

COUNTY COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 10TH MARCH, 2016

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
D.B. Davies	G. Davies	J.A. Davies	S.L. Davies
W.R.A. Davies	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
C.P. Higgins	W.G. Hopkins	J.K. Howell	I.J. Jackson
A. James	J.D. James	D.M. Jenkins	G.O. Jones
H.I. Jones	T.J. Jones	W.J. Lemon	A. Lenny
D.J.R. Llewellyn	K. Madge	S. Matthews	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	M.K. Thomas	R. 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 Community Services
Mr R. Sully	-	Director of Education & Children
Mr P. Thomas	-	Assistant Chief Executive
Ms W. Walters	-	Assistant Chief Executive
Ms L. Rees Jones	-	Head of Administration & Law
Mr M. Davies	-	Head of Property Maintenance & Construction
Mr O. Bowen	-	Interim Head of Financial Services
Mrs M. Evans Thomas	-	Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen : 10.00 a.m. – 12.10 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T. Bowen, I.W. Davies, T. Davies, T.T. Defis, P.M. Hughes, A.W. Jones, P.E.M. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, A.G. Morgan, H.B. Shepardson, A.D.T. Speake, K.P. Thomas and W.G. Thomas.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
J.S. Edmunds	14 – Affordable Homes Delivery Plan	He is a private landlord.
D.C. Evans	10 – Pay Policy Statement 2016-2017	His wife works for the Council.
H.A.L. Evans	14 – Affordable Homes Delivery Plan	Her sister is the Chief Executive of a Housing Association.

J.D. James	13 – The Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus (CH+)	His daughter is a Council tenant.
K. Madge	10 – Pay Policy Statement 2016-2107	His daughter works for social services.

Officer Declarations

All officers in attendance declared a personal interest in Minute 10 – Pay Policy Statement 2016-2017.

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed back to the chamber Councillor D.B. Davies following his recent illness and period in hospital.

The Chair made reference to several members who had recently been or were still in hospital and wished them well and hoped that they would soon be back in the Chamber.

The Chair extended his congratulations to officers from the Authority's Older Persons Service on winning a UK wide award for improvement and efficiency. This was in recognition of the work undertaken in contracting and commissioning our domiciliary care providers and the improvements made in reducing delayed transfers of care, improving terms and conditions of those in the care sector, reducing costs and better managing demand. Particular congratulations were extended to Rhian Dawson, Neil Edwards, Lyn Walters and Jane Wood.

4. COUNCIL MINUTES

5.1. 10TH FEBRUARY, 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 10th February, 2016 be signed as a correct record.

5.2. 23RD FEBRUARY, 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 23rd February, 2016 be signed as a correct record.

6. QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR JEFF EDMUNDS TO COUNCILLOR EMLYN DOLE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

“Over the last few weeks there have been a couple of occurrences in a two member ward where only one has been informed of events/projects taking place in their respective wards. On both occasions the Plaid Cymru councillors were ‘kept in the loop’, but the Labour councillors were not. Each ward, Tyisha and Glanymor, has one Plaid Cymru and one Labour councillor.

In respect of openness, transparency and equality I ask the Leader what he is going to do to try and ensure that there are no further occurrences of this nature.”

Response by Councillor Emlyn Dole, Leader of the Council:

“Firstly can I seek to exonerate the two Plaid Cymru Councillors involved in the instances that you raise. The first is around an invitation sent to two ward councillors to attend the re-opening of Waddle Court, the former St. Paul’s. I was also copied in on the invitation by e-mail and did attend. You are right in a sense that Councillor Keri Thomas doesn’t appear on that e-mail list of invitees but years ago Councillor Keri Thomas informed the Council that he no longer wanted to use his computer or receive e-mail or correspondence through the computer which means that he has to have everything sent to his home address by mail. The invitation to that particular event was sent by an officer to Councillor Thomas by mail. It was sent in font size 22 because he specifically requested that it be sent in a larger font so that it would be readable. His refusal to use a computer is his decision and the decision as to whether he chooses to open or not to open his mail is also up to him but that invitation was sent by mail. His fellow Councillor in Tyisha, Councillor Jeff Owen, is an honest and hardworking councillor who on countless occasions, regardless of political persuasion or colour, has given his fellow Councillor lifts to and from meetings both in Llanelli and in Carmarthen. How is that for openness, transparency and equality. The second incidence you raise is down to an officer error which resulted in an immediate apology, and rightly so, to Councillor Louvain Roberts. If I can just explain what happened in chronological order so that this Council and the people watching can make their own judgement. The whole thing concerns proposals to accommodate a wakeboarding franchise at North Dock and the consultation with local members on that proposal. On 29th February this year an officer gets in touch with Councillor Winston Lemon amongst others to ask for their comments but due to an oversight omits to include Councillor Louvain Roberts in the e-mail. That very same day, within less than 3 hours, Councillor Winston Lemon opens his e-mail and notices that his fellow ward member, Councillor Louvain Roberts, hasn’t been copied in so once again, regardless of political colour or persuasion, he sends his fellow councillor notice of the issue and the fact that she wasn’t copied in. How’s that for openness, transparency, integrity and equality. The following day Louvain credits Winston for copying her in and thanks him and then contacts the officer in question and outlines her hope that there wasn’t a political motive behind that oversight. She then gets a response from the officer apologising and assuring her that it was indeed merely an oversight and apologises a second time. The Leader of the Opposition asked me what I intend to do. In response to the first case what I intend to do is commend all our staff who go that extra mile in their dealings with members, thanking them for going above and beyond their call of duty often and praise their openness and transparency and sense of equality. I will also commend Winston, what an example to all councillors in two member wards, in notifying his fellow councillor of that e-mail. In response to the second case, I will be reminding all staff to ensure that when we deal with wards where there are two members that they take special care that both are consulted. Contrary to the implied suggestion, I am absolutely proud of the behaviour of both Winston and Jeff towards their Labour counterparts. Both of them are a credit to Plaid Cymru and to their respective wards and I would like to commend them publicly for their behaviour and their professionalism in both cases. Let me deal with the darker side of this question. It is officers of the Council that send out invitations and reports to members. The standard and level of questioning by the present Leader of the Opposition does not surprise me but it does disappoint me. I am genuinely concerned about the tenure of his questioning as it implies that officers here are applying political bias and somehow favouring one political group over and above the other. That’s a very serious allegation to make. I’m glad to have been able to throw light on both instances and be able to share that knowledge with him

although why he would want to raise it in a televised public forum is beyond me. So can I try to put this as diplomatically as I can. His question implies that officers of this Council are somehow politically biased. Such an implied allegation does a great disservice to the hardworking and diligent officers of this Council who are directed by the Constitution that we all abide to that they show no political favour to any political grouping in their dealings with members. Indeed they are instructed to remain neutral. The Leader of the Opposition's suggestive line of question not only calls their neutrality into doubt but also their professionalism and I am concerned that this puts the Leader of the Opposition in breach of the Members Code of Conduct. Under Part 2 under General Provisions Part 5 it states "You must not do anything which compromises or which is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for or on behalf of your Authority". As it is specifically officers who send out invitations and reports it calls their impartiality into question and I would ask the Monitoring Officer for her comments on that."

At this point the Monitoring Officer explained that complains about members' conduct are matters which should be referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Officers are similarly subject to a Code of Conduct and if there is information which suggests that there are officers who are acting politically or are not impartial then a complaint should be made to the Council in order that it can be investigated.

Councillor Jeff Edmunds asked the following supplementary question:-

"What I am putting across is factual. I am not blaming anybody. It is about public perception. My question wasn't about the two Plaid Cymru councillors and I totally accept the fact that they both give Councillor Keri Thomas lifts to Council. It is about the fact that these things have occurred. My second question is basically about openness and transparency and public perception when things like this happen. With regards to the governance review and the fact that we want to be the most open and transparent Council in Wales, how does he believe this would affect the public perception, how would they perceive that perhaps Labour are being kept in the dark."

Response by Councillor Emlyn Dole, Leader of the Council:-

"I have explained both instances that there is no conspiracy here to keep Labour out of the loop. The suggestion that Plaid Cymru councillors were kept in the loop but Labour councillors were not is one that suggests that something is wrong. My concern is not about the conduct of members as I have exonerated both Plaid Cymru members. They did absolutely the right thing in the context of a two member ward. The implication here is that officers, the people who send out reports and invitations, are somehow politically biased. That's the insinuation behind it and that's what concerns me because it absolutely is not the case and I would defend with my last breath the professionalism and neutrality of our officers."

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

8. PRESENTATION ON DEMENTIA AND THE WORK BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE ALZHEIMER'S SOCIETY

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Ms Marcia Vale, Dementia Friendly Communities Co-ordinator with the Alzheimer's Society, who had been invited to give the Council a presentation on dementia and the work being undertaken by the Alzheimer's Society.

45,000 people in Wales are living with dementia. Recent studies have indicated that lonely or isolated people are more than twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's which is why social networks play such an important role in the campaign for the prevention of dementia. If you want to slow down someone's cognitive decline it is essential for them to be part of the community.

A Dementia Friendly Community is one which supports everyone and where no one feels isolated or alone. It is all about small businesses and community groups being understanding and allowing vulnerable people to be part of the community. Local businesses are encouraged to attend dementia friendly sessions and they are then awarded the accreditation of being a dementia friendly business.

Dementia Friendly Communities are run by a small committee who take on board feedback provided by those living with dementia and their carers about what they want out of their community.

Carmarthenshire is leading the way in many respects with nearly all front facing staff having undertaken the information sessions so that they are aware and prepared to help and support people with dementia. Parc y Scarlets and the National Botanic Garden are both dementia friendly and Pontyberem, Ammanford, Llanelli and Kidwelly have been designated Dementia Friendly Communities.

The presentation was followed by a question and answer session, following which the Chair thanked Ms Vale for a most informative presentation.

9. SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2016/17

Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Head of Financial Services (attached as Appendix A to the minutes) setting out the financial details relevant to the setting of the Council Tax for 2016-2017 together with the Council Tax amounts in respect of the different Council Tax Valuation Bands, as applicable to each of the individual Community and Town Council areas.

The recommendations contained within the report were based on the final settlement details received from the Welsh Government on 2nd March, 2016 and the precepts notified to the County Council by the Police & Crime Commissioner for Dyfed Powys and the Town and Community Councils.

The Director of Corporate Services pointed out that on page 31 of the report under point 4(a) the figure for Community Council Precepts should read £5,283,039 and not £5,016,719.

RESOLVED that, in order for the Council to comply with legislative requirements, the report and recommendations of the Interim Head of Financial Services (as set out in Appendix A to the minutes) on the setting of

the Council Tax for the financial year 2016/17 be adopted.

10. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2016-2017

- [NOTE: (1) Councillors D.C. Evans and K. Madge, having earlier declared a personal interest in this item, left the meeting prior to the consideration and determination thereof;
- (2) All officers in attendance at the meeting, having earlier declared personal interests in this item, left the meeting prior to the consideration and determination thereof, apart from the Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance) who remained in the meeting to present the report but left prior to the vote being taken and the Democratic Services Officer, who remained in the meeting to take notes]

Council was reminded that under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 all Local Authorities were required to prepare a pay policy statement for the financial year 2016-2017 and each subsequent financial year.

The pay policy statement for a financial year required the approval of full Council and must set out the Authority's policies for the financial year relating to the remuneration of its Chief Officers, its lowest paid employees and the relationship between the remuneration of its Chief Officers and its employees who are not Chief Officers.

The Pay Policy Statement had been considered by the politically balanced Pay Policy Advisory Panel whose recommendations had been incorporated into the final document for approval by County Council.

RESOLVED that the Pay Policy Statement 2016-2017 be approved in compliance with Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011.

11. SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) PROJECT

Council considered a report providing a brief summary of the process followed since the Executive Board's decision to proceed with the Solar Photovoltaic (PV) project at its meeting held on 27th July, 2015 (minute 3 refers).

The report provided details of the procurement of PV panels, the focus on the non housing portfolio and the setting up of the Community Benefit Society. Proposals for the funding of the scheme and an indicative programme for the project were also included.

Having formed the Community Benefit Society, Egni Sir Gâr, the Council had a permanent board position as the Custodian Trustee and it was therefore necessary to appoint an appropriate member to represent the Council in this capacity.

RESOLVED

10.1 that the Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Project be funded as part of the capital programme;

10.2 that Councillor D.M. Jenkins, Executive Board Member for Resources, be appointed to sit on the Board of the Community Benefit Society, Egni Sir Gâr.

12. EXECUTIVE BOARD RECOMMENDATION - MODERNISING EDUCATION PROVISION - PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE LANGUAGE CATEGORY OF YSGOL BRO MYRDDIN FROM BILINGUAL (2A) TO WELSH MEDIUM (WM)

Council was informed that the Executive Board, at its meeting held on the 22nd February 2016 (Minute 7 refers) considered a report outlining proposals to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Myrddin from Bilingual (2a) to Welsh Medium (WM) and had made a recommendation, as detailed in the report of the School Modernisation Manager, for consideration by Council.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the following recommendation of the Executive Board be adopted:-

“That the proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Myrddin from Bilingual (2A) to Welsh Medium (WM) be proceeded with and a statutory notice be published to implement the proposal.”

13. EXECUTIVE BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS - THE CARMARTHENSHIRE HOMES STANDARD PLUS (CH+) "DELIVERING WHAT MATTERS"

[NOTE: Councillor J.D. James had earlier declared a personal interest in this item.]

Council was informed that the Executive Board, at its meeting held on the 22nd February 2016 (Minute 8 refers) considered a report on the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus (CH+) “Delivering What Matters” and had made two recommendations, as detailed in the report of the Service Improvement Officer, for consideration by Council.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the following recommendations of the Executive Board be adopted:-

“11.2.1 That the vision of CHS+ and the financial and delivery programme over the next three years be confirmed;

11.2.2 That the submission of the plan to the Welsh Government be confirmed.”

14. EXECUTIVE BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS - AFFORDABLE HOMES DELIVERY PLAN

[NOTE: Councillors J.S. Edmunds and H.A.L. Evans had earlier declared a personal interest in this item. Councillor Evans left the chamber prior to the consideration and determination thereof.]

Council was informed that the Executive Board, at its meeting held on the 22nd February 2016 (Minute 9 refers) considered a report on the Affordable Homes Delivery Plan and had made four recommendations, as detailed in the report of the Housing Services Manager, for consideration by Council.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the following recommendations of the Executive Board be adopted:-

- “11.3.1 that the strategy to utilise the Council’s existing options to maximise the supply of affordable homes over the next five years be confirmed;**
- 11.3.2 that options to maximise the number of new build homes that could be delivered be investigated with a view to providing recommendations by September 2016;**
- 11.3.3 that the action area approach for delivering more affordable homes in different parts of the county be confirmed;**
- 11.3.4 that when preparing further proposals for the action areas due consideration be given to their deliverability and sustainability including matters such as the suitability of the existing local infrastructure for example local amenities and potential planning constraints.”**

15. EXECUTIVE BOARD - 22ND FEBRUARY 2016

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

CHAIR

DATE