

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2024

PRESENT

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)

County Councillors 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 (Cabinet Assistant), A Davies, G Morgan, G Thomas and A Williams

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors J Berriman and A. Kennerley (Cabinet Assistant).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported.

3. SCHOOLS DELEGATED FUNDING 2025/26

Cabinet considered a proposal to fully fund pay and price pressures in 2025/26 for schools, along with the unfunded pressures for 2024/25, a sum of £5.277 million. The increase included teachers' pay awards and changes in pupil numbers which were declining whilst there had been a significant increase in the number of pupils with additional learning needs.

The impact of the uplift to teachers' pension estimated at £2.1 million had been included separately in the FRM, with the expectation that Welsh Government would provide additional funding through the settlement. The National Insurance increases for 2025/26 had been estimated, and although Welsh Government had confirmed that UK national funding would be available, this was not likely to be until April 2025.

Cabinet noted that this was a significant investment in schools at a time when the Council was faced with a very challenging budget. It was emphasised that those schools with accumulated deficits would have to continue to deliver on their deficit recovery plans and the Director of Education and the Head of School Improvement and Learning outlined the support and challenge provided to schools to ensure that they did so.

The Chair of the Finance Panel and the Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee whilst welcoming the proposal, said that previous two years budget decisions had been detrimental for schools and pupils. They expressed disappointment that the Scrutiny Committee had not had the opportunity to look at the paper. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation did not accept that it had been wrong to ask schools to use their reserves in view of

the budget position of the Council as a whole. The Cabinet Member for Learning reminded members that all Welsh Government funding received for schools had been passported on to them in full.

The Cabinet noted that the proposal fully funded the formula and that it would be the responsibility of school governing bodies to manage their spend within that funding envelope.

RESOLVED that the 2025/26 Delegated Schools FRM financial pressures as set out in section 4 of the report are funded through the budget process, subject to any amendments needed to address the Welsh Government Settlement received on the 11th December.

4. POWYS SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE STRATEGY 2025 TO 2030
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Cabinet was asked to approve a 12 week engagement exercise on the Powys Sustainable Resources Strategy. The Strategy had been developed via a working group consisting of officers in Powys as well as experts from WRAP and Local Partnerships (working on behalf of Welsh Government) which had allowed best practice to be drawn upon from other authorities as well as ensuring the local needs and circumstances were considered.

Central to the Strategy were the principles of a Circular Economy and the Waste Hierarchy, ensuring that waste was prevented wherever possible, followed by a greater emphasis on re-use. Whatever is left would then be recycled and finally sent for energy recovery. Landfilling of material would only occur in exceptional rare circumstances. This was why the Strategy was presented as one for 'Resources' as it goes beyond the limitations that 'Waste and Recycling' would impose.

Cabinet noted that the recycling rate in Powys had improved considerably over the past 10 years and was now one of the highest performing Councils in Wales at a projected 69% for 2024/25. However, to reach the Welsh Government's Statutory Recycling Target of 70% and avoid any potential fines, further improvements were required as outlined in the Strategy. The Strategy would also form the first stage of the business case to Welsh Government for support with capital funding for improvements to its bulking facilities.

The Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys and the Senior Manager for the service answered questions from members. They confirmed that cross border issues would be looked at as part of the engagement process but noted that these only worked when there were reciprocal arrangements in place. The engagement would also look at what could be done to reduce the estimated 45% of residual waste that should be put in recycling. A number of members expressed concerns over moving to a 4 weekly collection of residual waste.

Cabinet noted the positive comments of the Economy Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED to give approval to proceed with an engagement exercise to move forward with the Powys Sustainable Resources Strategy.

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)