

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2023

PRESENT

County Councillor James Gibson-Watt (Chair)

County Councillors Jake Berriman, Jackie Charlton, Richard Church, Sian Cox, Sandra Davies, Matthew Dorrance, Pete Roberts, David Selby and David Thomas

In attendance: County Councillors Jeremy Brignell-Thorp, Bryan Davies, Aled Davies, Ed Jones, Arwel Jones, Gareth Jones, Gary Mitchell and Jonathan Wilkinson.

1. APOLOGIES

County Councillor Jackie Charlton apologised for the start of the meeting as she had a meeting with a Welsh Government Minister.

2. MINUTES

The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting held on 1st August 2023 as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported.

4. CORPORATE STRATEGIC AND EQUALITY PLAN SCORECARD: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE
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Cabinet considered the report for quarter 1 which set out performance against the objectives in the Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan. The report set out some suggestions for clarifying the wording of some measures.

The Cabinet also considered comments and recommendations from the Scrutiny Committees which were wholly or partly accepted.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- 1. Confirm they are assured that performance is progressing well, or that mitigating actions have been identified and reflected in updates to service Integrated Business Plans.**
- 2. Confirm they are satisfied that any remedial actions will effectively improve performance in line with outcomes set out in the Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan.**
- 3. Approve the introduction of a new measure to support Objective 1 (We will improve people's awareness of**

services, and how to access them, so that they can make informed choices.):

- Number of 'keeping in touch' visits; this is in relation to Housing Services and would enable the team to regularly demonstrate some key work that is being undertaken to support the Council's tenants.

4. Note the following clarifications to measure wording:

- Measure 4: 'Number of people accessing leisure facilities' has been amended to 'Number of people participating in leisure activities'; this clarifies that it will measure participations rather than people.
- Measure 9: 'Percentage increase in user (active) participations' has been amended to 'The number of (active) user participations'; this reflects the number of participations rather than measuring a percentage increase.
- Measure 15: 'Number of apprentices within the Council' has been updated to clarify that it reports the number of new apprentices; it now reads: 'Number of new apprentices within the Council'.
- Measure 19: 'Staff turnover rate' has been updated to clarify that it is the: 'Staff turnover rate during the quarter'.
- Measure 20: 'Sickness absence rate' has been updated to clarify that it is the: 'Average days sickness per full time equivalent employee'.
- Measure 35: 'A reduction in the child poverty rate' has been amended to 'A reduction in the child absolute poverty rate'; this clarifies that absolute poverty is the basis of measurement.
- Measure 36: 'Number of families with children who are living in absolute poverty in Powys' has been amended to 'Number of children living in absolute poverty'; this is because the relevant data is not available for families.

5.	TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER 1 REPORT
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Cabinet considered the Treasury Management report for the first quarter setting out the Council's borrowing and investment strategy.

6.	FINANCIAL FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024 (AS AT 30TH JUNE 2023)
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Cabinet considered the forecast revenue budget outturn for the 2023-24 financial year, based on the full year forecasts as at 30th June 2023. A £3.7 million surplus was currently forecast.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation noted 54% or £9.4 million of cost reductions approved in the budget had been delivered and a

further 40% £7.0 million were assured of delivery by Services. Services were being challenged on those savings which were unachieved and at risk of delivery and would be required to consider mitigating action to ensure that they can deliver within the budget allocated.

The Chair of the Finance Panel expressed his frustration at the delay in receiving the report and the Head of Finance confirmed that the Panel would be given more time in future. He asked whether the introduction of 20 mph limits had impacted on Council resources and was advised that while it had been fully funded by Welsh Government it had required a large amount of management time. Tribute was paid to HTR staff who had ensured that appropriate signage had been put in place.

Cabinet also considered recommendations from the Finance Panel in respect of the HTR budget. The Executive Director Economy and Environment confirmed that a breakdown of maintenance undertaken by contractors would be provided.

RESOLVED

- 1. that Cabinet note the current budget position and the projected full year forecast to the end of March 2024.**
- 2. The grants set out in section 6.1 are noted.**
- 3. To approve the virements set out in section 6.2 and 6.3 of the report to comply with the virement rules for budget movements as set out in the financial regulations.**
- 4. That Cabinet supports the movement between reserves set out in paragraph 6.4.**

7. CAPITAL FORECAST 2023-24, AS AT 30TH JUNE 2023
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Cabinet considered the Capital report for the first quarter. The revised programme at the 30th June 2023 was budgeted at £102.50 million following the successful award of additional grants and the reprofiling of budgets between financial years. Cabinet noted that expenditure for the first quarter was extremely low at 7.4%, and that re-profiling of schemes was essential to enable Finance to more accurately project expenditure, the consequential need to borrow and the impact on the revenue budget.

In response to the recommendation from the Finance Panel, asking for a reason why the Sustainable Communities for Learning capital programme had been pushed back, it was explained that there had been some delays due to reprofiling. On the request for the re-implementation of a 10-year Capital programme, the Head of Finance advised that the service did work on a longer draft programme which was more flexible and had less detail than the 5 year programme approved by council.

RESOLVED

- 1. That virements in section 6 of the report are approved.**

2. That the contents of this report are noted.

8. FINANCIAL PLANNING UPDATE

Cabinet considered a report on the latest economic projections and how these influence and impact on the development of the Council's Budget for 2023/25 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Council had embarked on a programme of change to reimagine what the Council should look like in the future to ensure that it can remain financially stable and provide sustainable services in the long-term. "Sustainable Powys" would review what services the council provides and how they are provided to design a future for the council that delivers stronger, fairer and greener services whilst reducing costs.

RESOLVED

- 1. That Cabinet acknowledge the changing environment in which our plans are being developed and agree with the revised assumptions that are being used to support the development of the MTFs; and that work will continue to update and refresh the MTFP as appropriate.**
- 2. Agree that the Senior Leadership Team continues to work with the relevant Portfolio Cabinet Member(s) to identify potential savings to assist in addressing the indicative budget gap across the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan.**
- 3. Delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, the authority to implement any saving proposal in advance of 2024/25 where no policy recommendation is required.**
- 4. This report is presented to Finance Panel for their scrutiny and feedback.**

9. MARCHES AGREEMENT

Cabinet was asked to give approval for the Council to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Shropshire Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council's to collaborate on the cross-border Marches Forward Partnership.

The Marches Forward Partnership offers an opportunity to establish a collaborative framework with our neighbouring local authority areas with shared needs and interests. It provided a flexible basis for joint working without the need for formal governing structures and without impacting existing strategic partnerships or individual local authority working arrangements.

The Cabinet member for a Learning Powys expressed the hope that there would be an opportunity to work with colleagues in Oswestry and along the border to extend the ability for families to take part in Welsh medium education.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the authority continues to progress the work of the Marches Forward Partnership.**
- 2. To approve the draft Memorandum of Understanding in Appendix A and delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council's Leader, to agree changes in finalising the Memorandum of Understanding to reflect feedback from each cabinet and once completed to sign on behalf of Powys County Council.**
- 3. That further updates be brought to Cabinet in due course.**

10.	CORRESPONDENCE
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Cabinet considered a letter from RSPCA Cymru asking that the Council consider a ban on the giving of pets as prizes at fairs and events held on council owned land.

RESOLVED to support the proposal and ask officers to draw up a policy for Cabinet's consideration.

11.	DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING
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Cabinet noted the delegated decisions taken by portfolio holders since the last meeting.

12.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
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Cabinet noted the forward work programme.

13.	EXEMPT ITEMS
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RESOLVED to exclude the public for the following item of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under category 3 of The Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007).

14.	SALE OF PROPERTY
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Cabinet considered the confidential report and recommendations from the County Farms Working Group and heard from the Chair and members of the group.

RESOLVED to approve the recommendations in the report.

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)