

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD BY TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 22  
FEBRUARY 2022**

PRESENT

County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, B Baynham, P Davies, A W Davies, H Hulme and R Powell

In attendance: County Councillor G Breeze

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment paid tribute to the HTR crews who had responded to emergencies caused by the storms over the weekend.

<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>
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There were no apologies for absence.

<b>2. MINUTES</b>
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The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022 as correct records.

<b>3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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There were no declarations of interest reported.

<b>4. POWYS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) REVIEW REPORT AND THE DELIVERY AGREEMENT FOR THE REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (RLDP): UPDATE ON PUBLIC CONSULTATION STAGE AND REVISED DOCUMENTS</b>
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Cabinet considered representations received from the recent consultations on:

- i) the Local Development Plan (LDP) Review Report Consultation Draft January 2022 and
- ii) the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Delivery Agreement Consultation Draft January 2022.

Cabinet was advised that the papers had been considered by the LDP Working Group and had been published for consultation in January. The Delivery Agreement set out the timetable for plan preparation and required approval by full Council. If approved by Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, the Delivery Agreement would be sent to Welsh Government for agreement. Welsh Government agreement would signal the start of preparations for the Replacement Local Development Plan from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 with the aim of adopting it in January 2026.

Cabinet also noted that the newly established Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee would have responsibility for preparing a strategic development plan for the region.

Having considered the representations received and the Council responses, it was

**RESOLVED to approve the revised LDP Review Report (Appendix 2).**

**RECOMMENDED to Full Council that the revised RLDP Delivery Agreement (Appendix 3) is approved.**

<b>5.</b>	<b>RESPONSE TO THE STAFFING AND OTHER PRESSURES IN THE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SERVICES</b>
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Cabinet was briefed on the pressures on the workforce in Children's Services which was facing severe recruitment challenges and noted the associated risks of the service being unable to meet its statutory responsibilities and regulatory requirements.

The report set out a series of proposals for short and longer-term solutions to alleviate the pressures in social work teams, offer incentives to retain and attract social work staff and provide assurances that statutory duties and regulatory requirements can be met. The Director advised that these solutions could be funded from within the existing Children's Services budget.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. To acknowledge the current staffing crisis in the Children's Social Services workforce, the other pressures including increased demand, and the impact this is having on the Council's ability to consistently deliver a safe and effective service.**
- 2. To note and support the responses to this crisis that have already been implemented.**
- 3. To support the proposed solutions to mitigate the impact of this crisis.**

The Leader thanked the staff in Children's Services for all their work throughout the pandemic.

<b>6.</b>	<b>COVID RECOVERY FUNDING PROGRESS UPDATE</b>
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Cabinet noted details of the assistance provided to businesses through the Council's Covid Recovery Fund and related financial support given to businesses via the Covid support grants provided by the Welsh and UK governments and administered by the Council.

To date 54 projects have been supported through the Community Recovery Grant Fund established by Council and awarded grants totalling £498,990. Council had supported 14 covid support grant and relief schemes to businesses. A total of £85,573,115 in Covid grants and £21,500,000 in relief schemes from business rates had been awarded to Powys businesses since March 2020.

Details of the 3<sup>rd</sup> relief scheme for business for the year 2022/23 were expected soon and it was estimated that approximately 1,400 businesses would receive relief of approximately £5.7million.

Cabinet commended the team for their work.

<b>7.</b>	<b>BUSINESS RATES RETAIL, LEISURE &amp; HOSPITALITY RELIEF SCHEME 2022-23</b>
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Cabinet considered the adoption of a Business Rates Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme for financial year 2022-23 to maximise funding available, to support Powys businesses to recover from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic by granting rate relief which is compliant with Welsh Government guidance. The report set out the eligibility criteria for applications. The scheme would offer 50% relief and businesses would be required to submit applications. A flyer reminding businesses to submit applications would be included with bills.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. That a Business Rates Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme 2022-23 be established in accordance with section 3 of the report.**
- 2. That applications for Business Rates retail, leisure, and hospitality rates relief 2022-23 under the scheme referred to above be delegated to and determined by the Portfolio Holder for Finance in consultation with the Head of Financial services (Section 151 Officer).**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance thanked the business support team for their work.

<b>8.</b>	<b>FINANCIAL FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2022 (AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2021)</b>
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Cabinet was advised that there was a projected underspend of £579k for the Council's General fund excluding the Schools Delegated budget and the HRA. Services projecting an overspend position must act now to recover their forecasted position and deliver within budget, if necessary, completing and submitting virements for consideration to realign budgets.

The report set out details of grants received in the last quarter which would impact on the outturn including a recently approved virement of £1.8 million from reserves to Children's Services which would not now be required.

A virement was proposed in the Finance service to utilise an underspend to fund the posts delivering the finance transformation work and to set up a specific reserve to manage this.

It was noted that significant costs would be incurred responding to and clearing up after the storms at the weekend. Cabinet was advised that the Council would have to meet the first £1,000,000 costs with Welsh Government meeting 85% of costs above that figure. The Council had recently received a payment for costs incurred in Storm Denis in 2020.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. That Cabinet note the current budget position and the projected full year forecast to the end of March 2022.**
- 2. That the grants set out in section 7 of the report are noted.**
- 3. The virement set out in section 7.6 is approved.**
- 4. That where additional in year financial pressure cannot be accommodated within existing budget, a detailed report is requested to give clear explanation of projected overspend before action is taken by Cabinet to address the projected deficit.**

<b>9.</b>	<b>CAPITAL FORECAST AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2021</b>
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Cabinet received details of the financial position of the Council's capital programme for 2021/22 as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021. The revised programme at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 is budgeted at £95.59 million following the successful award of additional grants and the reprofiling of budgets between financial years. Actual spend amounted to £43.18 million, representing 45% of the total budget. The report set out details of grants received including the Levelling Up Fund, £20.90 million of which was funded by UK Government, £1.00 million from third parties and the remaining £1.30 million funded by the council.

Cabinet was asked to approve a budget virement of £0.40 million for urgent capital works on the Powys owned residential homes with the amount being split equally between 2022/23 and 2023/24.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. That the contents of the report are noted.**
- 2. To approve the virement proposed in section 3.10 of the report.**

<b>10.</b>	<b>TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER 3 REPORT</b>
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Cabinet considered the Treasury Management report for quarter 3. The Authority would continue to look to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity to support Council services. With interest rates for investments remaining extremely low the use of cash reserves as opposed to borrowing was prudent and cost-effective. This would be reviewed as interest rates started to increase.

**RESOLVED that the Treasury Management report for Quarter 3 be accepted.**

**11. WELSHPOOL TOWN - TRANSFORMING EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

Cabinet considered a proposal to provide a grant of £5,500 per annum to Welshpool Town Football Club as Powys County Council's contribution towards a 25 year lease for land in Welshpool which would enable the Club to develop new football pitches. This was a compensatory payment for the loss of a recreational area at Welshpool High School, Salop Road, which the Council had used to build the new Welshpool Church in Wales School building.

County Councillor Graham Breeze spoke as a local member to welcome the proposal. He noted that the new Church in Wales school and soon to be opened Welsh medium school were a fantastic asset to Welshpool. However, the downside was that Welshpool Town football club's thriving junior teams had lost access to three pitches. This proposal would put that right and he commended the Portfolio Holder, officers and the project group for finding this solution.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet approve a grant of £5,500 per annum to Welshpool Town Football Club for a 25 year lease period, to be funded from existing Schools Service budget. This arrangement will begin from the start of financial year 2022/23.**

**12. CLUSTER BUSINESS MANAGER PROJECT**

Cabinet was advised that a task and finish group had reviewed the current model of business support to schools and had developed a new model based around the clusters of schools to provide all headteachers and governing bodies with the best possible business support.

It was proposed to adopt a model to include two business support roles for each cluster: a Strategic Cluster Business Manager (in line with the number of secondary / all age schools) and an Assistant Cluster Business Manager (pro rata) per 8 schools. This option would include a scaling back of the Corporate Finance Service.

The funding of the model was based on Secondary / All age schools contributing their formula funding, primary schools contributing £3k per school, the Local Authority contributing the remainder via a growth bid of £150k and realigning monies from within existing budgets totalling a further £227k. It was proposed that the cluster model be rolled out in waves over the next five years.

**RESOLVED that the contents of this report are noted including the timescale for delivery of this proposal through to 2026.**

**13. DELEGATED DECISIONS**

Cabinet noted the delegated decisions taken by Portfolio Holders.

<b>14.</b>	<b>CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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Cabinet received details of the forward work programme.

**County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)**