

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD BY TEAMS ON  
THURSDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2021**

**PRESENT**

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, B Baynham, J Berriman, G Breeze, J Charlton, L V Corfield, K W Curry, A W 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, S M Hayes, H Hulme, A Jenner, E A Jones, D R Jones, E Jones, G Jones, J R Jones, M J Jones, D Jones-Poston, F H Jump, K Laurie-Parry, H Lewis, P E Lewis, I McIntosh, DW Meredith, JG Morris, R Powell, WD Powell, D R Price, G Pugh, J 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, M Weale, J Wilkinson, A Williams, G I S Williams, D H Williams, J Williams, J M Williams, R Williams and S L Williams

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors M Barnes, B Davies, E M Jones, MC Mackenzie, S McNicholas, C Mills, G Morgan, P C Pritchard and T J Van-Rees

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors M Barnes, B Davies, E M Jones, MC Mackenzie, S McNicholas, C Mills, G Morgan, P C Pritchard and T J Van-Rees.

<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 as correct records.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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County Councillors D Evans, R Harris, MJ Jones, G Jones, R Williams, M Weale, E Vaughan, D Thomas, P Lewis, B Baynham, G Williams, E Jones, L George, E Roderick, J Wilkinson, A Williams, D Price, R Powell, D Davies, G Thomas, A Davies, D Rowlands, A Jones, K Laurie-Parry, W Powell, G Pugh, E Durrant and EM Jones declared an interest in item 14 Notice of Motion on support for the agricultural sector.

County Councillor D Evans declared an interest in item 8 Budget Virements.

<b>4.</b>	<b>CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>
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The Chair advised that he had represented the Council at a service on Remembrance Sunday and at the Winter Fair. He had hosted a thank-you event for staff on 6 December and had presented Silver Kite awards to Sian Healey, Raiff Devlin & Howard Owen.

<b>5. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>
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The Leader referred to the event hosted with jointly with Ceredigion County Council at the Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth to mark COP26. Julie James MS the Minister for Climate Change had written to thank the Councils. She noted that £16 million had been received from the Levelling Up Fund for the restoration of the Montgomery Canal and that further funding had been received for schemes in Brecon and Llandrindod Wells. Six projects had received funding from the Community Renewal Fund.

<b>6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING</b>
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The Chief Executive reported that the number of Covid cases in the county remained high and that Social Care remained in business continuity. The Council would continue to support the Health Board with their vaccination programme.

She thanked everyone who had supported the education service and helped it make sufficient progress in addressing the Estyn recommendations with the result that the authority had been removed from the category of local authorities causing significant concern.

She reported that the Youth Justice Service had just been inspected with the report expected in March and that Community Mental Health Services would be inspected in the following week. Finally, she reported the appointment of Georgina Bevan as Head of Education.

<b>7. ESTYN MONITORING REPORT</b>
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Council noted the findings of the Estyn Monitoring Visit that had removed the Council's education services from the category of local authorities causing significant concern. The inspectors had judged that the service had made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

The Portfolio Holder thanked Cabinet colleagues, the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee, the Improvement and Assurance Board, the Director of Education, officers and headteachers who had worked to secure the improvements required by Estyn and turn the service around whilst coping with the demands of the pandemic.

County Councillor Gibson-Watt noted that this had been the third time Council services had required intervention by inspectorates and he expressed the hope that this would not happen again.

The Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee noted that there had been significant improvements in the quality of reports coming to Scrutiny. He

paid tribute to ALN services in particular and to the Schools who had adapted and embraced new ways of working. He noted that there was still a lot of work to do but, overall, this was a very positive change of direction for the service.

<b>8.</b>	<b>BUDGET VIREMENTS</b>
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Council considered a report setting out budget pressures on Children's Services and proposing a virement of funds into the service budget to ensure that the organisation worked within the financial regulations and discharged its statutory duties under the Social Services Wellbeing Act.

County Councillor Amanda Jenner, the Chair of the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee, advised that the Committee had raised a number of concerns and had received a confidential briefing on the very high costs associated with a small number of very complex cases. The Committee had been shocked at the very high costs and concerned that they were all being borne by the County Council with no contribution from Powys Teaching Health Board. The Committee was concerned that physical and mental health problems were not been treated with parity. The Health Board had been invited to attend the Committee to discuss collaborative working and hear about the mental health support they provide to children in Powys.

Members asked if there would be any analysis of the comparative figures on the cost of expenditure which had been provided. The Head of Service advised that the figures were not comparable. The Portfolio Holder suggested that the Scrutiny Committees may wish to look in more detail at the figures.

The Head of Service agreed that there were not enough places available in the county and noted that a new children's home would be opening in the south of the county and that planning permission had been received for another home in the north.

The Head of Service confirmed that an action plan had been put in place to address the recommendations of the SWAP report on Children's Services. The Director of Social Services advised that the service did not accept one of the recommendations in relation to budgeting for agency staff and wouldn't be taking it forward.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that she had met Welsh Government Ministers who had been very supportive and the Health Board to discuss the issue. The Joint Partnership Board, which was a meeting of Council and Powys Teaching Health Board members and officers, had met to discuss this the previous week. The Head of Finance advised that every funding stream available, including the Welsh Government Hardship Fund, would be explored before there was any draw on reserves. The Head of Children's Services advised that the service was doing everything it could to keep costs down.

The recommendation in the report was moved by County Councillor Rachel Powell and seconded by County Councillor Myfanwy Alexander and it was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the virements of £187k and £350k set out in 4.3 and 4.4 of the report are approved.
2. That at the end of this financial year, any of the remaining pressures as set out in paragraphs 3.2, 3.10 and 3.11 up to a maximum of £1.854 million will be authorised and vired from the Council's Budget Management Reserve, providing that evidence is produced to establish that the pressures have been mitigated wherever possible.

County Councillor Laurie-Parry abstained.

<b>9. DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT</b>
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Council considered the Director of Social Services annual report for the period April 2020 to March 2021. In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Welsh Language noted that despite being seriously understaffed and in the face of the pandemic, the service maintained a high level of service because of the efforts of staff who she thanked. She noted that currently 3,000 people were waiting for services when normally there were 300.

The Chief Executive presented the report on behalf of the Director who had been called away on urgent business. She noted that the service had been operating under the business continuity plan since 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 concentrating on delivering critical services to residents. She thanked the Director, the Heads of Service, staff, the voluntary sector and the Portfolio Holders for their work. The contribution of teachers who had operated school hubs providing a place of safety for children during the lockdown was also acknowledged.

In response to a Member's question about children being educated at home rather than in school, Council was advised that there was no statutory duty on local authorities and that children who were not in school could be at risk. To help address this two home education outreach officers had been appointed by the Council. The service had spent a good deal of time during the pandemic ensuring the welfare of children who were out of school.

Council unanimously

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

<b>10. ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, SUBMISSION, AND CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSALS</b>
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Council considered the arrangements and the timetable for the development, submission, and consideration of alternative budget proposals. The Head of Finance confirmed that information would be shared with Group Leaders to keep them abreast of changes in proposed funding projections and the financial pressures that were being identified. This would also provide the opportunity to

offer more general advice on all aspects of the budget including the level of reserves held and Council Tax calculations and would ensure that advice to opposition groups is consistent with the advice being offered to Cabinet as they develop their budget proposal.

It was moved by County Councillor H Lewis and seconded by County Councillor JM Williams and

**RESOLVED that Council approve the process and timetable as set out in this report for the development, submission and consideration of alternative budgets.**

County Councillor K Laurie-Parry abstained.

Council adjourned at 12.46 and reconvened at 1.30 pm.

#### PRESENT

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, B Baynham, J Berriman, G Breeze, J Charlton, L V Corfield, K W Curry, A W 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, S M Hayes, H Hulme, A Jenner, E A Jones, D R Jones, E Jones, G Jones, J R Jones, M J Jones, D Jones-Poston, F H Jump, K Laurie-Parry, H Lewis, P E Lewis, I McIntosh, DW Meredith, JG Morris, R Powell, WD Powell, D R Price, G Pugh, J 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, M Weale, J Wilkinson, A Williams, G I S Williams, D H Williams, J Williams, J M Williams, R Williams and S L Williams

<b>11. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION</b>
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Council considered amendments to the Constitution recommended by the Democratic Services Committee.

#### **Section 2 – Purpose, Definition, Interpretation and Amendment to the Constitution**

It was proposed by County Councillor JM Williams and seconded by County Councillor Beverley Baynham and unanimously

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the amendments to Section 2 of the Constitution is approved as set out in the draft Section 2 attached to the report.**
- 2. That the Monitoring Officer is authorised to make such other changes to the Constitution as may be required to reflect the changes set out in Recommendation 1 above.**

#### **Section 4 – Full Council**

It was proposed by County Councillor J Wilkinson and seconded by County Councillor A Davies and unanimously

**RESOLVED**

- 3. That the amendments to Section 4 of the Constitution are approved as set out in the draft Section 4 attached to the report.**
- 4. 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 3 above.**

**Section 7 – Scrutiny Committees**

It was proposed by County Councillor E Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor B Baynham and

**RESOLVED**

- 5. That the amendments to Section 7 of the Constitution are approved as set out in the draft Section 7 attached to the report.**
- 6. 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 5 above.**

County Councillor K Laurie-Parry abstained.

**Section 8 – The Standards Committee**

It was proposed by County Councillor E Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor J Berriman and unanimously

**RESOLVED**

- 7. That the amendments to Section 8 of the Constitution are approved as set out in the draft Section 8 attached to the report.**
- 8. 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 7 above.**

**Section 9 – Regulatory Committees**

It was proposed by County Councillor R Williams and seconded by County Councillor E Vaughan and unanimously

**RESOLVED**

- 9. That the amendment to Section 9 of the Constitution is approved as set out in the draft Section 9 attached to the report.**
- 10. 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 9 above.**

### **Section 11 – Officers**

It was proposed by County Councillor R Williams and seconded by County Councillor E Vaughan and

#### **RESOLVED**

- 11. That the amendments to Section 11 of the Constitution are approved as set out in the draft Section 11 attached to the report.**
- 12. 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 11 above.**

County Councillor K Laurie-Parry abstained.

### **Section 13 – Responsibility for Functions**

It was proposed by County Councillor R Williams and seconded by County Councillor E Vaughan and unanimously

#### **RESOLVED**

- 13. That the amendment to Section 13 of the Constitution is approved as set out in the draft Section 13 attached to the report.**
- 14. 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 13 above.**

### **Section 15 – Budget Procedure Rules**

It was proposed by County Councillor E Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor JM Williams and

#### **RESOLVED**

- 15. That the amendments to Section 15 of the Constitution are approved as set out in the draft Section 15 attached to the report.**
- 16. 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 15 above.**

County Councillor K Laurie-Parry abstained.

### **Section 16 - Financial Procedure Rules**

It was proposed by County Councillor E Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor JM Williams and

#### **RESOLVED**

**17. That the amendments to Section 16 of the Constitution are approved as set out in the draft Section 16 attached to the report.**

**18. 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 17 above.**

County Councillor K Laurie-Parry abstained.

### **Section 18 – Code of Conduct for Members**

It was proposed by County Councillor E Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor R Williams and unanimously

#### **RESOLVED**

**19. That the amendment to Section 18 of the Constitution is approved as set out in the draft Section 18 attached to the report.**

**20. 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 19 above.**

County Councillor J Jones left the meeting at 14.12.

<b>12.</b>	<b>AMENDMENTS TO THE INTER AUTHORITY AGREEMENT OF THE WALES PENSION PARTNERSHIP</b>
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Council was asked to Council to approve amendments to the Inter Authority Agreement of the Wales Pension Partnership to reflect developments in respect of Local Government Pension Scheme pooling arrangements.

It was moved by County Councillor R Williams and seconded by County Councillor A Davies and unanimously

**RESOLVED to approve the amendments to the Inter Authority Agreement as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.**

<b>13.</b>	<b>APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES AND COMMITTEES</b>
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Council noted the following appointments made by political groups and approved by the Monitoring officer:

Councillor Gwilym Williams appointed to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority in place of Councillor Jon Williams.

Councillor Karl Lewis appointed to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority in place of Councillor Iain MacIntosh.

Councillor Ange Williams appointed to the Employment and Appeals Committee in place of Councillor Jon Williams.

County Councillor John Morris noted that four of the Council's appointees to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority came from outside of the Park and he asked that the group leaders discuss this and that it be debated at Council.

<b>14.</b>	<b>NOTICE OF MOTION - RESPONSIBLE AFFORESTATION - A NON-EXPLOITATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE APPROACH</b>
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The Chair advised that the proposer and seconder of the motion had agreed to confer consideration of it so that a dispensation could be sought from the Standards Committee for members who may have an interest.

<b>15.</b>	<b>NOTICE OF MOTION - A STEP CHANGE IN ACTION ON THE CLIMATE AND ADOPTING THE ONE PLANET STANDARD</b>
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County Councillor Les Skilton left the meeting at 14.29.

Council debated the following motion proposed by County Councillor Jackie Charlton and seconded by County Councillor Jake Berriman.

This Council notes that:

Council has an opportunity to make a step change in addressing the crisis we face; progress has been slower than residents and stakeholders anticipated and monitoring and feedback less transparent than they would like.

An increase in pace and openness is needed to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. Ambition and leadership from the Council will be key to taking our community and local stakeholders with us to reach the target set in September 2020 of Net Zero by 2030.

The COP26 international conference in Glasgow left no one in any doubt about the seriousness and urgency of the situation for communities at home and abroad. Our response requires nothing short of a whole-organisation cultural change where we clearly say what we are doing and do what we say, inspiring others to act too.

Swansea Council is piloting a new initiative – the One Planet Standard, launched in time for COP26, which is designed to support organisations like ours to adjust

our activities to match our environmental aspirations. Supported by the Welsh Future Generations Commissioner, Sophie Howe, the One Planet Standard could help Powys Council become resource-efficient, develop circular economic pathways with the engagement of employees, supply chains, customers and anyone affected by our activities. The One Planet Standard supports continuous improvement, with a simple Plan > Do > Check > Act virtuous cycle all set against our own goals, milestones, and time scales. At its core it is essentially an integrated reporting methodology to assist an organisation to measure, account for, and improve on, the environmental impact of its activities. The One Planet Standard would embrace the five ways of working:

**Long Term** – balancing short term needs with meeting long term needs.

**Prevention** – acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse, using the precautionary principle.

**Integration** – considering how all Powys' actions impact upon each other, upon the social and ecological goals, and upon the interests and actions of stakeholders.

**Collaboration** – with any other person (or different departments) that could help Powys meet its objectives and its social and ecological goals.

**Involvement** – involving a wide range of people in achieving its social and ecological goals, ensuring that those people are from and reflect the diversity of Powys.

Understanding and adopting the requirements of the One Planet Standard will help the Portfolio Holder for the climate and ecological emergency, and other members of the Cabinet to shape strategic direction, and the senior management team implement change, whilst helping staff shift the corporate culture. Our partners and customers will better appreciate our ambitions and choose to join us on this journey.

This Council calls for:

The reinforcing of its declaration of a climate emergency in September 2020, its divestment decision of 2018 and its pursuit of the Local Nature Recovery Action Plan which is important to reporting on Section 6 of the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty.

**This Council resolves to:**

- Call on the cabinet member for Climate Change for a clear and visible step change in activity necessary to deliver Powys' commitment to meet its net zero target by 2030, publishing the agreed baseline assessment and Action Plan for carbon reduction for members, stakeholders and residents to assess urgently.

- Become the second Council in Wales to pilot the One Planet Standard ahead of a decision, post May 2022, on whether to formally adopt it as a new way of working.
- Ask the Chair of Powys Pension Fund to call on the Welsh Pension Fund to use the power it has, including its influence as one of the UK's largest pension funds, to encourage divestment as agreed in the motion of 2018.

Councillor Charlton explained that the motion was to improve and strengthen the resolution passed by Council on the climate emergency. The Leader argued that the Council was moving as quickly as financial and staffing resources allowed. It was pointed out that a Climate Change Strategy had been launched at the Winter Fair and would be going out for public consultation.

The motion was put to the vote and was lost by 21 votes to 29 with one abstention.

<b>16. NOTICE OF MOTION - WHITE RIBBON: CULTURE AND PRACTICE</b>
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County Councillor J Williams left at 14.44.

County Councillor D Evans left at 14.46.

County Councillor L George left at 14.50.

Council debated the following motion proposed by County Councillor P Roberts and seconded by County Councillor J Charlton.

This Council Meeting notes:-

- Mid and West Wales MS Joyce Watson championed the White Ribbon cause, at the head of a cross party initiative, early in the Fourth Assembly/Senedd. Cllr William Powell represented Welsh Liberal Democrats at vigils and other events on behalf of Joyce Watson and met many different survivors. Joyce's ongoing leadership in this matter to this day is still an important part of Senedd business;
- Dyfed-Powys Police has raised the profile of domestic abuse, coercive control and violence against women. Our incoming DPP Chief Constable, Richard Lewis, currently Chief Constable of Cleveland, has identified domestic abuse and associated issues as a high priority;
- ONS figures show that almost one in three women aged 16-59 will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, that two women a week in England and Wales are killed by a current or former partner, that over half a million women are raped or sexually assaulted each year and that a YouGov poll shows that a third of girls have experienced sexual harassment in schools;
- the global pandemic has led to more women and girls being vulnerable to domestic abuse and, according to a BBC news report last July, the initial three months of the first national lockdown saw an 80% increase in calls to the National Domestic Abuse Hotline;

- the recent Fawcett Society report “Tackling sexual harassment in the workplace” - reports on employer actions to prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment, identifies over 40% of women have experienced workplace harassment and 45% online harassment of a sexual nature with rates highest amongst those with a protected characteristic.
- that, according to crime-survey and other government data, victims disproportionately come from those groups which already experience inequality and additional challenges in our society, including those who are mixed-race, have disabilities, or are transgender;
- as we reflect on the end of the delayed UEFA Euro 2020 tournament, previous research by Lancaster University showed that reported domestic abuse incidents increase whenever any of the home nations play in a major tournament, and the effect is particularly large on the days when those teams lose; and
- the highly disturbing implications of the Sarah Everard case and the subsequent revelations of misogynistic behaviour amongst other members of the police.

This Council Meeting further notes that:-

- White Ribbon UK is the leading charity with a mission to end **male violence against women** and part of the global White Ribbon movement which arose from a campaign started by men in Canada in 2004;
- White Ribbon Day is marked annually on 25th November, the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women, by encouraging men and boys to pledge never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women by wearing a white ribbon on the day and a week or two afterwards; and
- White Ribbon UK, which works across all 3 devolved administrations, operate a system of male Ambassadors, female Champions and youth Advocates, as well as having specific materials to support primary and secondary schools, all with the aim of encouraging men/boys to take the pledge and help to eradicate male violence against women.

This Council Meeting believes male violence against women can never be condoned and Powys County Council should do everything in its power to ensure women are safe. The Authority has a strong policy on protecting women both in the workplace and in the communities it supports. Training is mandatory for staff and councillors. As part of this motion we ask that the council should facilitate and encourage participation by councillors, staff, and schools in the White Ribbon Campaign.

This Council Meeting therefore resolves to:-

1. Embrace a culture so that all male Councillors can the take White Ribbon pledge, never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women;

2. undertake as soon as practicable the steps necessary to achieve White Ribbon accreditation, joining the large number of public sector bodies including 4 other Welsh councils and Dyfed Powys Police and Mid and West Wales Fire Service which have already done so<sup>iv</sup>; and
3. as part of this, encourage the Leaders of each political group to come together to nominate a male Councillor and the Chief Executive to nominate a member of staff as Ambassadors; mark White Ribbon Day on 25th November each year with a fundraising event; and encourage participation among council staff and local primary and secondary schools.
4. Undertake a review of protocols and procedures to determine if the Council is discharging its responsibility as a reputable employer in light of the recommendations of the Fawcett Report and to bring forward any modifications as a matter of urgency.

County Councillor M Alexander proposed an amendment seconded by County Councillor A Jenner, to:

1. Encourage all male Councillors can the take White Ribbon pledge, and all councillors to undertake Ask and Act training as soon as is practicable. Stage Three Champions training will be available in the New Year, providing a deeper understanding of this vital area for councillors in their role as community leaders. Request the Democratic Services Committee to consider making Ask and Act training mandatory.
2. undertake as soon as practicable the steps necessary to achieve White Ribbon accreditation, joining the large number of public sector bodies including 4 other Welsh councils and Dyfed Powys Police and Mid and West Wales Fire Service which have already done so; and
3. as part of this, encourage the Leaders of each political group to come together to nominate a male Councillor and the Chief Executive to nominate a member of staff as Ambassadors; mark White Ribbon Day on 25th November each year with a variety of events; and encourage participation among council staff and local primary and secondary schools.
4. Undertake a review of protocols and procedures to determine if the Council is discharging its responsibility as a reputable employer in light of the recommendations of the Fawcett Report and to bring forward any modifications as a matter of urgency.
5. The Council examine the Tool Kit due to be published by the Fawcett Society early in the New Year to determine its utility in our journey to become an employer of choice for all.

The amendment was accepted by the proposer and the seconder of the original motion and put to the vote. By 53 votes to 0 it was unanimously

## RESOLVED

1. Encourage all male Councillors can the take White Ribbon pledge, and all councillors to undertake Ask and Act training as soon as is practicable. Stage Three Champions training will be available in the New Year, providing a deeper understanding of this vital area for councillors in their role as community leaders. Request the Democratic Services Committee to consider making Ask and Act training mandatory.
2. undertake as soon as practicable the steps necessary to achieve White Ribbon accreditation, joining the large number of public sector bodies including 4 other Welsh councils and Dyfed Powys Police and Mid and West Wales Fire Service which have already done so; and
3. as part of this, encourage the Leaders of each political group to come together to nominate a male Councillor and the Chief Executive to nominate a member of staff as Ambassadors; mark White Ribbon Day on 25th November each year with a variety of events; and encourage participation among council staff and local primary and secondary schools.
4. Undertake a review of protocols and procedures to determine if the Council is discharging its responsibility as a reputable employer in light of the recommendations of the Fawcett Report and to bring forward any modifications as a matter of urgency.
5. The Council examine the Tool Kit due to be published by the Fawcett Society early in the New Year to determine its utility in our journey to become an employer of choice for all.

<b>17. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION</b>
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**17.1. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property from County Councillor William Powell**

I note your response to Cllr Gareth Ratcliffe's *question at any time* in the early autumn on Gwernyfed High School, where you stated that you were pleased that the team were now able to re-commence the work on the Gwernyfed High School project.

Can you please provide the local communities and me with an update and anticipated time lines? As we move forward, I'm sure that you will agree with me that clarity and transparency are vital to ensure that opportunities are not missed to progress this project, prior to the onset of purdah ahead of the elections in May 2022.

### **Response**

I can report that no further progress has yet been made on the Gwernyfed school build project, but the Transformation Team are currently considering next steps in order to build it into next year's work programme. Further updates will be provided when further information is available.

In response to Councillor Powell's supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder advised that a programme of work would be published as soon as possible.

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

**Following the recent debate on rodent management at Full Council initiated by the Welsh Labour Group and subsequent incidents reported to me locally, could you please clarify:**

- **What arrangements are in place by Powys County Council to address the nuisance and public health implications caused by rodents in Council owned rental accommodation, specifically those designed for and occupied by frail elderly or vulnerable persons and those with additional learning needs or anxiety issues?**
- **Are reports of rodent infestation made by residents dealt with as matters of urgency and with effective cross portfolio working, from those responsible for Public Protection and Housing?**
- **Subject to appropriate Covid-19 precautions, will the Portfolio holder(s) make themselves available to meet residents in the South Powys area, whose quality of life is being adversely affected by these issues?**

### **Response**

Thank you for your enquiry.

The legal framework relating to your query, which informs the way Housing Services responds, is laid down in the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1947.

The 1949 Act requires the Council to: "take such steps as may be necessary to secure so far as practicable that their district is kept free from rats and mice". The Council may therefore enforce against the owner or the occupier of land where there an infestation of rates, mice and other pests. As a land and property owner itself, it is under obligation to take similar action to which applies to all property owners or occupiers.

Landowners and occupiers are required to inform the Council in writing if substantial numbers of rats, mice and other pests are present on their land. A landowner or occupier is responsible for the control of all pests and any costs incurred doing so on land they own or occupy. Where a property is unoccupied, it is the responsibility of the land or property owner to rid the site of pests. If a landowner or occupier refuses to make arrangements to remedy an infestation, the Council in its environmental protection role will allow seven days-notice before terminating pests from any land (occupied or not). Any expenses incurred can be recoverable, if necessary, by means of a County Court judgement.

In Council owned property, if rats or rodents have entered such properties through defects, for example holes in the building structure, then the Council is under a duty, provided in the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to put right the defects which have allowed the vermin to gain access to the property.

With regard to your questions, please see below...

- What arrangements are in place by Powys County Council to address the nuisance and public health implications caused by rodents in Council owned rental accommodation, specifically those designed for and occupied by frail elderly or vulnerable persons and those with additional learning needs or anxiety issues?

Housing Services will look at rodent management where vermin have entered a property or communal area in older or vulnerable persons accommodation, or properties where it has been established that entry is due to a maintenance or repair breakdown. Where necessary, repairs will be undertaken to prevent any further or repeat access.

- Are reports of rodent infestation made by residents dealt with as matters of urgency and with effective cross portfolio working, from those responsible for Public Protection and Housing?

Housing Services deals with rodent infestation promptly, liaising with Public Protection and Environmental Health teams for professional advice in how to effectively deal with the infestation and any repair maintenance work needed to prevent a reoccurrence of the problem.”

- Subject to appropriate Covid-19 precautions, will the Portfolio holder(s) make themselves available to meet residents in the South Powys area, whose quality of life is being adversely affected by these issues?

I am always happy to meet with members of the public to discuss matter related to any of my portfolio responsibilities.

There was no supplementary question.

**17.3. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe**

**Can the portfolio holder please provide the costs to the Gwernyfed primary cluster (per school) on general maintenance by year since the new schools opened? Several schools are facing the same design issues/ faults, impacting the budgets of these schools. The school process promised fit for purpose schools, yet the same problems highlight poor construction and design across the catchment. Can the council also arrange a meeting with heads and chairs to discuss ongoing issues and identify where Powys needs to support the financial impact. An example is the school new buildings were originally signed off as safe (in the case of the kitchens' roller shutters which have now been classified as not fire-proof, therefore not fit for purpose). If Powys county council is serious about its school's**

**programme, then an assessment of this catchment is paramount to ensure its success is delivered.**

### **Response**

Attached are the property plus transactions for the Gwernyfed primary school cluster. Property Officers are available to meet Head Teachers and/or Chairs of Governors on site to discuss any ongoing maintenance/design issues. If you wish to take up this offer please contact Neil Clutton, Principal Property Manager ([neil.clutton@powys.gov.uk](mailto:neil.clutton@powys.gov.uk)). With regards to the canteen roller shutters, the Strategic Property team have informed me that the roller hatch does not need to be fire rated as it does not form part of the fire compartment.

In response to Councillor Ratcliffe's supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he was happy to meet him and the headteachers.

## **18. NOTICE OF MOTION - SUPPORT FOR THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR**

County Councillors D Evans, R Harris, MJ Jones, G Jones, R Williams, M Weale, E Vaughan, D Thomas, P Lewis, B Baynham, G Williams, E Jones, L George, E Roderick, J Wilkinson, A Williams, D Price, R Powell, D Davies, G Thomas, A Davies, D Rowlands, A Jones, K Laurie-Parry, W Powell, G Pugh, E Durrant and EM Jones declared an interest in this item.

The Monitoring Officer advised Council that the Standards Committee had granted a dispensation for members with a personal interest to speak but not to vote on this item.

The Chair left the meeting at 15.31 having declared an interest and the Vice Chair chaired the rest of the meeting.

County Councillor D Rowlands left the meeting at 15.32.

Council debated the motion proposed by County Councillor E Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor B Davies:

The agricultural sector is of paramount importance to our economy and communities of Powys as indicated in this this map. With 9.5 million sheep in Wales we have seen one of the main natural products, wool, having extremely low prices in recent times.

We have wool grading centres in Newtown and Brecon, and the sheep sector is of huge importance in Powys. Wool is also a natural, environmentally friendly and fire retardant product.

In view of this, the Council proposes that the authority, as part of the Mid Wales Growth deal, looks at opportunities to add value to our agricultural products and specifically to work with the farming unions and the British Wool Marketing Board with a view of facilitating the establishment of the equivalent of WRONZ, Wool Research Organisation New Zealand in Mid Wales hence being a catalyst for innovative ideas, products and commercial spin offs using wool.

By 26 votes to 0 it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that the Council proposes that the authority, as part of the Mid Wales Growth deal, looks at opportunities to add value to our agricultural products and specifically to work with the farming unions and the British Wool Marketing Board with a view of facilitating the establishment of the equivalent of WRONZ, Wool Research Organisation New Zealand in Mid Wales hence being a catalyst for innovative ideas, products and commercial spin offs using wool.

**County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)**