

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT COUNTY HALL
AND ON ZOOM ON THURSDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2023**

PRESENT

County Councillor G W Ratcliffe (Chair)

County Councillors B Baynham, M Beecham, S J Beecham, B Breeze, G Breeze, J Berriman, L Brighthouse, A Cartwright, J Charlton, R Church, 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, P James, A Jenner, 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, C Johnson-Wood, G Mitchell, G Morgan, G Morgan, WD Powell, G Preston, J Pugh, L Rijnenberg, L Roberts, P Roberts, C Robinson, E Roderick, D Selby, D A Thomas, R G Thomas, J Brignell-Thorp, E Vaughan, C Walsh, A Williams, D H Williams, J M Williams and S L Williams

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors D Bebb, T Colbert, H Hulme, DW Meredith, G Pugh and J Wilkinson

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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There were no declarations of interest reported.

3.	CONSTITUTION - SECTION 4 - SPEAKING ON MOTIONS
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Council considered the recommendation of the Democratic Services Committee proposing an amendment to the Constitution to set the speaking times for proposers of motions at five minutes and for everyone else at three minutes. It was proposed by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Beverley Baynham and by 60 votes to 1 it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p>1. To amend the Rules 4.47.2, 4.54.8.2 and 4.54.8.4 of the Constitution with immediate effect to provide for speaking times in relation to motions of five minutes for proposers and three minutes for everyone else (including portfolio holders) on a permanent basis.</p> <p>2. That the Head of Legal Service and the Monitoring Officer be required to amend Section 4 of</p>	<p>To revise the speaking time for motions in Section 4 of the constitution following the trial agreed by Council in November 2020.</p>

<p>the Constitution to reflect the decision in 1 above at the earliest opportunity.</p>	
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4.	DRAFT MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023-2028, DRAFT 2023-24 BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2023-2028
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Council considered the draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-2028, the draft 2023-24 Budget and the Capital Programme for 2023-2028. The budget was proposed by County Councillor D Thomas, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation, and seconded by the Leader County Councillor J Gibson-Watt. In moving the budget, Councillor Thomas thanked members for their contributions at briefings and the Scrutiny Committees for their feedback. He thanked the Independents for Powys group for their engagement, particularly in respect of the £500,000 fund being proposed for schools to support energy efficiency schemes.

The budget proposal included additional funding of £4.395 million directly into schools delegated budgets, which together with a further £1.1 million for the Education Service, passported all of the additional education funding included in the settlement from Welsh Government to schools. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation recognised that this would not meet all of the additional costs faced by schools and that Governing Bodies, like other council services, would need to consider how they managed these pressures, including utilising reserves.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation explained that the reductions proposed in the budget were focused on delivering services more efficiently. He argued that the Council in its current form was unsustainable and that work had begun on reimagining how the Council would deliver services in the future. The 5% Council Tax rise proposed was made with careful consideration of affordability for residents. It was made up of 3.8% to support Council services and 1.2% for the Fire Levy.

The Section 151 Officer gave her opinion that the estimates used in the budget proposal for 2023-24 were adequately robust but a heightened level of risk remained. Based on the assessment of reserves, the overall level was adequate but remained at the lower end of acceptability given the ongoing economic challenge and the scale of savings required and the financial uncertainty facing the Council over the medium term.

The Leader of the Conservative group and the Deputy Leader of the Independents group criticised the budget saying that it would be damaging to schools, particularly those without reserves and would lead to teachers losing their jobs.

The Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees provided feedback expanding on the comments and recommendations in the notes circulated as part of the report. They thanked the members of their committees and the Heads of Service for engaging so effectively in the process and noted the need for ongoing scrutiny

throughout the year. The Chair of the Health and Scrutiny Committee asked for responses to the questions on the costs of children's placements to the Quarter 1 financial performance meeting. The Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee expressed his concerns over schools' budgets and insufficient resources being put into schools maintenance which may result in unsafe and unfit buildings and the school build building stock deteriorating. He reported that the Committee wished to be given the opportunity to scrutinise the proposed energy efficiency fund for schools. The Chair of the Economy Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee reported that the Committee had provided a robust challenge to officers and had been satisfied by the responses given by them and by the mitigations put in place. The Chair of the Finance Panel expressed his concern at the heightened level of risk in the budget.

Council adjourned at 12.40 pm and reconvened at 1.30 pm.

PRESENT

County Councillor G W Ratcliffe (Chair)

County Councillors B Baynham, M Beecham, S J Beecham, B Breeze, G Breeze, J Berriman, L Brighouse, A Cartwright, J Charlton, R Church, 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, P James, A Jenner, 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, C Johnson-Wood, G Mitchell, G Morgan, G Morgan, WD Powell, G Preston, J Pugh, L Rijnenberg, L Roberts, P Roberts, C Robinson, E Roderick, D Selby, D A Thomas, R G Thomas, J Brignell-Thorp, E Vaughan, C Walsh, A Williams, D H Williams, J M Williams and S L Williams

Council continued the debate on the budget with Cabinet members responding to questions and comments made by Scrutiny Chairs and Councillors.

Recommendation 1

By 42 votes to 14 with 4 abstentions

RESOLVED that the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023-2028 as set out in Appendix A to the report be agreed in principle.

Recommendation 2

By 41 votes to 18 with 2 abstentions

RESOLVED to approve the Revenue Budget for 2023-24 with the inclusion of a 5% increase in Council Tax in 2023-24 shown in the Financial Resource Model in Appendix B and Table 4 of the report.

Recommendation 4

By 43 votes to 14 with 3 abstentions

RESOLVED to approve the Fees and Charges Register in Appendices D and E of the report.

County Councillor A Jenner left the meeting at 14.19.

Recommendation 3 & 5 – 9

By 45 votes to 12

RESOLVED that any additional funding received following publication of the Local Government Final Settlement will be applied in the budget as prescribed.

RESOLVED to approve Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2023-28 shown in Appendix H of the report.

RESOLVED to approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out in Appendix H of the report.

RESOLVED to approve the Treasury Management Strategy and the Annual Investment Strategy in Appendix H of the report.

RESOLVED that the authorised borrowing limit for 2023-24 as required under section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 is set at £490 million and the Operational Boundary is set at £476 million as set out in section 3.84 of the report.

RESOLVED to approved thee Prudential Indicators for 2023-24 as set out in section 3.80 to 3.87 of the report and Appendix H.

5.	CORPORATE AND STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN (2023-2027)
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The Leader, the Cabinet Member for a Connected Powys and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Fairer Powys presented the Council's new Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan: Stronger, Fairer, Greener (2023-2027). The Plan set out the new well-being objectives and the actions that needed to be taken to deliver them. It introduced the three corporate objectives that were its core aim:

- We will improve people's awareness of services, and how to access them, so that they can make informed choices.
- We will provide good quality, sustainable, employment and training opportunities, whilst pursuing real living wage employer accreditation.
- We will work to tackle poverty and inequality to support the well-being of the people of Powys.

The plan had been developed using the priorities in the progressive partnership for Powys, which had been presented to Cabinet in May 2022 and since then Cabinet had collaborated with councillors and colleagues from across the council to determine the corporate direction for 2023-27. The plan had been aligned to the Powys Public Service Board Well-being Plan and the Regional Partnership Board Area Plan to ensure that partners were working towards shared outcomes for the people of Powys. The Council was also working jointly with Ceredigion County Council and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority on joint strategic development plans and transport plans.

Publication of the plan would ensure that the Council met statutory obligations set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and that activities and resources were focused on delivering the objectives.

County Councillor L George left the meeting at 14.35.

Engagement and consultation took in December 2022 and feedback from those activities was considered along with feedback from the Scrutiny Committees.

Responding to comments on the cost of delivering net zero by 2030, the Leader noted that the cost of not achieving net zero would far outweigh the costs of achieving it.

The Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan 2023-27 was moved by County Councillor J Berriman and seconded by County Councillor M Dorrance and by 50 votes to 0 with 7 abstentions it was

RESOLVED that the proposed Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan (as outlined in Appendix B to the report) is approved for publication, with implementation from 1st April 2023 considering the recommendations provided in Appendix A, based upon engagement and scrutiny activity.

County Councillor G W Ratcliffe (Chair)