

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN COUNTY HALL /
BY ZOOM ON FRIDAY, 22 JULY 2022**

PRESENT

County Councillor G W Ratcliffe (Chair)

County Councillors B Baynham, D Bebb, M Beecham, S J Beecham, B Breeze, G Breeze, J Berriman, L Brighthouse, A Cartwright, J Charlton, R Church, T Colbert, S Cox, A W Davies, A Davies, B Davies, B Davies, S C Davies, M J Dorrance, D Edwards, J Ewing, L George, J Gibson-Watt, I Harrison, K Healy, H Hulme, P James, A Jones, E A Jones, E Jones, G D Jones, G E Jones, J R Jones, A Kennerley, C Kenyon-Wade, P Lewington, K Lewis, P E Lewis, W Lloyd, I McIntosh, S McNicholas, DW Meredith, C Johnson-Wood, G Mitchell, G Morgan, G Morgan, WD Powell, G Preston, G Pugh, J Pugh, L Rijnenberg, L Roberts, P Roberts, C Robinson, E Roderick, D Selby, D A Thomas, R G Thomas, J Thorp, E Vaughan, C Walsh, J Wilkinson, A Williams and J M Williams

1.	APOLOGIES
-----------	------------------

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors A Jenner, D H Williams and S L Williams.

2.	MINUTES
-----------	----------------

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 24th February, and reconvened on 3rd March, 3rd March and 26th May 2022 as correct records.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
-----------	---------------------------------

The Monitoring Officer advised that all members had a personal but non-prejudicial interest in item 10 Members' Salaries, Allowances and Expenses but that there was an exemption in the Members' Code of Conduct which allowed Members to speak and vote on this item.

The Monitoring Officer advised County Councillor C Walsh that he did not have an interest in Item 15 Notice of Motion – School Closures as a minor authority governor at Priory School, nor did County Councillor I McIntosh as the decision rested with the Cabinet.

County Councillor G Mitchell declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 15, Notice of Motion on School Closures.

4.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
-----------	------------------------------

The Chair thanked his Vice-Chair for representing him at the Women's Cycle Tour of Wales and the Young People's Village at the Royal Welsh Show.

He outlined the functions he had attended including the Radnorshire Rally and the Gurkha's parade. He had met the First Minister at the Royal Welsh Show and had hosted a reception at the Show. He had presented a Gold Kite award to Joyce Williams on the occasion of her 100th birthday, a Silver Kite to Rachel Palmer for her environmental work and to Karen and Danny Sherwood who had fostered children for over 25 years. He had also attended an event to thank volunteers involved in the vaccination and track and trace programmes.

5.	LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
-----------	-------------------------------

The Leader thanked staff who had been involved in setting up and supporting the Council's presence at the Royal Welsh Show. The Cabinet had launched its strategy for the new administration and a revision to the schools transformation strategy at the Show. He was pleased to note the turf cutting ceremony for the new school at Ysgol Cedewain. Brynllawarch Special School would also be redeveloped. He further reported that 32 one bedroom energy efficient flats would be developed on the site of Robert Housing House and that the social housing development at Sarn had been highly commended from the Housing Excellence in Wales awards.

He was pleased to report that Powys County Council had joined the Proud Council network which committed the Council to fully recognising LGBTQ+ rights, the first rural Welsh council to do so. He advised that the Cabinet was determined to enhance the way in which it consulted with the public. Businesses would be consulted on an employment and skills survey and on electric vehicle charging. Finally, he was pleased to note that the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan had been approved by Welsh Government, although he recognised that there was more to do and that the Cabinet wished to be more ambitious in the provision of Welsh medium education in future.

6.	CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING
-----------	-----------------------------------

The Chief Executive advised that Care Inspectorate Wales had published a largely positive letter following an inspection visit in May. She outlined interim arrangements following the departure of the Director of Social Services and advised that these arrangements would be reviewed after six months. She thanked Powys residents who had offered homes Ukrainian refugees. She advised that she had visited Council staff providing support at the Royal Welsh Show and thanked all the staff involved. Finally, she had attended the Urdd Eisteddfod in Denbigh and she congratulated all the participants from Powys. Powys was looking forward to welcoming the Urdd Eisteddfod to Machynlleth in May 2024.

County Councillor Aled Davies welcomed the CiW letter and he thanked the staff and the former portfolio holder for their work in improving the standards in the service.

7.	ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT
-----------	--------------------------------------

Council considered the first Annual Self-Assessment report. The report incorporated the annual monitoring of the Council's performance against its Corporate Improvement Plan and Strategic Equality Objectives and provided a holistic view of the organisation working towards delivering its well-being objectives. The report would help guide the Cabinet on how it delivered services and help Scrutiny focus on the areas for further review. The Leader thanked the officers and members involved in its production. In response to a member's question, it was confirmed that a bilingual easy read version would be produced. It was moved by County Councillor Michael Williams and seconded by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and by 63 votes to 0 it was

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Council considers the report presented and satisfies itself that the following criteria have been met:**
 - That the Self-Assessment Report fulfils the Authority's obligations under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.**
 - That the conclusions presented in the Self-Assessment Report are considered corporately to be a fair and accurate evaluation of the Authority's performance in 2021/22.**
 - That the self-assessment report offers an open, balanced, and realistic picture of the Council's achievements and challenges over the previous year.**

- 2. That the document is clear and provides the right level of information to make it meaningful and relevant to all audiences.**

County Councillor William Powell left the meeting at 11.20.

8. MARKET STABILITY REPORT SOCIAL SERVICES 2022
--

Council considered the Market Stability report for Social Services for 2022. The report identified challenges in the market and proposals for actions to be taken in future years. The report would help the Council and Powys Teaching Health Board to better understand the social care market within Powys and plan for future provision.

The key themes of the report were pressures on workforce capacity which had been exacerbated by the rising demand for services in the pandemic, the impact of changing demographics and the cumulative impact of ongoing budget constraints.

The Cabinet Member for Future Generations emphasised the importance of providing services in Welsh and she acknowledged the vital role played by carers and the third sector. Officers outlined the support provided to carers.

The report would be submitted to Powys Teaching Health Board, the Regional Partnership Board and Welsh Government. It would be used to plan future service delivery through the area plans and commissioning strategies. The

Leader said his priority was to pursue the integration agenda with the Health Board at pace.

The report was moved by County Councillor Sian Cox and seconded by County Councillor Edwin Roderick and it was unanimously

RESOLVED the report be noted.

9.	REVENUE VIREMENTS
-----------	--------------------------

Council considered two virements in the Vehicle Replacement Reserve:

- Fleet Management Services reported an underspend of £1,054,400 against depreciation charges. The service asked to utilise this underspend with an additional contribution to the vehicle replacement reserve to assist in managing the increasing pressure on the transport fund arising from significant inflation on purchase costs. Where possible this funding would be used to purchase “green” vehicles.
- Fleet Management Services had generated £226,086 of income from the sale of vehicles/equipment, and had requested that this be transferred to the vehicle replacement reserve to be used to fund the purchase of future vehicles and/or equipment. Where possible this funding would be used to purchase “green” vehicles.

Members asked about staffing pressures in the HTR service which had led to some delays in waste collection. The Executive Director Economy and Environment advised that the service was seeking to manage this with agency staff and by recruiting staff. The Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys asked Members to contact her if collections were missed.

It was proposed by County Councillor Michael Williams and seconded by County Councillor Gareth E Jones and unanimously

RESOLVED to approve the virements set out in the report.

10.	MEMBER ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES 2021-22
------------	---

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reminded members that they had an interest in this item but that there was a dispensation which allowed them to speak and vote on it.

Council received the report setting out the amounts paid and reimbursed to Members and Co-opted Members during the tax year 2021-22, in salaries and expenses.

It was proposed by County Councillor Les George and seconded by County Councillor Michael Williams and unanimously

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

11.	COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP
------------	-----------------------------

Council noted appointments made to committees by political groups since the last meeting. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised of one error in the report on page 383 of the pack, noting that there wasn't a Conservative vacancy on the Licensing Act 2003 Committee. He further advised that County Councillor Corrina Kenyon-Wade had been appointed to the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee by the Liberal Democrats. He would look again at the numbers on the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee as the Liberal Democrat group did not believe they had another place to fill. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services had been authorised by group leaders to approach non-aligned members to fill vacancies on committees.

It was proposed by County Councillor Les George and seconded by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and unanimously

RESOLVED to note the appointment of members to committees.

12.	APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT (LAY) MEMBER ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
------------	---

Council considered a report on the appointment of an independent (lay) member of the Standards Committee. Following an interview by an appointments panel, the panel had recommended the appointment of Mr Jonathan Goolden.

It was moved by County Councillor Michael Williams and seconded by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and by 59 votes to 0 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED that Mr Jonathan Goolden be appointed as an Independent (Lay) Member for a period of 6 years from 22 July 2022.

13.	APPOINTMENT OF COUNCILLORS TO OUTSIDE BODIES
------------	---

The Pritchard Trust

It was moved by County Councillor Gareth E Jones and seconded by County Councillor Karl Lewis and unanimously

RESOLVED that County Councillor Jeremy Pugh be appointed to the Pritchard Trust.

The Evans Trust

It was moved by County Councillor Gareth E Jones and seconded by County Councillor Claire Johnson-Wood and unanimously

RESOLVED that County Councillor Jeremy Pugh be appointed to the Evans Trust.

The Reserve Forces' and Cadet's Association for Wales

It was moved by County Councillor Pete Roberts and seconded by County Councillor Les George and unanimously

RESOLVED that County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe be appointed to the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association for Wales.

Wyeside Arts Centre Board

County Councillor Corrina Kenyon-Wade was proposed by County Councillor Richard Church and seconded by County Councillor Les George, and County Councillor Little Brighthouse was proposed by County Councillor Pete Roberts and seconded by County Councillor Josie Ewing and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that County Councillor Corrina Kenyon-Wade and County Councillor Little Brighthouse be appointed to the Wyeside Arts Centre Board.

14.	NEWTOWN TOWN COUNCIL REQUEST FOR ELECTION
------------	--

Council considered a request from Newtown Town Council that an election is held for two vacancies in the South ward of the town council. This would enable the Town Council to co-opt to four other vacant seats.

It was moved by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Graham Breeze and by 59 votes to 0 it was

RESOLVED to make the Newtown Town Council (South ward) Election – Order 2022 as set out in Appendix A to the report.

15.	NOTICE OF MOTION - SCHOOL CLOSURES
------------	---

County Councillor Gary Mitchell declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and left the meeting while it was being considered.

Council considered the following motion proposed by County Councillor Iain McIntosh and seconded by County Councillor Karl Lewis:

“The current Welsh school closure programme started when the previous Labour and Liberal Democrat Welsh Government administration was in power, with Kirsty Williams MS as Education Minister. Since then, local authorities throughout Wales have taken decisions to close primary schools. The following three schools now face closure in Powys:

Cradoc CP School
Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School
Llanbedr Church in Wales School

During the closure process, the proposals to close the above three schools went through the Learning and Skills Scrutiny committee, chaired by the Liberal Democrat Councillor Cllr Pete Roberts.

On 8th December the Learning and Skills scrutiny group met to consider the closure of Cradoc CP School; [2021-12-08 Scrutiny Recs to Cabinet - Cradoc and Mount Street v2.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#). The chairman made no objections to the proposal and submitted observations with four additional recommendations.

On 22nd September the Learning and Skills scrutiny group met to consider the closure of Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School; [2021-09-22 Scrutiny Recs to Cabinet - Llanfihangel Rhydithon.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#). The chairman made no objections to the proposal and submitted observations to include the comment "The committee was satisfied that the majority of the arguments set out in the document were justified on all grounds."

On 4th November the Learning and Skills scrutiny group met to consider the closure of Llanbedr Church in Wales School; [2021-11-04 Scrutiny Recs to Cabinet - Llanbedr.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#). The chairman made no objections to the proposal and submitted observations to include the comment "There were no recommendations from scrutiny to the cabinet."

Despite the Learning and Skills Scrutiny committee chair's apparent satisfaction with the three primary school closure proposals, Welsh Liberal Democrat candidates now forming the new Powys County Council administration campaigned, and committed, to reverse the closure of primary schools in Powys during the recent County Council election campaign:

On 29th January 2022, 13th February 2022 and 14th May 2022, several Liberal Democrat Council candidates, Councillors, and current Cabinet members joined Powys residents on protest walks and campaign days to fight against the closure of the three schools above. On 23rd January 2022 several Labour candidates, councillors and a current Cabinet member joined Powys residents on a protest walk to fight against the closure of Cradoc CP School, Mount Street Infants School, and Mount Street Primary School. During this year's County Council election campaign period, Liberal Democrat and Labour candidates informed Powys residents, through campaign literature, social media, and doorstep conversations that if elected, and in control of this authority, they would stop the closure of the three schools above. Since taking control of this authority in May, the new administration has failed to carry out their commitment to Powys residents. Instead, the Leader has announced that Llanfihangel Rhydithon and Llanbedr school closures will be delayed for one calendar year, offering false hope to parents, teachers, and children, as council officers have confirmed that both schools will still close.

The Leader and new Cabinet members have now revealed plans to proceed with the proposal to close Cradoc CP School, going against commitments made to all residents, teachers, parents and children in Powys.

This council therefore calls upon the new Powys County Council administration to:

Keep Cradoc CP School open.

Not propose the closure of Cradoc CP School again during the next five-year term.”

County Councillor McIntosh argued that instead of closing small rural schools, the Council should be holding Welsh Government to account for putting it in this position. He said that there was no evidence that larger schools were better for children’s education. He questioned the costings provided as Cradoc school would be there for another four years regardless of whether the motion was passed and money would need to be spent on relacing mobile classrooms.

County Councillor Pete Roberts challenged the attribution of the comments of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee to him personally in the preamble to the motion, when as the Chair of that Committee, it was his role to report the comments of the committee. He contended that it was misleading not to include the full minute relating to Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School in the preamble “The Committee was satisfied that the majority of the arguments set out in the document were justified on all grounds, with the exception of those in relation to federation and Welsh Language.” He argued that if the motion was passed, the school could not be federated or put into a cluster regardless of circumstances. He argued that it was essential to judge every proposal on its merits.

The motion was lost by 14 votes to 41 with 4 abstentions.

County Councillor Gary Mitchell returned to the meeting.

16.	NOTICE OF MOTION - RURAL FUEL DUTY RELIEF SCHEME
------------	---

Council debated the following motion proposed by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Bryn Davies.

“Poor public transport infrastructure sadly means that many Powys residents have few alternatives for essential journeys, and are dependent on using the car. At 80%, Wales continues to have the highest proportion of people travelling to work by car compared to the regions of England or Scotland.

Rural areas of Wales are currently not supported despite meeting almost all of the criteria. The scheme must be reconfigured to take into account access to local public transport networks, as well as a guarantee of inclusion of Welsh areas within the scheme. In view of this, Council -

-supports calls for rural Wales to be included in the Rural Fuel Duty Relief scheme;

-presses on HM Treasury to update the criteria for the scheme

-and asks for our Powys MPs to work with other Mid Wales opposition MPs in ensuring a united voice in pressing the case at Westminster.”

In proposing the motion Councillor Vaughan noted that despite Wales being the most car dependent nation of the UK due to poor public transport investment, no part of the country was eligible for the scheme.

By 55 votes to 2 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED that the Council
-supports calls for rural Wales to be included in the Rural Fuel Duty Relief scheme;
-presses on HM Treasury to update the criteria for the scheme
-and asks for our Powys MPs to work with other Mid Wales opposition MPs in ensuring a united voice in pressing the case at Westminster.

17.	NOTICE OF MOTION - DYDD GWYL DEWI
------------	--

Council debated the following motion proposed by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Gary Mitchell.

1. That the Council asks the Cabinet to officially recognise St David's Day by giving a day's leave to its workforce in order to celebrate our Patron Saint's Day on 1 March 2023 and every year thereafter.
2. That the Council calls on the Westminster Government to devolve to Welsh Government the power to create bank holidays for Wales (via the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971) – in the same manner as already happens in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan argued that Wales had fewer bank holidays than the rest of Europe and that an additional bank holiday would bring economic benefits.

An amendment was moved by County Councillor David Thomas and seconded by County Councillor Susan McNicholas to delete part 1 of the motion arguing that for the Council to grant staff a day's leave on 1 March 2023 would mean significant extra costs. Council voted on the amendment which was passed by 43 votes to 10 with 1 abstention and became the substantive amendment. Council then voted on the substantive amendment and by 44 votes to 10

RESOLVED that the Council calls on the Westminster Government to devolve to Welsh Government the power to create bank holidays for Wales (via the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971) – in the same manner as already happens in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

18.	QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR WELSH LANGUAGE FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR ELWYN VAUGHAN
------------	--

The 2011 Census shows that circa 19% of Powys population is fully bilingual ie in Welsh and English.

Yet in March 2022, the Language Commissioner reviewed a 4 week customer survey which showed that of 17 calls made to Powys only 1 stated that a Welsh

service was available, and of the 15 calls answered by staff, only 3 were able to respond fully to the needs of the caller in Welsh.

Furthermore, employment data shows that only 7.59% of Powys staff are fully bilingual in 2021-22 with housing and community development department as low as 5.04%

Yet from April 2021 to March 2022 of the 1,271 jobs advertised, only 64, or 5% showed the need for full bilingualism.

In view of the fact that the authority does not reflect our society, let alone meet its legal obligations, and hence the need for a radical over-all of the situation, what are your proposals to correct this imbalance?

Response

The Workforce and Organisation Design service are undertaking a thorough recruitment review, and the Welsh language will be considered as part of this. The Council has good practices in place already e.g., bilingual job adverts and job descriptions, and the opportunity to apply for any role in Welsh. We carry out selection processes in Welsh and for roles where Welsh is essential we publish these adverts in Welsh only.

As part of the review we will update data on staff Welsh language skills to ensure that it is accurate, and ensure managers consider the Welsh skills needed for a particular vacancy carefully as part of the recruitment process. The Council needs to be mindful of the recruitment challenges we and other local authorities are facing in a range of sectors. It is important that the Welsh language skills of our workforce are enhanced, and that we continue to provide opportunities for future talent applying for our vacancies. We recognise too that we have experienced considerable difficulties recruiting to posts where Welsh language skills are essential, going out to recruitment up to 4 times on occasion to secure recruitment, although New Ways of Working has eased the challenges in some areas relating to this by enabling some categories of employees to work from home.

We understand the importance of Welsh language skills across Powys and are committed to reflecting our communities and the people of Powys. As part of the review we will look at how we can actively encourage applications from Welsh speakers. We will consider how managers can identify roles that may not require Welsh language skills at the point of recruitment, but where there may be a requirement for them to learn some specific work-based Welsh as part of their role. This will make it easier for residents to use Welsh when interacting with us. We proactively advertise Welsh language training opportunities via Aberystwyth University and encourage staff to use Welsh with one another, for example by showing they speak Welsh on their e-mail signature on their building passes and lanyards. We will introduce informal virtual coffee mornings and lunchtime sessions where staff can practise their Welsh. We have spoken to Carmarthenshire County Council about this to learn from their best practice to ensure sessions are focussed and develop practical Welsh language skills staff can use when providing services.

In the longer term, our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan will help to address the imbalance between the percentage of Welsh speakers in the county and those working for us.

In response to Councillor Vaughan's supplementary question about making progress with the cross party group, the Cabinet Member confirmed that she would work with him and other members to move things forward.

County Councillor G W Ratcliffe (Chair)