

# COUNTY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 9<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2015

**PRESENT:** Councillor P. Hughes-Griffiths (Chair)

**Councillors:**

S.M. Allen	D.J.R. Bartlett	S.M. Caiach	C.A. Campbell
J.M. Charles	A.P. Cooper	D.M. Cundy	A. Davies
G. Davies	I.W. Davies	J.A. Davies	T. Davies
W.R.A. Davies	T.T. Defis	T. Devichand	E. Dole
J.S. Edmunds	P.M. Edwards	D.C. Evans	H.A.L. Evans
L.D. Evans	W.J.W. Evans	W.T. Evans	M. Gravell
A.D. Harries	W.G. Hopkins	J.K. Howell	P.M. Hughes
I.J. Jackson	A. James	J.D. James	D.M. Jenkins
J.P. Jenkins	A.W. Jones	G.O. Jones	P.E.M. Jones
T.J. Jones	A. Lenny	M.J.A. Lewis	D.J.R. Llewellyn
K. Madge	S. Matthews	A.G. Morgan	E. Morgan
J. Owen	P.A. Palmer	D. Price	D.W.H. Richards
B.A.L. Roberts	L.M. Stephens	T. Theophilus	E.G. Thomas
G. Thomas	G.B. Thomas	J. Thomas	M.K. Thomas
S.E. Thomas	J. Tremlett	D.E. Williams	J. Williams
J.E. Williams	J.S. Williams		

**Also Present:**

Mr M. James	Chief Executive
Mr C. Moore	Director of Corporate Services
Mr J. Morgan	Director of Communities
Mr R. Sully	Director of Education & Children
Mr E. Bowen	Acting Director of Environment
Mr P. Thomas	Assistant Chief Executive
Ms W. Walters	Assistant Chief Executive
Ms L. Rees Jones	Head of Administration & Law
Mrs M. Evans Thomas	Democratic Services Officer

**Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen : 10.00 a.m. - 12.55 p.m.**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S.L. Davies, C.P. Higgins, H.I. Jones, W.J. Lemon, A.D.T. Speake, K.P. Thomas and W.G. Thomas.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS.**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Minute Number</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>
K. Madge	6.1 Question by Mrs Lesley Williams to Councillor Jane Tremlett, Executive Board Member for Social Care & Health	His daughter does assessments at the Day Centre in Carmarthen.

### 3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- The Chair extended his condolences to Councillor Deian Harries and family on the death of his mother;
- The Chair referred to the sad passing of Councillor Keith Davies and extended his condolences to his wife, Mrs Iona Davies and family. Tributes were paid to Councillor Davies who was respected and admired by his fellow members, staff and the people in his community. He was a true gentleman who worked diligently to achieve the best for both his community and the county. His calm and measured contribution at meetings was always greatly appreciated and he would be greatly missed;
- The Chair extended his congratulations to Councillor D.E. Williams on his appointment as Chair of the Resource Management Committee of the Mid & West Wales Fire Authority;
- The Chair welcomed back to the chamber, Councillor D.J.R. Llewellyn, following a period of ill health and wished him a full and speedy recovery;
- The Chair extended get well wishes to Councillor W.J. Lemon, who had recently been admitted to hospital;
- The Chair extended his congratulations to the Carmarthenshire Federation of Young Farmers Clubs on their success in many events at the Royal Welsh Show this year in Llanelwedd;
- The Chair also extended his congratulations to the following on their outstanding success at the National Eisteddfod this year:-
  - Burry Port Town Band;
  - Llanddarog Choir;
  - Côr Bois y Castell;
  - Ffion Haf, Llanfynydd (David Elis Memorial Prize);
  - Dawnsywyr Talog;
  - Joy Parry;
  - Mari Lisa, Carmarthen (Daniel Owen Memorial Prize);
  - Jennifer Maloney, Ammanford (Sir T.H. Parry Williams Prize);
  - Hywel Griffiths, winner of the Chair;
- The Chairman extended his congratulations to the Carmarthenshire Primary Schools Football and Cricket Teams who won the All Wales Championships;
- Congratulations were extended to Brynamman Primary School on their outstanding Estyn inspection in which they received 15 excellent grades, the first school in Carmarthenshire and the first Welsh medium school in Wales to achieve this success.

**4. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 8TH JULY, 2015.**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 8th July, 2015 be signed as a correct record.

**5. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS (NONE RECEIVED).**

The Chair advised that no questions by members had been received.

**6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS:-**

**6.1. QUESTION BY MRS LESLEY WILLIAMS TO COUNCILLOR JANE TREMLETT, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH**

[NOTE: Councillor K. Madge had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Chair advised that Mrs Williams was unable to attend the meeting to ask her question. Councillor Jane Tremlett, Executive Board Member for Social Care & Health, was asked to provide Mrs Williams with a written response.

**6.2. QUESTION BY MRS JACQUI THOMPSON TO COUNCILLOR DAVID JENKINS, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR RESOURCES**

Mrs Jacqui Thompson asked the following question:-

“Plaid Cymru AM Rhodri Glyn Thomas stated in June that ‘serious questions’ will ‘inevitably’ be asked over the decision to shortchange Carmarthenshire residents over the sale of a council asset and pay off a £274,000 loan on behalf of a private company, Scarlets Regional Ltd. The club ended up with £650,000 and the taxpayer £200,000 from the deal. Documents disclosed by the Council under the Freedom of Information Act revealed there was disagreement among officers within the authority over the deductions but their objections were overruled by a senior officer. Given that many other private businesses in Carmarthenshire are struggling to stay afloat and pay off their loans, will the executive board member agree that the decision was not in the best interests of the people of Carmarthenshire and finally ask those serious questions?”

Response by Councillor David Jenkins, Executive Board Member for Resources:-

“The land at Trostre was subject to a long lease to The Scarlets and it is usual in such circumstances for there to be a split in proceeds between the parties. The District Valuer was appointed to provide an independent assessment of the split and the costs necessary to release the site for sale. The District Valuer recommended that, after deduction of these costs, the net proceeds of £400,000 were divided equally between the Council and The Scarlets (£200,000 each). The Wales Audit Office, as a result of receiving a number of items of correspondence from individuals alleging that the Council, as part of the negotiations undertaken during the disposal process, had failed to obtain a reasonable share of the proceeds of the sale, conducted an investigation into these allegations and concluded that “the Council’s share of the proceeds of sale was not unreasonable, given the complexities of the negotiations with the Scarlets and, in particular, the

fact that the final agreement was based on an independent valuation by the District Valuer. In addition, from the evidence we have seen, the District Valuer played a key role in “brokering” an agreement between the Council and the Scarlets to ensure that the interest of both parties were reflected in his final report.” Wales Audit Office go on to state that the independence of the District Valuer was the key to their conclusion on this issue. Therefore, I cannot agree with your proposal that the decision arrived at was not in the best interest of the people of Carmarthenshire and that there are no further serious questions to be asked.”

### **6.3. QUESTION BY MR RICHARD VALE TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND CHILDREN**

The Chair advised that Mr Vale was unable to attend the meeting to ask his question. Councillor Gareth Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children, was asked to provide Mr Vale with a written response.

## **7. PRESENTATION - BT SUPERFAST BROADBAND.**

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Ed Hunt, Superfast Cymru Programme Director with BT, who had been invited to give a presentation to Council on the provision of superfast broadband in the county.

Mr Hunt informed Council that very good progress is being made on superfast broadband availability in Wales, which now has better broadband infrastructure than Germany.

The Welsh Government, recognising that the lack of broadband was inhibiting economic progress in Wales, together with the European Regional Development Fund and the UK government invested £205m and along with BT as co-investors, the Superfast Cymru project was created in 2012. Work has progressed since then and to date in excess of 500,000 properties are able to access superfast broadband who were unable to do so previously.

The contract with the Welsh Government includes a provision called Gainshare (Clawback) whereby if takeup exceeds 20% then BT shares half the profit with the Welsh Government to re-invest in fibre broadband.

The end goal of the Superfast Cymru project has recently been increased from 655,000 to around 700,000 properties to be completed by 2017, which will provide around 96% coverage across Wales.

There was currently 58% fibre broadband coverage in Carmarthenshire with 49,000 premises completed out of around 84,000. There was still a lot more work to do and it was hoped to complete the vast majority of the work by June 2016.

The presentation was followed by a question and answer session, following which the Chair thanked Mr Hunt for an excellent and informative presentation.

## **8. AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION.**

At the Council meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2015 (minute 4 refers) consideration was given to the recommendations of the Constitutional Review Working Group

wherein it was resolved that the recommendations be incorporated within the new constitution and presented to the next meeting of Council for consideration.

Council duly considered a report detailing the amendments to the Council's Constitution which were required as a result of the adoption of the recommendations of the Constitutional Review Working Group.

**RESOLVED that the amendments to the Council's constitution, as agreed by Council's on 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2015 and detailed in the report, be implemented.**

**9. TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD IN RESPECT OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:-**

**9.1. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT 2014-2015 [13/07/2015];**

Council was informed that the Executive Board, at its meeting held on the 13th July, 2015 (Minute 6 refers) had received the Annual Treasury and Prudential Indicator Report, in line with Council Policy. The report summarised the activity that had taken place during 2014/15 under the headings of: Investments; Borrowing; Treasury Management Prudential Indicators; Prudential Indicators, Leasing and Rescheduling.

Several questions were asked seeking clarification on various aspects of the report and the Chair advised that these would be better raised with officers outside of the meeting. The Director of Corporate Services indicated that he would be happy to meet with members to go through the report in detail.

**RESOLVED that the following recommendation of the Executive Board be adopted:**

**“that the Annual Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Report 2014/15 be received.”**

**9.2. CORPORATE STRATEGY 2015-2020 [13/07/2015];**

Council was informed that the Executive Board, at its meeting held on the 13th July, 2015 (Minute 9 refers) had received the Corporate Strategy 2015-2020. The report detailed the Council's strategic priorities and aspirations and outlined what the Authority planned to do to achieve its vision for Carmarthenshire. The strategy would be reviewed annually and the Council's progress in delivering the priorities therein would be published in the Annual Report.

Concern was expressed over the safety aspect of the strategy in view of the loss of CCTV, potential loss of the police helicopter and the closure of several community police stations. Council was informed that the Leader meets regularly with the Police & Crime Commissioner and any concerns would be relayed to him.

**RESOLVED that the following recommendation of the Executive Board be adopted:**

**“that the Corporate Strategy for 2015-2020 be adopted.”**

### **9.3. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROVISION - SCHOOL ORGANISATION DECISION MAKING AND DETERMINATION PROCESS [27/07/2015].**

Council was informed that the Executive Board, at its meeting held on the 27th July, 2015 (Minute 8 refers), received a report on Modernising Education Provision – School Organisation Decision Making and Determination Process. The report detailed proposals to significantly reduce the time taken to complete statutory procedures for making significant alterations to schools, whilst ensuring compliance with regulations and guidance in relation to school organisation.

**RESOLVED that the following recommendation of the Executive Board be adopted:**

**“that, in order to reduce the length of time taken to complete statutory procedures for making significant alterations to schools in accordance with the statutory School Organisation Code, Stages 1 and 2 be considered by the Executive Board with the final determination being made by Council.”**

#### **10. TO RECEIVE THE REPORTS OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD HELD ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:-**

**10.1. 13TH JULY, 2015;**

**RESOLVED that the report of the above meeting be received.**

**10.2. 27TH JULY, 2015.**

Reference was made to minute no. 3 (Installing Solar Photovoltaic Systems onto Housing and Non Housing Properties) and concern was expressed over the proposed reduction in tariff from 12.47p to 1.63p and the consequences for Council tenants. The Leader agreed to make representations in this regard to the Welsh Government.

**RESOLVED that the report of the above meeting be received.**

#### **11. URGENT ITEM**

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed that the following item could be considered at the meeting as an urgent item, by reason of special circumstance, on the grounds that a decision was required before the next meeting of Council.

#### **11. SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS**

The Leader informed Council that the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) had approached all Welsh Local Authorities for feedback regarding their ability to take in refugees, if needed.

It was felt that the Council had a human and moral responsibility to respond to this humanitarian crisis.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the WLGA be advised that Carmarthenshire County Council is prepared to play its part in assisting with the Syrian Refugee crisis.

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**