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Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee Friday, 28 April 2023

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ECONOMY, RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT BY ZOOM ON FRIDAY, 28 APRIL 2023

PRESENT

County Councillor A Davies (Chair)

County Councillors D Bebb, A Cartwright, A Jones, E A Jones, K Lewis, G Mitchell,
C Walsh, S L Williams, J Charlton and D Selby

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Anita Cartwright, B Davies,
I Harrison.

2.	DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST
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There were no disclosures of interest by Members relating to items to be
considered at the meeting

3.	DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPS
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The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a
Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section
78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

4.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS
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Documents:

Minutes of the previous meetings:

07.11.22 / 12.12.22 / 19.01.22 / 30.01.23 / 13.02.23

Outcome: The Chair was authorised to sign the Minutes of the previous
meetings as a correct record.

5.	SECTION 6 BIODIVERSITY REPORT
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Issues Discussed:

The report demonstrated ways in which the Council meet legal duties under the
Environment (Wales) Act 2016, reflecting actions taken to maintain or enhance
biodiversity between 2019 and 2022.

Town and community Councils were also required to complete a Section Six
Biodiversity Report for which the Council offer support.

The Council was required to publish an updated report every three years, setting
out what the Council has done in the previous three-year period, as well as the
Powys Nature Recovery Action Plan, which sets out future actions with partners
and a range of organisations for a collective response for Powys.

The report covered a wide range of projects which were initially set up using external grant funding from the Local Places for Nature Fund to provide officer expertise with no impact to the Council budget.

The Committee were asked to consider the content and progress made.

The Committee noted that the report:

Was very comprehensive, clear, and easy to read document.

- Showed what the Council had been working on as required by legislation, but progression and positive impacts were not evidenced, and questions raised around how projects would roll out to other areas within Powys.
- The Committee felt that the report if expanded would be beneficial to funders as risks around external funding remain high. Town and Community Councils could also support in order to achieve more.
- The Committee were keen to maximise benefits from Council assets and that the planned combined report i.e., looking both back and forward, would highlight projects with partners and community groups.

Question	Response
What was the status of the Powys Nature Recovery Action Plan	Officer Comment: Objectives and Measures have been set under the Corporate Improvement Plan and align with the Council Stronger, Fairer Greener vision.
Grant funding is often time limited, what would happen if it was withdrawn, is a contingency plan in place	Officer Comment: Resource remains a high risk with biodiversity officer posts being grant funded, the Council would need to look at other sources, if funding was no longer available.
What were the differences between the Town and Community Councils and Powys County Council requirements under Section Six	Officer Comment: The Council works closely with Town and Community Councils which have standalone duties and responsibilities. The difference is the range of services the Council provides.
Does the Council write out to Town and Community Councils to request a report	Officer Comment: Invitations had been circulated for an Awareness Event arranged to discuss and develop plans with Town and Community Councils.
The report meets all legal requirements but did not show evidence that progression is providing the right biodiversity improvements. Projects could have been highlighted more with partners and communities.	Officer Comment: The report requires only the work provided by the Council, which was narrow and constrained by time. Forward looking partnership work would be incorporated within the Powys Nature Recovery Action Plan.
Reassurance was asked regarding	Officer Comment:

how benefits of Council assets would be included in the Powys Nature Recovery Action Plan.	The funding for the Nature Recovery Officer provides opportunities to explore our assets including the County Farms Estate.
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Outcomes:

The Committee felt that the report demonstrated the valuable work conducted by the Council.

Funding Risks were evident, the Local Nature Partnership was being developed to collaborate with partners to look into extended funding as core funding was not available.

Concerns were raised around the cutting of verges by the Trunk Road Agency, which is outside the remit of Section Six but will be addressed.

It was felt that awareness could be higher, and the Council will endeavour to conduct more publicity around the report and plan.

6. SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

Documents Considered: Information Governance
The Committee noted the report for feedback.

Documents Considered: Shared Prosperity Fund
The Committee noted the report for feedback.

7. WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE
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Documents Considered: Heart of Wales Property Services
The Committee approved the Terms of Reference for the Heart of Wales Property Services Working Group.

Documents Considered: County Farms
The Committee approved the Terms of Reference for the County Farms Working Group.

8. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Documents Considered: Work Programme
The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

9. LEISURE REVIEW - JOINT WORKING GROUP
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Documents Considered: Leisure Review
The Committee approved the Leisure Review Working Group creation. Membership will be open and reviewed on a regular basis.

Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee - Cllr G Thomas, G D Davies
Health and Care Scrutiny Committee -Cllr G E Jones, L Rijnenberg
Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee - Cllr A Davies, B Davies, A Jones, G Mitchell, D Bebb

County Councillor A Davies (Chair)