

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT BY TEAMS ON
THURSDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2021**

PRESENT

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors James Evans, Stephen Hayes, Arwel Jones, Francesca Jump, and Jeremy Pugh.

2. MINUTES

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting held on 15th July 2021 as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor Peter Lewis declared a personal and prejudicial interest item 10 Pension and Investment Committee Chair's Allowance.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair advised that details of his engagements would be circulated by email.

Council paused to remember Garry Banks, the former Councillor for Presteigne and past Chair of Council and Cabinet member who had passed away.

5. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader noted the high number of Covid cases in the county and the significant pressures being experienced in social care. She reported that the Council was working the Home Office and the WLGA to take in Afghan families and was finding accommodation for them. The Leader also advised that the Growing Mid Wales Board had agreed the Portfolio Business Case for submission to the UK and Welsh governments. She thanked the staff who had

worked on the bid for UK City of Culture status. A decision on whether or not the bid had been shortlisted was expected in October. The Leader also reported that work was continuing on the Global Centre for Rail Excellence and that a decision was expected at the end of 2021.

6.	CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING
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The Chief Executive reported that instances of Covid were at the highest level since the start of the pandemic. Half of recent cases were in the 0 – 10 and 11 – 19 age groups and this was having an impact on schools with Cradoc CP school closing and returning to on-line learning. On 23 August the Council had returned to business continuity due to the cumulative impact of 18 months of the pandemic impacting on services, particularly Social Care and Test, Track and Protect. Staff had been redeployed to support these services and more staff were being recruited.

The Chief Executive advised that new equipment had been purchased to enable hybrid meetings to be held in the Chamber but that such was the demand for equipment it would not be installed until the new year. Officers would make every effort to facilitate face to face meetings for Members. She advised that budget planning had started and noted that it was likely to be a very challenging budget round. Finally, she congratulated Lynette Lovell on her appointment as Director of Education.

Councillor Amanda Jenner, Chair of the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee advised that the committee had been stood down for the time being to reduce the pressure on officers but that the committee would continue to do what it could to support social care without the need for formal meetings.

7.	CONSTITUTION
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Council considered the recommendations of the Democratic Services Committee on amendments to the Constitution.

Section 4 – Full Council

Council unanimously resolved as follows

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p>1. That the amendment to Rule 4.18.28 of the Constitution (Full Council) is approved as set out in the draft Section 4 attached to the report.</p> <p>2. That the Monitoring Officer is authorised to make such other changes to the Constitution as may be required to reflect the change set out in Recommendation 1 above.</p>	<p>To review and amend the Constitution so that it aligns with the current requirements of the Council.</p>

Section 11 – Officers.

By 55 votes to 5 with 3 abstentions it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p>3. That the amendments to Section 11 of the Constitution (Officers) are approved as set out in the draft Section 11 attached to the report.</p> <p>4. That the Monitoring Officer is authorised to make such changes to the Constitution as may be required to reflect the change set out in Recommendation 3 above.</p>	<p>To review and amend the Constitution so that it aligns with the current requirements of the Council.</p>

Governance and Audit Committee – Section 9 (Regulatory Committees

Council unanimously resolved as follows

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p>5. That Council approves an amendment to the membership of the Governance and Audit Committee to become 6 Councillors and 3 Independent Members as from May 2022.</p> <p>6. That the Monitoring Officer is authorised to make such amendments to Section 9 of the Constitution as are required to implement recommendation 5 above.</p> <p>7. That the Lay Members are in place as near to the start of 2022 (January) as possible in order to ensure continuity and to provide training and transition time so that the new Committee can operate efficiently from May 2022.</p>	<p>To meet the requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 that as from May 2022, one third of the membership of the Governance and Audit Committee must be lay persons.</p>

Finance Panel and Section 7 (Scrutiny Procedure Rules)

By 57 votes to 4 with 2 abstentions it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p>8. That the revisions to the operation and composition of the Finance Panel in two phases as set out in Paragraphs 2.4.5 and 2.4.6 above</p>	<p>To review and amend the Constitution so that it aligns with the current requirements of the Council.</p>

<p>be supported.</p> <p>9. That the revised Terms of Reference of the Finance Panel as set out in Rules 7.37 and 7.38 is approved and implemented with immediate effect.</p> <p>10. That the Monitoring Officer is authorised to make such changes to Section 7 of the Constitution as may be required to reflect the changes set out in Recommendations 8 & 9 above.</p>	
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8.	APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT (LAY) MEMBERS ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
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Council considered the recommendation of the Appointment Panel on the appointment of an independent (lay) member to the Standards Committee. It was moved by County Councillor Tim Van-Rees and seconded by County Councillor Gareth Morgan and by 56 votes to 8 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p>1. To note the contents of the report and the Panel's recommendation and appoint Mr Nigel Steward as Independent (Lay) Member for a period of 6 years from 23 September 2021 and to appoint Mr Russell Stafford-Tolley as Independent (Lay) Member, for a period of 6 years from 3 March 2022.</p>	<p>To comply with the requirements for Independent (Lay) members of the Standards Committee as required by the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001 (as amended).</p>

Extension to the Term of Office of Independent (Lay) Member on the Standards Committee

It was further recommended that Mr Stephan Hays was reappointed for a further four-year term on the expiry of his current term on 25 January. It was moved by County Councillor Tim Van-Rees and seconded by County Councillor Kath Roberts-Jones and Council unanimously resolved as follows

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p>That the Council reappoints Mr Stephan Hays as an Independent [Lay] Member of the Standards Committee for a term of four years, from 26 January 2022, expiring on 25 January 2026.</p>	<p>To fill the Independent Member vacancy on the Standards Committee.</p>

9.	LLANDDEW COMMUNITY COUNCIL - INQUORATE
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Council considered a recommendation proposing the appointment of temporary community councillors to act until a sufficient number of councillors have been elected to take up office to make the Llanddew Community Council quorate again. The County Councillors for the neighbouring electoral wards of Felinfach St John and St Mary had agreed to act as such temporary members. A proposal to add a fourth member from the Yscir ward was not accepted by the Chair.

It was proposed by County Councillor RH Williams and seconded by County Councillor S McNicholas and by 52 votes to 8 with 3 abstentions it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
To make the Llanddew Community Council (Removal of Difficulty) Order 2021 as set out in Appendix A to the report.	To properly constitute Llanddew Community Council to enable the said Community Council to function.

10. PENSIONS AND INVESTMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR'S ALLOWANCES

County Councillor P Lewis declared an interest in this item and left the meeting while it was considered.

Council considered the request of the Pensions and Investment Committee to make a payment equivalent to a Senior Responsibility Allowance to the Chair of the Committee and re-charged to the Pension Fund, to reflect the responsibilities placed on the chair of that Committee and the increasing demands being placed on the role.

An amendment was proposed by County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe and seconded by County Councillor RH Williams to refer the recommendation to the Democratic Services Committee. The amendment was lost by 26 votes to 37.

The recommendation in the report was moved by County Councillor T Van-Rees and seconded by H Williams. By 42 votes to 19 it was

RESOLVED to accept the recommendations of the Pensions and Investment Committee and agree that an amount equivalent to a senior responsibility allowance should be paid to the chair of the Pensions and Investment Committee and the additional cost to be recharged to the Pension Fund, to reflect the responsibilities placed on the chair of the Pensions and Investment Committee and the increasing demands being placed on the role.

Council adjourned at 13.23 and reconvened at 14.00.

PRESENT

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

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

11. WELSH AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST
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Jason Killens, the Chief Executive of the Welsh Service Ambulance Trust, Benjamin Collins, the Ambulance Operations Manager for Powys and Estelle Hitchon, Director of Partnership & Engagement joined the meeting and gave an update on the pressures facing the service and on the actions being taken in response.

Mr Collins updated members on the situation in Powys reporting increases in the number of calls to the service every month for the last 24 months with almost two thirds in either red or amber categories. He advised that following local recruitment and roster reviews, ambulance cover was being focused on the peak times when the highest call volume was expected. He confirmed that no ambulance stations would be closing. It was confirmed that there were some local difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff and that the service was looking at targeted local recruitment. He advised that fire service first responders had been reintroduced to help provide greater resilience and that a rural health care model was being developed with Powys Teaching Health Board. The service was also keen to have social workers based in ambulance control rooms to help manage calls and welcomed the invitation to join the Regional Partnership Board where these options could be explored.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

12.1. Future motions presented to Council

Council debated the following motion moved by County Councillor Iain McIntosh and seconded by County Councillor Lucy Roberts:

“This council resolves:

That all notices of motion, or any amendment to a motion, presented to this council for consideration, must be accompanied by a costed analysis of the financial and resource implications that motion, or amendment to a motion, would have on this council, should it be approved.”

The proposer and seconder argued that when a motion was brought to council should be aware of what a proposal would cost. A number of members argued

that the motion would stifle debate. The Head of Finance advised that if the motion was passed, she and her officers would work in confidence with members on any notices of motion on costings but that they would need to be involved at an early stage.

An amendment was moved by County Councillor Jake Berriman and seconded by County Councillor David Selby asking Council to strike out

“That all notices of motion, or any amendment to a motion, presented to this council for consideration, must be accompanied by a costed analysis of the financial and resource implications that motion, or amendment to a motion, would have on this council, should it be approved”.

and replace it with Council Resolves to:

“Ask the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance to bring forward costed proposals to provide the necessary Member support to facilitate the proper costing of proposed Motions which Members may wish to put before Full Council for consideration”.

The amendment was put to the vote and was lost by 25 votes to 32 with 1 abstention. The motion was put to the vote and by 31 votes to 24 with 2 abstentions it was

RESOLVED that all notices of motion, or any amendment to a motion, presented to this council for consideration, must be accompanied by a costed analysis of the financial and resource implications that motion, or amendment to a motion, would have on this council, should it be approved.

County Councillors A Jenner and J Williams left the meeting at 15.48.

12.2. Declaring an Ecological Emergency and Supporting the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill

Council debated the following motion moved by County Councillor Jake Berriman and seconded by County Councillor Jackie Charlton:

“This Council resolves to:

1. Declare an ecological emergency to demonstrate the Council's commitment to protecting Powys' natural environment, biodiversity and wildlife;
2. Declare its support for the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill;
3. Inform the local media of this decision, including sharing information on social media;
4. Write to our local Members of Parliament asking them to support the CEE Bill in its passage through Parliament; and
5. Write to the CEE Bill Alliance, the organisers of the campaign for the Bill expressing our support (campaign@ceebill.uk).”

The proposer and seconder urged Council to declare its support for a Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill to address the decline in nature. A number of members expressed concerns about the impact that the Bill would have on farming and the wider economy in the county.

The motion was put to the vote but lost by 24 votes to 31.

12.3. **Support a Simple Firework Licence**

Council debated a motion proposed by County Councillor J Charlton and seconded by County Councillor J Berriman:

“This Council resolves to:

1. Actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people – including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks as the unintended consequences of legal fireworks.
2. Support the RSPCA in the work being undertaken to change the legislation on firework displays to enable and ensure all public firework displays are advertised in advance of the event, with appropriate information in respect of the size of the display, allowing residents to take precautions for people and pets.
3. Encourage, through awareness raising, local suppliers of fireworks to separate ‘quieter’ fireworks from the loud ones so people can choose which ones they prefer with animal and people safety in mind.”

Councillor Charlton advised that the motion was about supporting the work of other campaigning organisations through awareness raising. She had discussed this with officers who had agreed that it would not result in additional costs. She confirmed that she was not proposing a licensing system. The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance and Regulatory Services advised that Trading Standards and Environmental Health were already very active in this area.

The motion was put to the vote and was lost by 22 votes to 31 with 1 abstention.

12.4. **Universal Credit: Cancel the Cut**

Council debated the following motion proposed by County Councillor Liz Rijnenberg and seconded by County Councillor Matthew Dorrance:

“This council resolves to:

1. Write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Work and Pensions Secretary and the Prime Minister to oppose the planned cut to Universal Credit;
2. Call on Fay Jones MP and Craig Williams MP to stand up for families in Powys and oppose the cut to Universal Credit; and

3. Work in partnership with advice agencies to support residents impacted by the Universal Credit cut.”

The proposer and seconder argued that this was not the right time to withdraw the uplift to Universal Credit noting that more than eight thousand families in Powys would lose £1,000 a year and that £8 million would be taken out of the Powys economy and that more pressure would be placed on social services.

An amendment was moved by County Councillor Aled Davies and seconded by County Councillor Iain McIntosh to remove the three recommendations in the Motion and substitute with: “This council resolves to work in partnership with advice agencies to support residents impacted by the removal of the temporary increase in the Universal Credit.”

The mover of the amendment argued that it would concentrate on what the Council could do.

The amendment was put to the vote and passed by 26 votes to 23 with 3 abstentions. The substantive motion was put to the vote and by 35 votes to 11 with 8 abstentions it was

RESOLVED to work in partnership with advice agencies to support residents impacted by the removal of the temporary increase in the Universal Credit.

County Councillor MJ Jones left the meeting at 17.08. County Councillor G Breeze left the meeting at 17.10.

12.5. **Expansion of availability and awareness of Defibrillators in Powys**

Council debated the following motion proposed by County Councillor P Roberts and seconded by County Councillor G Ratcliffe

“Council requests Cabinet to consider the following :

- The compilation of a list, and subsequent publication and updating of, all defibrillators that are maintained on council premises with information on how to access them.
- Undertaking a review of, and, where appropriate, and increase in, the public accessibility of defibrillators that are located within council-owned properties including public parks, community centres, schools, leisure facilities, and areas of high public footfall.
- The Chair of Council sending a letter on behalf of the Council the Health and Education Secretaries in the Senedd urging them to support moves to extend the availability of AEDs and promote their use though especially though training within the education system.”

The proposer and seconder argued that this measure could make a significant difference. The motion was put to the vote and by 29 votes to 20 it was

RESOLVED to request Cabinet to consider the following :

- **The compilation of a list, and subsequent publication and updating of, all defibrillators that are maintained on council premises with information on how to access them.**
- **Undertaking a review of, and, where appropriate, and increase in, the public accessibility of defibrillators that are located within council-owned properties including public parks, community centres, schools, leisure facilities, and areas of high public footfall.**
- **The Chair of Council sending a letter on behalf of the Council the Health and Education Secretaries in the Senedd urging them to support moves to extend the availability of AEDs and promote their use though especially though training within the education system.**

County Councillor C Mills left the meeting at 17.24.

13. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION
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13.1. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Economic Regeneration and the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property from County Councillor Timothy Van-Rees

Having benefitted from the assistance of interpreters and other locally enlisted personnel during my service overseas I would commend the Cabinet in deciding to offer accommodation to six families of refugees from Afghanistan.

Having regard to the state of affairs in that unhappy country there is likely to be a requirement for accommodation for a significantly larger number of refugees and indeed provision for the education of their children. What contingency plans has the Cabinet made in an event of an approach from HMG / Welsh Government for additional assistance?

Response

Powys County Council has pledged to provide homes for six families as part of the national Afghan Relocations and Assistance Programme (ARAP). After discussions with housing associations the council has been able to increase the previous offer.

The variety and complexity of the needs of the Afghan families, coupled with the rural nature of Powys, provides the Council with a number of challenges in scaling up provision. We need to ensure that both housing and support needs are fully met so that these families can settle quickly and thrive within their new communities when they move to Powys. In order to meet these challenges, services are able to draw on experience from the successful Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Project, where the council works in partnership to ensure that wrap around accessible support is readily available.

Families recently displaced from Afghanistan are part of a wider and growing need from refugee and asylum seeking households. To this end, Powys County Council is also working in partnership with the Welsh Refugee Council and Clearsprings, the organisation tasked with finding homes for asylum seekers and secure suitable accommodation within the private rented sector.

Schools are well prepared for accepting pupils from refugee families through the usual admissions process at the Local Authority. The Admissions Team are aware that refugee families will be settling in Powys, and are building on the

already established link with the Vulnerable Groups team to ensure that they are notified of any admissions applications received in respect of refugee families from Afghanistan, in the same way as they do for refugee families from Syria. School places are available and the Admissions Team will be able to provide information about schools in the area that the families move to.

There was no supplementary question.

13.2. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Young People and Culture from County Councillor James Gibson-Watt

Could the Portfolio Holder provide figures in actual and percentage terms for the total annual reductions in Powys County Council's grant funding to arts and cultural organisations included in the Council's Budget in each year from 2017/18 to 2021/22?

Response

Powys County Council's Arts Service Budget 2017 - 2022

	2020-21 to 2021-22		2019-20 to 2020-21		2018-19- to 2019-20		2017-18 to 2018-19	
Arts & Cultural Grant Support	Budget	%	Budget	%	Budget	%	Budget	%
Reductions	-£59,480.00	-33.84%	-£58,060.00	-24.83%	-£43,550.00	-15.70%	-£9,810.00	-3.42%

The Arts Service budget has reduced every year during the period in question, 2017/18 to 2021/22. Over that timeframe the reductions equate to £170,900. The current budget for the Arts Service is £116,280.

The Arts Service has consulted and communicated with affected organisations throughout this period, providing information, resources and advice on broadening funding income portfolios including opportunities for income generation, business development and re-modelling. This support for community arts providers and creative industry partners is continuing and developing, especially in the areas of access to external sources of funding, collaborative and partnership working as well as working closely with those involved in national strategic investment planning.

In response to Councillor Gibson-Watt's supplementary question about how she would mitigate the message the Council's reducing level of support for the arts would send to the assessors reviewing the bid for City of Culture status, the Portfolio Holder advised that the arts service would have to review commissioning principles and look at new ways of working with organisations in light of the current situation.

13.3. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Economic Regeneration from County Councillor William Powell

Will the Portfolio Holder for Housing please update Council on the latest proposals for reorganisation of the Powys County Council Housing Service, currently subject to consultation?

At a time of intense housing pressure - and given the renewed emphasis by Welsh Government Climate Change Minister, Julie James MS, on the

importance of the timely reinstatement of Empty Properties, can the Portfolio Holder please reassure Members that the prize winning Private Sector Housing Team will not be disbanded or eroded in any way?

Response

Housing Services is being restructured with the aim to improve the Council's ability to respond to a changing housing market in which supply and demand need to be better aligned, and to the expectations and aspirations of households to have more opportunities to enjoy a secure, well-maintained home.

A proposal for a new approach to Housing Services, to meet these outcomes, was agreed this summer by Cabinet. The Business Case setting out a proposal for the future of Housing Services, was shared with colleagues on August 3rd. The proposal includes a strong emphasis on local accountability, a tenure blind approach to improving the way the housing market provides and improves homes, and a clear focus on high quality services.

A six-week consultation period on the proposal ended on September 10th. During this time, all colleagues were able to have a 1-2-1 with the Professional Lead for Housing and team meetings and group discussions took place. Now that the consultation period has ended, a final Business Case is being drawn up, taking into consideration the contributions and feedback received since August 3rd. We cannot comment further on the proposals at this stage while the final Business Case is being completed.

With the work still in progress in terms of the Management of Change process, it is not possible to outline the impact on the Private Sector Housing team at this stage. However, the work being undertaken by the team remains a priority and if there are changes it will be in order to build capacity in these key areas.

The redesign is planned to be introduced on January 1st, 2022.

There was no supplementary question.

13.4. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care from County Councillor Jon Williams

As councillors we are constantly being told that staff are being seconded to other service areas because of Covid. Due to the extra workload adult social services are having to deal with and the huge amount of pressure they are facing on a daily basis, Could the portfolio holder please tell me how many staff have been seconded to support adult social services, how many staff from this service area are on furlough and what steps are the council taking to ensure the welfare of the staff in this service area.

Response

Redeployment

Since March 2020, 54 members of staff have been deployed into Adult Services & Commissioning from other service areas. One deployee from other area service was successful in application for permanent role in which they were initially deployed to. Redeployed staff have played a crucial role in assisting Adult Services in delivering its business critical services during business continuity, which the service has remained in since March 2020.

The numbers of people redeployed to Adult Services has changed during the pandemic period, especially, when other areas of the Council came out of business continuity to step back up service delivery.

As of 9th September 2021, 5 staff are deployed into Adult Services & Commissioning from other service areas (1 of these is now due to start in a permanent role imminently). We have another member of staff awaiting to be redeployed also.

There are also two employees who are undertaking formal secondments in Adult Services from other service areas, who were previously redeployed from other service areas.

It should be noted that Adult Services has also internally deployed some of its staff to ensure that we can maintain our mission critical activities. As of 25th August 2021, 35 of our staff whose substantive roles are in day support services, were redeployed to outreach and domiciliary care roles.

Again, as of 25th August 2021, 3 additional staff from day support services are currently supporting continuity of care in our care homes.

During the pandemic, we have had cause to support our commissioned care homes when they have faced acute staffing issues, by providing emergency staffing resource. Such a response is only made possible through the willingness of our staff to support, many of whom have not worked in a care home previously. We remain forever grateful to these staff for their willingness and ability to step up at very short notice to support our providers. We currently have 13 staff in Adult Services who have committed to supporting care homes at short notice (in the past, this has been with less than 24 hours notice).

Furlough

With regards to furlough, we currently have 14 staff on full furlough and 47 staff on flexible furlough. Furlough arrangements are in place until 30th September 2021.

Steps taken to ensure staff welfare

Our staff are our greatest asset and their resilience and resolve have been tested to the limits during the pandemic. We are in awe of their continued efforts to support the wellbeing and safety of our residents and want to do all we can to make it as easy as possible to undertake some of the most challenging of work.

We have a range of wellbeing measures in place to support our staff. This includes our  [wellbeing protocol](#) that emphasises the importance of protected time for work catch-ups, lunch, keeping work within work hours and links to health and wellbeing support.

All our employees have access to [Care First](#); a great and confidential employee well-being resource that provides impartial advice and support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through a free-phone number - 0800 174319.

We have also introduced a range of wellbeing activities such as Yoga, Singing and short exercise classes that staff can access as and when they want, which have both physical and mental health benefits.

In Adult Services, we know that our staff are likely to feel more positive about their jobs if they feel listened, communicated with, and have a genuine part to play in co-designing our services. In Adult Services, we have maintained our commitment to holding regular employee-rep groups and the Head of Service has facilitated virtual tea-breaks and virtual management check-ins with staff throughout the pandemic. Earlier in the year, we, alongside Children's Services held a number of Dragon's Den events where our staff were invited to bid for funding for new projects and ways of working. We were able to fund a number of exciting initiatives such as training for falls interventions, additional visual

impairment support and multi-generational partnerships between schools and care homes.

13.5. Question to the Leader from County Councillor William Powell

The Mid Wales Growth Deal has the potential to be an enormous driver for the Mid Wales economy in the challenging years ahead and the efforts made by Members and Officers, working with UK and Welsh Government actors, need to be recognized.

However, the Welsh experience of other Growth Deal initiatives in recent years, notably in the Swansea Bay Region, has demonstrated the vital importance of scrutiny in testing the soundness and viability of particular strategies.

With this in mind, what consideration has the Leader given to promoting joint scrutiny by Members, drawn from Ceredigion and Powys County Councils, so as to provide reassurance and transparency, and thus gain greater buy-in, from the wider public?

Response

Thank you for your question regarding scrutiny of the Mid Wales Growth Deal.

I can confirm that arrangements have been put in place for a joint scrutiny committee comprising of 7 Members from each Council. Members from each authority have been nominated by Group Leaders on a politically balanced basis and the Council's former Co-Ordinating Committee agreed that our membership of the Joint Scrutiny Committee should be made up of 3 from the Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee, 1 from Learning & Skills Scrutiny Committee, 1 from the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee, 1 from the Finance Panel with the 7th Member not on any Scrutiny Committee. Arrangements are in hand for meetings of the Joint Scrutiny Committee on 11th and 22nd October 2021 and 29th November 2021.

In response to Councillor Powell's supplementary question about how business interests would be represented, the Leader advised that a new group would be established to replace the Economic Strategy Group and that she hoped that some members from the ESG would be part of the new group.

13.6. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environment from County Councillor Pete Roberts

Progress of the Covid Recovery fund Pothole repair scheme

As we are now almost half way through the financial year and hence the duration of the covid recover fund cycle. Could the portfolio holder provide a breakdown by council ward of the cost and scope of pothole repair schemes that have been undertaken to date as a result of this investment and provide a similar breakdown of the works that are scheduled to be undertaken throughout the rest of the year?

Response

Thank you for your question in relation to the Covid recovery fund for highway works. I can confirm the highway spend across the County is as follows:

North - £140,000

Mid - £80,000

South – £80,000

In response to Councillor Roberts' supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder advised that it was not possible to provide a breakdown by Council ward as the work was carried by the three depots based on priority and not by ward.

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)