

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT HYBRID MECOUNTY HALL
AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 30 JULY 2024**

PRESENT

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)

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

In attendance: County Councillors J Brignell-Thorp and A Kennerley (Cabinet Assistants) B Baynham, A Davies, G Thomas and A Williams

1.	APOLOGIES
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There were no apologies for absence.

2.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 9th and 16th July 2024 as correct records.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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County Councillor Sandra Davies declared a personal non pecuniary interest in item 14 Revision to the Home to School Transport Policy as a Governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Dyffryn y Glowyr.

4.	ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND SELF ASSESSMENT
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Cabinet considered the Annual Self-Assessment Report and Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The Annual Corporate Self-Assessment 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 in delivering its well-being objectives. The AGS provided an account of the processes, systems, and records that the council had in place to demonstrate the effectiveness of its governance arrangements during the financial year. Cabinet had been closely involved in the production of the Annual Self-Assessment Report and Annual Governance Statement and felt that they were a fair reflection of performance over the last year.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Fairer Powys noted that significant challenges remained particularly in tackling homelessness and that the Cabinet would continue to work to achieve its goals.

RESOLVED

- 1. To approve the Self-Assessment report and endorse the Annual Governance Statement.**
- 2. To accept that the Annual Corporate 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 2023-24.
 - That the self-assessment report offers an open, balanced, and realistic picture of the Council's achievements and challenges over the previous year.
 - That the document is clear and provides the right level of information to make it meaningful and relevant to all audiences.
3. To accept that the Annual Governance Statement provides a complete and accurate account of the processes, systems, and records that the Council has had in place during 2023-24 and demonstrates the effectiveness of its governance arrangements over that period.

5.	PRESTEIGNE MEMORIAL HALL - TRANSFER OF THE TRUSTEESHIP
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Cabinet considered a proposal to transfer the Trusteeship of Presteigne Memorial Hall from Powys County Council to a committee who would be able to manage and maintain the building for the community. The Council would need to commission the services of an external legal specialist in Charity Law to support the transfer.

The local Member, County Councillor Beverley Baynham, spoke to support the recommendation and to put on record her thanks to the former committee who had run the hall on a voluntary basis for the benefit of the community and the new committee who would be taking on its management. She thanked the Council officers who had worked with the committee on the transfer. She was advised that it was hoped that the transfer of the trusteeship could be completed in the autumn.

RESOLVED

1. To approve the transfer the Trusteeship of Presteigne Memorial Hall from Powys County Council to a committee who will be able to manage and maintain the building for the local community.
2. To approve the commission of the services of an external legal specialist in Charity Commission Law to guide and support the transfer.

6.	FINANCIAL OUTTURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024
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Cabinet considered a report on the revenue budget outturn for the 2023/24 financial year. There was a net underspend, after contributions to specific reserves, of £1.8 million against the £242.1 million budget, a 0.7% variance (excluding Schools and the Housing Revenue Account). In reaching this position, savings of £15.4 million had been delivered during the year as planned.

The report set out three requests for budget virements which required Cabinet approval.

The Chair of the Finance Panel, County Councillor Aled Davies, congratulated Cabinet and officers on bringing in the budget within 1%. He queried a press release setting out £15.4 million worth of year on year savings included a saving in the Highways budget which he understood to be a one off saving. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation said that he would check and get back to Councillor Davies.

RESOLVED

- 1. To note the full year outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2024 and the variances reported against the approved budget.**
- 2. To approve the virements as set out in section 7 of the report.**

7.	CAPITAL OUTTURN 2023 - 2024
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Cabinet received an update on the financial position of the Council's capital programme for 2023/24 as at 31st March 2024. The final programme at the 31st March 2024 was budgeted at £80.12 million following the successful award of additional grants and the reprofiling of budgets between financial years. Actual spend amounted to £63.72 million, representing 79% of the total budget. The report set out the projects delivered in the course of the year including works at Ysgol Pennant, Ysgol Canol y Dderwen and Ysgol Robert Owen which would be opening on its new site in September.

8.	TREASURY MANAGEMENT END OF YEAR REPORT
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Cabinet received the Treasury Management end of year report. The report set out how the Council managed its investments, borrowing and debt.

9.	FINANCIAL PLANNING UPDATE
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Cabinet received an update on the latest economic projections and how these influence and impact on the development of the Council's Budget for 2025/26 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Cabinet was advised that the report had been drafted before the general election and that some of the forecasts referred to in the report would be affected by the changed political

situation. It was important therefore that the MTFs was able to be updated and refreshed.

Cabinet discussed the level of reserves being held. The Director of Corporate Resources explained the importance of holding reserves and noted that usable reserves could only support services for 86 days.

Cabinet discussed the costs of achieving net zero by 2030 and noted that this could not be achieved without additional government support. Applications were being made for grant funding and the Council was also looking at the assets it held.

Responding to comments from the Chair of the Finance Panel, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation said that he did not accept that Sustainable Powys was not on track. He noted that Sustainable Powys had delivered £5 million savings in the 2024/25 and he expected further savings in next year's budget.

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 continue 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. To note and approve the 2025/26 Budget timetable and publication in line with the constitution.**
- 4. To delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation, the authority to implement any saving proposal in advance of 2025/26 where no policy recommendation is required.**
- 5. That the report is presented to Finance Panel for their scrutiny and feedback.**

10.	FINANCIAL FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025 (AS AT 30TH JUNE 2024)
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Cabinet received the forecast revenue budget outturn for the 2024-25 financial year, based on the full year forecasts as at 30th June 2024. The Chair of the Finance Panel challenged why a virement was being requested for the Pupil Referral Unit when Scrutiny had warned of the impact of the saving in the 2024/25 budget. The Director of Education advised that the Council needed to

address the recommendations made by Estyn. He said that he would be bringing a paper to the Finance Panel.

RESOLVED

- 1. That Cabinet note the current budget position and the projected full year forecast to the end of March 2024.**
- 2. That the grants set out in section 5.1 of the report are noted.**
- 3. That the virements set out in section 5.2 are approved and those in 5.3 agreed for recommendation to Council.**

11. CAPITAL FORECAST 2024-25, AS AT 30TH JUNE 2024

Cabinet received an update on the financial position of the Council's capital programme for 2024/25 as at 30th June 2024. The revised programme at the 30th June 2024 was budgeted at £124.73 million following the successful award of additional grants and the reprofiling of budgets between financial years. Actual spend amounted to £10.45 million, representing 8% of the total budget.

The report recorded details of grants received, one of which related to the Active Travel Fund and the Cabinet Member for a Connected Powys asked if the benefits of the schemes were being recorded and reported back to communities.

RESOLVED

- 1. To note the contents of the report.**
- 2. That the virements in section 5 of the report are approved.**

12. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER REPORT QUARTER 4 2023/2024

Cabinet considered the Strategic Risk Register for quarter 4. The report set out details of the 13 strategic risks in the register and the mitigating actions identified to control them and progress reviews.

RESOLVED that Cabinet notes the current Strategic Risk Register in Appendix A and is satisfied with progress against mitigating actions for quarter 4.

13. SCHOOL OUTTURN POSITIONS 31 MARCH 2024 AND BUDGET PLANS 2024-25
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Cabinet received for information the outturn position on school reserve movements and balances at 31 March 2024, and the school budget plans for 2024-25 as ratified by Governing Bodies and submitted to the authority for the 1 May 2024 deadline.

At 31 March 2024, the total cumulative reserves for schools was in a surplus position of £491k. The overall position on schools' carried forward reserves was a surplus of £891k. The actual draw from reserves was £5.8m, close to the original projected position at the beginning of the financial year. Overall, this had used the majority of the net cumulative surplus reserves being held.

Officers confirmed that since the report had been drafted and published, schools had continued to submit recovery plans. The Leader asked for the current position to be made public.

The Cabinet asked what steps were being taken to support schools with deficit balances and the Director of Education outlined the support that the Schools Service and Finance teams provided.

The Chair of the Finance Panel noted that the Panel had made a recommendation that the Schools' delegated budget be added to the Strategic Risk Register. The Director of Corporate Services said that the overall financial challenge to the Council was in the Strategic Risk Register and there was no need to add individual risks for service budgets.

County Councillor Gwynfor Thomas, the Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee, presented the Committee's recommendations. Whilst recognising the support being given to schools, the Committee was concerned that the only options available to them to balance budgets were reductions to curriculum or staff.

The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys thanked the Committee for their recommendations which would receive a formal response. He noted that schools had been set a flat cash budget so they could begin work on planning their budgets. He hoped that this would be a worst case scenario, and that the situation would improve as grants were received and added to the schools' budget. The final decision on schools' budgets would be for Council on the recommendation of the Cabinet.

14. REVISION TO THE HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY
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Cabinet was asked to consider giving approval to a consultation on amendments made to the Home to School Transport Policy, to provide greater clarity to parents and pupils and to align with the catchment maps. The consultation would also seek to provide clarity on changes in respect of transport to Welsh medium secondary education from 2026/27.

The Cabinet Member for Future Generations declared a personal non pecuniary interest as a Governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Dyffryn y Glowyr. She had concerns that the school which had been set up as a area Welsh medium school would be negatively affected by having two wards amalgamated into one and how this would affect the future capacity of the school.

County Councillor Aled Davies commented that the maps published with the report had cut off the top of the county including his ward. He argued that the

proposed changes would mean less rather than more parental choice, which had been the aim of the motion passed by Council in October 2022.

The Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee expressed his disappointment that the Committee had not been asked to comment on the report. There would be an opportunity for the Committee to scrutinise before the results on the consultation and final policy were considered by Cabinet.

RESOLVED to approve the commencement of public Consultation on the amended Home to School Transport Policy (Appendix A) during August/September 2024 and that a report on the Consultation and final policy is considered by Cabinet before the end of September 2024.

15.	LEISURE AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR MUSIC IN POWYS
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Cabinet received the recommendations of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee in respect of the National Plan for Music in Powys. A response would be provided.

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

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

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)