

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD BY ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 8
NOVEMBER 2022**

PRESENT

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)

County Councillors J Berriman, R Church, S Cox, S C Davies, M J Dorrance,
P Roberts, D Selby and D A Thomas

In attendance: County Councillor A Davies

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| 1. | APOLOGIES |
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors J Charlton and S McNicholas.

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| 2. | MINUTES |
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The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting held on 11th October 2022 as a correct record.

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

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| 4. | COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS - LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES |
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Cabinet considered a report on the level of Council Tax premium to be applied to long-term empty properties within Powys. From 1 April 2023, The Council Tax (Long-Term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied Periodically) (Wales) Regulations 2022 allow for a premium of up to 300% to be charged, for both long-term empty and periodically occupied properties, so this would result in a total charge to the property owner of up to 400%. The intention was to help bring long-term empty properties back into use to and increase the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.

It was proposed to increase long-term empty premium to a 100% premium effective from 1 April 2023 and monitor the impact it had on the number of empty properties and length of time they remain empty for. Cabinet noted the results of a consultation that had been carried out.

County Councillor A Davies speaking as leader of the opposition said he opposed the proposal arguing that it was unfair on people facing delays in the planning process and he asked for it to be referred to Scrutiny. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation reminded Members that over 4,000 people in Powys were waiting for an affordable home.

RESOLVED

1. **To Increase the long-term empty premium from 50% to 100% effective from 1 April 2023, and**
2. **To recruit Empty Property Officer to work with and support owners and to explore an incentive package to assist empty homeowners to encourage properties back into use, as outlined in section 4.4 of the report.**
3. **To review the impact of increasing the premium has on numbers in 2023/24, to consider further action that may be required to shape the use of premiums for long-term empty properties in the future.**

The Leader asked for a report to be brought to Scrutiny after the premium had been in place for 12 months.

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| 5. | FINANCIAL FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023 (AS AT 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022) |
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Cabinet considered the forecast revenue budget outturn for 2022-23 financial year based on the position at quarter two. At quarter two the projected position had risen to a deficit of £7.064 million, of which £5.316 million would be funded through the drawdown of specific reserves, leaving a further £1.748 million deficit to be funded from general reserves. The impact of rising inflation and pay awards was increasing the financial pressure on the Council's budget.

In response to the increasing challenge, steps had already been taken to pull back on expenditure across the council with services taking action to reduce service expenditure by £2 million over the remainder of the financial year. In addition, corporate budget assumptions had been reviewed, reductions in borrowing as some capital schemes were delayed, the reversal of the National Insurance increase and updated Council Tax data, were now projecting improved positions to further support the revenue position.

44% of savings or £4.808 million had been delivered and a further 28% £3.040 million were assured of delivery by Services. £3.007 million, 28% were unachieved and were at risk of delivery in year. Services were required to consider mitigating action to ensure that they can deliver within the budget allocated.

The report also detailed a number of grants received and requests for budget virements.

In response to comments from the leader of the opposition, the Leader said that once the Chancellor of the Exchequer had made his statement on 17th November, he would convene a meeting of the political group leaders to work with them to set a balanced budget.

RESOLVED

1. That Cabinet note the current budget position and the projected full year forecast to the end of March 2023.
2. The grants received in this quarter as set out in section 5.1 are noted
3. The virements between £100,000 and £500,000 set out in section 5.2 of the report are approved.
4. That any virements in excess of £500,000 are referred to Council for approval.

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| 6. CAPITAL FORECAST 2022-23, AS AT 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022 |
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Cabinet noted that the revised programme at the 30th September 2022 was budgeted at £96.46 million following the successful award of additional grants and the reprofiling of budgets between financial years. Actual spend amounted to £24.37 million, representing 25% of the total budget.

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the report are noted.
2. That the virement proposed in section 4 is approved.

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| 7. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ASSURANCE |
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Cabinet considered the Annual Governance Statement which provided an account of the processes, systems and records that the council has in place in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of its governance arrangements during the financial period covering 2021/22. It was structured around the seven principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

RESOLVED

1. To confirm that the Cabinet is satisfied give that the following criteria have been met:
 - That the Annual Governance Statement fulfils the Authority's obligations under the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.
 - That the adjustments in approach adopted in drafting the 2021/22 AGS are acceptable and support understanding of the matters reported therein.
 - That the conclusions presented by the AGS are considered to be a fair and accurate evaluation of the Authority's fulfilment of its governance obligations during 2021/22.
2. To confirm that Cabinet is satisfied that the AGS provides an accurate reflection of the Authority's attainment of each of the CIPFA principles.

3. To confirm that Cabinet is satisfied that the AGS accurately reflects the Authority's overall fulfilment of its governance obligations during 2021/22.

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| 8. | CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD UPDATE |
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Cabinet considered an update from the Corporate Safeguarding Board. The September meeting of the Board was the first since the May 2022 elections, with new Councillors in attendance. Councillor Richard Church, Portfolio Holder for a Safer Powys, had taken on responsibility for Corporate Safeguarding, with Nina Davies taking over as Chair as Interim Director of Social Services & Housing.

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| 9. | DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING |
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Cabinet noted the delegated decisions taken by Cabinet Members since the last meeting.

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| 10. | CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD UPDATE |
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Cabinet noted the forward work programme.

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)