties identified as second homes or long term empty. Powys Council introduced this change in line with Welsh Government policy in an attempt to encourage properties in both categories back into active use as main homes or into other uses and where the person decides to retain the property as empty or as a second home, then their liability is increased to take account of that lesser use.

Since the inception of the premium for second homes, there has been very little movement in second home numbers and also there has not been a significant move of properties from the Council Tax rating list to the Business Rates rating list for this type of property.

I am aware that Welsh Government are undertaking a review of the legislation and the policy around empty homes and second homes and also how the premiums have impacted these two categories of properties as well.

Also representation has been made to Welsh Government by Welsh Treasurers to look at the crossover between Council Tax second homes and holiday lets in Business Rates and whether this is having a positive or negative impact on revenue raising for Councils, the impact on communities and also the development of tourism in the County.

So I hope you can see we are mindful where we can to ensure that policy and legislation is challenged and reviewed taking account of the impacts on Powys and its communities where possible.

There was no supplementary question.

County Councillor Aled Davies left the meeting to attend another meeting.

13.3. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environment from County Councillor David Thomas

Residents in the in Tawe Uchaf, Aber-craf, Ystradgynlais, Ynyscedwyn and Cwmtwrch wards received a worse than poor recycling collection service over the Christmas period. This was because of a lack of strategic planning and communication from the Council with Councillors and the community.

What will the Council do to ensure this doesn't happen again?

Response

The Christmas period is a problematic time of year in terms of kerbside waste and recycling collections due to a number of factors. There is understandably a considerable rise in materials to collect, with it being essential to continue to provide a service, whilst recognising the need and value for staff to have time off work with their families.

There is no expectation for collections to be undertaken on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year Day, so with the knock-on effect of missing these days, and with the additional waste and recycling generated at this time of year,

there is a considerable 'catch-up' required. Like most authorities, we do this by providing a service on the weekends following these days, and have had this arrangement in place for a number of years. Staff are asked to work on these weekends, for which they do receive an overtime payment, as opposed to some other Councils where it is a contractual requirement.

The majority of staff recognise the service need and respond well by making the effort to come in to work as necessary. This was the indeed the case in our Rhayader, Newtown and Welshpool Depots, where rounds were collected as planned and advertised, with very few problems. Unfortunately, this was not the case in the Brecon depot, where a significant minority of staff failed to turn in to work, either by refusing to work, or by initially agreeing but then not attending as planned. This was a significant let down and impacted badly on the arrangements that had been planned by supervisors and manager and advertised as such. Despite supervisors and managers attempting to reduce the impact to the public by covering some of the collection rounds themselves, there was as you describe a lower than acceptable performance.

It is simply not possible to get additional staff in at short notice at this time of year to cover for this period, and even if it were, then it would of course be at a considerable extra cost and anyone involved would of course had to have received appropriate training to carry out the work.

The arrangements were planned and advertised well in advance, and as previously stated were honoured in most cases. When the problems became apparent we did use all available channels to let residents know of changes. This is always difficult at short notice, but is helped with the use of social media. We also had notifications on our website when residents reported missed collections.

This is a problem specific to the Christmas period with staff generally willing to work on other Bank Holidays, but work is already underway to address the issue for future years. Many Councils simply make the Christmas working arrangements contractual, which will be considered as one of our options going forward. Unfortunately, should this approach be adopted, it will unfairly penalise those staff who regularly do make the effort. The HTR senior management team has been restructured recently, with all the waste & recycling function now being overseen by one senior manager. Following on from this, the manager is currently reviewing the operational service area and Bank Holiday working will form part of this review. The Senior Manager for Waste and Recycling Services has offered to meet with Council Members in the Tawe Uchaf, Aber-craf, Ystradgynlais, Ynyscedwyn and Cwmtwrch wards to hear and understand their concerns first hand, so that we can work to address them.

County Councillor Thomas said that he would take up the offer to meet the Senior Manager and the Portfolio Holder offered to attend.

13.4. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environment from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe

As banks are withdrawing from Powys communities and some communities are being charged to withdraw cash from the local cash machine when will Powys county council start to introduce card payments

system to their car parking machines across the county to support businesses as cash is becoming harder to handle?

Response

The Council is currently working with suppliers to introduce card payment facilities within the busiest car parks. A total of 20 out of the 55 machines in 17 car parks will have card payment facility shortly. The following list identifies the car parks that will have the card payments installed as part of phase 1 of the programme. Other car parks will also be upgraded in the future should this phase prove successful and funding becoming available.

Church St, Welshpool
Berriew St, Welshpool
Severn Stars, Welshpool
Gravel, Newtown [2 machines]
Back Lane, Newtown
Maengwyn St, Machynlleth
Dark Lane Rhayader
Mount St, Llanidloes
High St, Llandrindod
Knighton Hotel, Knighton
Oxford Rd, Hay [2 machines]
The Groe, Builth Wells
The Watton, Brecon
George St, Brecon [2 machines]
Beaufort Rd, Crickhowell
Kensington, Brecon
Canal Rd, Brecon

In response to the supplementary question the Portfolio Holder advised that installation would take place in February and March.

13.5. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environment from County Councillor Karen Laurie-Parry

Many residents have read a Social Media post whereby another County Council had reported financial savings in Grass Cutting, by planting wild flowers which are very pleasing to the eye, and encourage the sustainment of butterflies, bees etc.

Residents have asked for consideration where there are very wide grass verges and embankments, would it not be cost-saving and better time management of workers to grass cut just 3 feet of verge and to allow the already planted wild flowers to take effect?

Might this not free-up time, for the Highways Department Manual Workers, to undertake identified much needed highway maintenance work on 'B' Class roads, other side roads and associated drainage?

Response

Powys County Council currently has 127 Roadside Verge Nature Reserves (RVNR's) on the County road network which all have individual management

plans to benefit the species present on that site. The database of these RVNR's will be emailed to Members for information.

The Rural grass verge cutting contract specification is already limited to a 1.2 metre width of cut with additional width of cut only at junctions or where there are visibility issues.

The Urban grass verges are where we are looking to reduce the areas that are currently cut. We have a number of projects ongoing, where we have worked with local groups to identify areas that can be left uncut. Please find below a list of some of the groups we are working with:

- Brecon Beacons National Park
- Presteigne Town Council
- "On the verge" – Creating wildlife havens Talgarth
- Radnorshire Wildlife Trust
- Brecknock Wildlife Trust
- Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust
- Crickhowell Town Council
- Hay-on-Wye Community Group

If you have any specific areas that you feel would benefit from remaining uncut, then please contact the HGSS Contracts & Programmes Manager Brian Price and I am sure he will be able to arrange for the area to be assessed.

In response to the supplementary question it was explained that the Trunk Road Agency reimbursed the Council for any grass cutting work on trunk roads and that this income helped support other areas of the Highways budget.

13.6. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environment from County Councillor Karen Laurie-Parry

A number of residents in my Ward are seriously concerned regarding the cut-backs in street lighting. This is particularly more alarming, where there are older residents, who fear for their safety during the night time, due to the County Council decision to withdraw certain street lights. I will give Neuadd Terrace, Bronllys as one example.

Safety and the well-being of particularly older and vulnerable residents is an utmost priority, so please could the Post Holder suggest how we might find the costs to ensure that our concerned residents needs are met?

Response

Thank you for your query regarding the lighting within your ward. The lighting within this area has not been reduced any further since the original energy saving projects in 2009. We are of course always looking at the lighting provision within the county, and looking at further improvements and energy saving that can be made by using new technology e.g. Dimming and reprogramming the existing lights to more specific outputs, due to the inflation of energy costs year on year this is becoming essential. At present any significant changes of the lighting is consulted with the local town and community councils along with the councillors, before any changes are made. In terms of making funding available to ensure that concerns of residents are met, unfortunately it is most unlikely that any additional funding will be available and it should be born in mind that

although the street lighting does provide obvious benefit in some areas, it is not a statutory requirement like the majority of other highway works.

All councillors do have access to the information showing the locations and status of the lights through Geo Discoverer. Details of how to access this information will be emailed to Members.

If there are any lights that are noted to be off when the inventory is showing the light as on, we will be happy to attend to the fault.

We are currently considering arrangements for the future whereby local councils can have a greater input into this provision, and tailor it more to suit their specific locality. Should such an arrangement be considered viable, proper consultation will be held well in advance.

The Portfolio Holder offered to meet Councillor Laurie-Parry to discuss whether it would be possible to get some lights switched on in Bronllys by having others switched off.

13.7. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environment from County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan

In view of the increasing concerns about the use of Glyphosate as a weed killer within our communities, and the fact that there have been a number of high profile successful multi million pound litigation cases against Monsanto, and a reported 18,400 pending legal cases against Bayer, due to reported health concerns as result of using glyphosate, and the concerns about the effect of the use of glyphosate on the environment, will the portfolio holder undertake a urgent review of the use of glyphosate by the authority and any of its contractors and look at best practice alternatives and report back to Council in due course with firm recommendations?

Response

Welsh Local Government Association have recently issued the attached information from APSE on the topic of glyphosate use by local authorities.

The Trunk Road network is managed by the North & Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency through a Service Delivery Agreement with Powys, where they specify one herbicide treatment of kerbs and channels during May and also one herbicide treatment of filter drains sections, again during May. Welsh Government are reviewing this process and I know a trial was carried out in North Wales with a hot water system this summer, but we have not seen the results from this trial as yet.

As far as Powys' treatments on our own network are concerned, we limit herbicide treatment to the bare minimum. This is to a large degree this is due to the reduced available budget, but also in consideration of the balance between the environmental impact and our duty to maintain the highways. The core areas of town centres and housing estates receive one routine treatment in May, with any other area only receiving treatment on a reactive needs basis. Currently this herbicide application is the 'Nomix Total Droplet' system.

We do have an issue with the presence of Japanese Knotweed and other invasive weeds in some areas of Powys, and these are treated with glyphosate via a stem injector where possibly or with a knapsack sprayer for the larger clumps; whilst all ragwort is removed by hand.

As part of a demonstration of an Infrared system back in August, we treated an urban area in Brecon town, which proved quite successful, so are evaluating this as a viable alternative to adopt.

There was no supplementary question.

County Councillor Heulwen Hulme left the meeting at 12.46 to attend another meeting.

13.8. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Young People and Culture from County Councillor Huw Williams

In a recent Improvement and Assurance Board Bulletin, it was written, that, *'workplace supervision (Children's Services) is vital in a whole variety of ways, current compliance levels are low, although slightly rising, and now that the structure is in place, must be addressed as a matter of urgency'*.

Can the portfolio holder, therefore, provide a comparative progress report, from September 2019 to December, to include:

- i) evidence of the numbers of qualified, newly qualified and agency social workers receiving structured, regular and appropriate level of workplace supervision, and**
- ii) what is the current average case load for each worker and is the work appropriate to each worker's qualification and training level?**

Response

Evidence of the numbers of qualified, newly qualified and agency social workers receiving structured, regular and appropriate level of workplace supervision

Children's Services Leadership Team are committed to ensuring all operational staff receive dedicated, formal 1:1 supervision every month, in addition to any informal, group and peer supervision that takes place. The Children's Leadership Team recognise that their performance indicator, the percentage of operational staff who have had case supervision on a monthly basis, is currently not at the percentage level that we aspire to reach as part of our continued improvement journey.

The percentage of operational staff who have had Case Supervision on a monthly basis is one of the services top 5 performance indicators.

Since September when the restructure was completed, performance has ranged between 80% and 85% and our internal target has been set at 90%. During this time period training has been provided to Managers around supervision, the model, process and expectations in line with a new reflective policy adopting Signs of Safety. Further analysis of more in depth supervision data across the whole service is being currently being assessed by the Children's Leadership Team. Findings so far are reassuring that there are no trends showing a particular team, type of post holder or individual that is not receiving supervision each month.

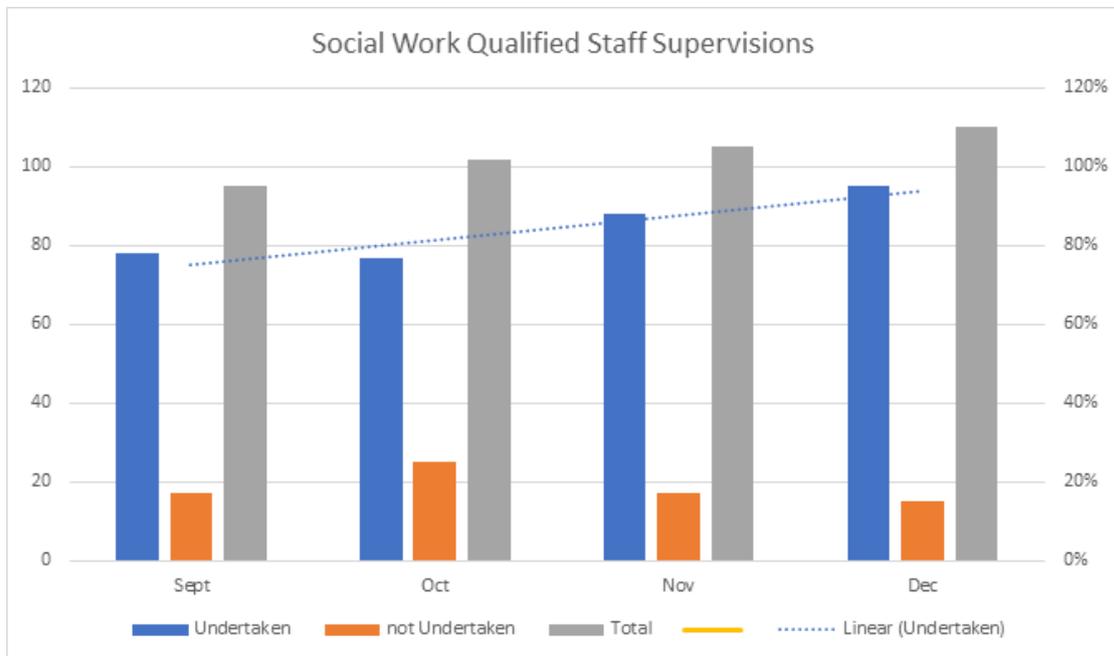
A breakdown of qualified, newly qualified and agency social workers are provided in the tables below.

The numbers in the tables are per individual employee and not full time equivalents (FTE) and the total number has increased each month as staff have been appointed.

Supervisions are not due where staff are absent for 2 weeks or more during the month and are not included in these reports. This may be due to Annual Leave, Sick leave or Maternity leave or end of employment. Staff with absences of less than 2 weeks within the month are included in the reports.

Annual leave and sickness is not recorded for all Agency staff on trent and so this will have impact on the figures above.

All (includes all Qualified Social Workers, Newly Qualified and Agency) Qualified Social Work Staff Supervision – Breakdown of Data



In conclusion supervision recording is part of the weekly data assurance meetings between Senior Managers and Team Managers, supported and facilitated by the Improvement Team. Supervision performance is also scrutinised at the monthly Head of Service and Senior Manager performance meetings. Supervision performance is reviewed and discussed as a group in the monthly Operational Management Team meetings.

Now that Managers have all received supervision training and the new Signs of Safety supervision policy has gone live, the Children’s Leadership Team continues to be committed to embedding the importance of good quality and regular supervision for all staff. The continued monitoring and analysis of the supervision data will allow Senior Managers to identify and forecast if there are

any weaknesses or potential issues that may arise in teams which could have an impact on staff receiving their supervision and aim to address them promptly.

As Portfolio Holder, I am assured on the reasons and rationale for some staff not having had supervision within the Month which includes sickness absence, rescheduled by just a few days which misses the cut off point for reporting.

What is the current average case load for each worker and is the work appropriate to each worker's qualification and training level?

An analysis has been undertaken to compare the average caseload in comparison to the previous year:

In Autumn 2019 the average caseload for qualified social workers was 16.16.

In Autumn 2018 the average caseload for qualified social workers was 23.8.

The majority of cases are held by Social Workers and Senior Social Workers in each team which is appropriate for their social work qualification and training level.

Principal Social Workers hold a smaller number of more complex cases when required. This reflects their managerial level and responsibilities within the team and their increased experience as a practitioner.

Team Managers do not hold cases, which is appropriate for this leadership position.

In addition to this, of the 8 Newly Qualified Social Workers in the service at this present time:

2 are non-case holding.

2 are very recent newly qualified social workers and they have an average caseload of 8.

4 are at the end of their newly qualified social worker status (April 2020) and they have an average caseload of 14.

These average case load for Newly Qualified Social Workers varies to reflect at what point they are in their first year of practice. The focus is on their continued professional development and supporting them to develop and grow confidently as practitioners as their experience increases.

Senior Managers and Team Managers review their teams individual caseloads on a regular basis and when assigning new cases to staff to ensure workloads are fair and manageable.

In answer to Councillor Williams' supplementary question about supervision for staff which at 80% was below what was required to deliver improvement, the Portfolio Holder advised that she had asked for a more in-depth look into the figures which she would be happy to share with members.

13.9. Question to the Leader from County Councillor William Powell

Whilst acknowledging the resource, both financial and human that is being committed by Powys County Council to its Brexit External Working Group and the significant amount of partnership working, both with public and private sector agencies and elected members, there is one area where we could – and arguably should – do more.

As the newly elected UK Government has refused to grant EU Nationals the automatic settlement rights that were promised by the Vote Leave Campaign in the 2016 Referendum, and all amendments to the Withdrawal Bill to reinstate these rights – and even to create an appeals mechanism - were rejected by HM Government, many EU, EEA and Swiss Nationals in Powys and throughout Wales face a daunting challenge in seeking to secure Settled Status from the Home Office.

I am aware of the Settled Status information link to Gov.UK on our PCC website – and of a ‘first come, first served’ booklet for interested Councillors. However, given the huge challenge that we have recognised over time on our PCC Corporate Risk Register in terms of the sharp decline in Powys residents of working age, it would surely be appropriate for the Authority to adopt a ‘best in class’ approach to supporting this vital category of workers. Proactive measures have already been undertaken in neighbouring authorities, notably Monmouthshire, Carmarthenshire and across the border in Herefordshire, involving drop in sessions, community meetings and a link with the respective library services, all to support EU Nationals wishing to continue living, working and contributing to our communities.

Will the Leader give consideration to a more proactive programme of support, in line with Powys’ reputation for hospitality, humanitarianism and fair play?

Response

According to the latest figures (7th November 2019) since the European Union Settlement Scheme opened 790 applications have been received from Powys. Powys County Council have been promoting the scheme through our social media channels and the Brexit pages on our website. In addition corporate communications have been sent to all staff and elected members. All messaging has been based on Home Office advice. In recent weeks publicity materials provided by the Home Office have been distributed and displayed in libraries throughout Powys, and library staff have received a briefing pack on the scheme. Support has been made available to Powys County Council staff in applying to the EU Settled Status Scheme, if requested.

Since the referendum we have been in constant contact with the commissioned service providers, in order to ensure their business continuity, and that any EU national staff are supported in applying for settled status. As Powys County Council receive updates from UK and Welsh Government, these are distributed to relevant service areas and service providers to ensure that there is clear, authoritative information on the rights of EU citizens.

The Welsh Government have now appointed Community Cohesion Coordinator (hosted by Carmarthenshire County Council, working throughout Dyfed-Powys)

and a Community Cohesion Officer (working throughout Powys and Ceredigion). These are able to offer advice and assistance to citizens, and will be organising a series of events to help with EUSS applications and other community cohesion based information. These first of these will be held in Ystradgynlais Welfare Hall on 31st January 2020 from 09:30 to 13:30. Communications around this have been issued, with further activities planned.

These new appointees are also currently in the process of arranging EUSS scheme training for frontline staff (in collaboration with Travelling Ahead). Once details of this have been confirmed with the Learning and Development team, details will be made available to staff.

Other local authorities are undertaking different activities, however based on the number of EU national citizens in Powys, the Strategic Brexit Coordination Group deems this level of support appropriate, this position is regularly reviewed.

In response to Councillor Powell's supplementary question, the Leader expanded on the actions being taken by the Council. In respect of making direct contact with EU nationals, advice was being sought from the Home Office on whether it would be possible to make use of the electoral roll for this purpose. A firm of solicitors had been engaged by the LGA to work with local authorities in providing drop in sessions for EU nationals. She encouraged Councillors if they knew EU nationals in the wards to point them to where they could get advice.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION

Council debated the following motion proposed by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Phyl Davies:

In view of the fact that having full Council meetings is not a legal requirement as part of the transformation of schools, and hence does not bring anything to the process, and with the importance that we make best use of staff resources and don't waste money, Council agrees to remove the requirement for full Council to meet to discuss school transformation and rather to use the other meetings and opportunities that form part of the legal processes.

A number of members expressed concern that the wording of the motion was too broad.

Council adjourned for lunch from 13.10 to 14.05. County Councillors S Davies, A Jones, E Jones, MJ Jones, F Jump, S McNicholas, C Mills, J Pugh, G Ratcliffe, D Rowlands, L Skilton and M Weale left the meeting.

PRESENT

County Councillor B Baynham (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, M Barnes, J Berriman, G Breeze, J Charlton, K W Curry, A W Davies, B Davies, D E Davies, P Davies, S C Davies, M J Dorrance, E Durrant, D O Evans, J Evans, L Fitzpatrick, L George, J Gibson-Watt, M R Harris, S M Hayes, H Hulme, A Jenner, E A Jones, D R Jones, E Jones, G Jones, J R Jones, E M Jones, M J Jones, D Jones-Poston, F H Jump, K Laurie-Parry, H Lewis, P E Lewis, MC Mackenzie, I McIntosh, S McNicholas, DW Meredith, C Mills, JG Morris, R Powell, WD Powell, D R Price, P C Pritchard, G Pugh, J Pugh,

G W Ratcliffe, L Rijnenberg, L Roberts, P Roberts, K M Roberts-Jones, D Rowlands, D Selby, K S Silk, L Skilton, D A Thomas, R G Thomas, T J Van-Rees, E Vaughan, M Weale, A Williams, G I S Williams, D H Williams, J Williams, J M Williams and R Williams

The following amendment was put forward which the proposer and seconder were happy with.

In view of the fact that having full Council meetings is not a legal requirement as part of the transformation of schools, and hence does not bring anything to the process, and with the importance that we make best use of staff resources and don't waste money, Council agrees to remove the requirement for full Council to meet to discuss school closure and / or mergers rather to use the other meetings and opportunities that form part of the legal processes.

It was moved and seconded and passed by 34 votes to 15. The substantive motion was put and by 35 votes to 17 it was

RESOLVED in view of the fact that having full Council meetings is not a legal requirement as part of the transformation of schools, and hence does not bring anything to the process, and with the importance that we make best use of staff resources and don't waste money, Council agrees to remove the requirement for full Council to meet to discuss school closure and / or mergers rather to use the other meetings and opportunities that form part of the legal processes.

15.	REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE
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RESOLVED to grant County Councillor Les George a four month leave of absence from March to June 2020.

County Councillor B Baynham (Chair)