

CABINET

MONDAY, 22 MAY 2023

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

C.A. Davies	L.D. Evans	G. Davies	P.M. Hughes
G.H. John	A. Lenny	E.G. Thomas	J. Tremlett
A. Vaughan Owen			

Also in attendance (virtually):

Councillor D.M. Cundy;

Also Present (In Person):

W. Walters, Chief Executive;
C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services;
J. Morgan, Director of Community Services;
G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services;
A. Williams, Director of Place and Infrastructure;
J. Jones, Head of Regeneration;
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;
G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager;
C. Higginson, Media Manager;
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer;

Also Present (Virtually):

R. Griffiths, Head of Place and Sustainability;
M. Jones, Welsh Language Policy Officer;

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen and remotely: 10.00 am - 11.20 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
C.A. Davies	5.2 - Question by Harvard Hughes to Councillor Ann Davies, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs and Planning Policy;	Councillor Davies owns land which crosses the path of the Tywi Valley route.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE 24TH APRIL 2023

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 24th April, 2023 be signed as a correct record.

4. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BY MEMBERS

The Chair advised that no questions on notice had been submitted by members.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chair advised that two public questions had been received.

5.1. QUESTION BY CHARLIE EVANS TO COUNCILLOR DARREN PRICE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

"Under plans for the new Urgent and Planned Care Hospital, Hywel Dda University Health Board projects that 68% of Glangwili General Hospital's workforce will be transferred to the new hospital. This equates to 2,625 members of staff, based on 2022 numbers. Glangwili Hospital is one of Carmarthen's biggest employers. Given the Council has responsibilities for our towns, what impact do you believe this will have on Carmarthen town?"

Response by Councillor Darren Price, Leader of the Council:-

"Thank you Mr. Evans. As you are aware, the decision to restructure hospital care in South West Wales will of course be one that will be taken by the Health Board, and ultimately, if approved, funded by the Welsh Government. Clearly you have an obvious interest in this topic, I would suggest that it might be worth your while engaging directly with the Health Board on the matter.

However, this is an issue that is clearly of interest to the local population, as Glangwili has been, and will continue to be, an important part of the fabric of the town. Indeed local elected members in Carmarthen have long campaigned to both retain and develop Glangwili Hospital – in fact, the campaign to do so was launched and led by local Plaid Cymru councillors in the town – two whom are now Cabinet members, and are sat in the chamber this morning.

When news of the proposed hospital reorganisation broke in March 2018, Cllr Alun Lenny, the then Town Mayor, called a public meeting and organised an on-line petition which attracted over 5,000 names in a very short time. This was supported by all parties on the Plaid-led Town Council.

Cllr Gareth John was then tasked by the Plaid Cymru group on the county council to prepare a detailed response to the consultation by Hywel Dda Health Board into the transformation of clinical services. As a result, in June 2018, a 14-page detailed response was submitted to the Board. In arguing the case for Glangwili, it pointed out that almost half (48%) of the population in the Health Board area live in Carmarthenshire, and Glangwili is located very close to the centre of the county.

Indeed, only last year, Plaid Cymru town Councillors in Carmarthen and the Senedd Member Adam Price called on the Health Board to protect services, and

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A&E provision at Glangwili, as part of any reorganisation of healthcare within South West Wales.

However, as you are aware, we now find ourselves in a situation whereby the Health Board is considering 3 sites for the new planned and urgent care hospital which sit outside Carmarthen town, albeit the proposed sites do sit within the county boundary.

I understand that the Health Board are required, and are planning, to undertake further work, to better understand the economic impact of their proposed changes to hospital configuration as part of the business case process, and we are happy to support that work.

I would however suggest that you would be better placed asking the Health Board on the business case process that they face, but clearly the Health Board's primary focus is on providing clinical services.

It is important to point out that during a recent consultative session, elected members from across the county were able to raise issues with the Health Board concerning the proposed changes. There are clearly questions in terms of transport, housing and economic opportunities and threats that we are keen to address.

However, I would say that I feel that modelling any economic impact, on Carmarthen town in particular, with any degree of certainty is going to be difficult, as much of the analysis will depend on trying to understand where health board staff currently live, where the future workforce in 5 or 10 years time will be living, commuting patterns, the shopping and spending habits of individual employees and a whole host of other factors, which are really difficult to pin down without a combination of robust quantitative and qualitative data – which of course will change over time.

As you will appreciate, Carmarthen town centre is very important to the County Council. However, Carmarthen and indeed other towns and villages are not the sole responsibility of the Local Authority. Indeed, each town is made up of a blend of key stakeholders including the business sector, voluntary sector, town council and a range of public bodies such as the Local Health Board, University, local authority, schools, and colleges with each settlement being individually distinct.

As a local authority we recognise the importance of Carmarthen Town Centre and of course invest resources to work collectively, to galvanise stakeholders and resources to make Carmarthen as successful as possible, and regardless of the final decision on the future hospital provision in South West Wales, that work will continue.”

Supplementary question by Mr. Charlie Evans:-

“Is the position of the Cabinet currently that Glangwili Hospital should be a general hospital or a community hospital as planned for by the Health Board.”

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Response by Councillor Darren Price, Leader of the Council, to the supplementary question:-

“As I mentioned in my answer to the first question members from across the chamber, regardless of whether they are Cabinet members or non-executive members, had the opportunity to engage directly with the Health Board only last month on the plans. As you are fully aware the Council as a corporate body has not made formal representations in terms of the proposed sites that the Health Board are currently consulting on. As I set out in the initial answer my party, and I can speak on behalf of Plaid Cymru, was certainly of the view that Glangwili should be protected in its current form and developed as an acute setting with the provision of Accident and Emergency services as an integral part of that. But as I mentioned that ship has sailed and the Health Board has made a decision, its not for us to make a decision, that the three sites that are currently up for consultation are the preferred options from their perspective and I would urge members of the public to feed into that process. But clearly ultimately this is a decision for the Health Board and not the County Council. As a member living on the eastern side of the county in Gorslas clearly I would want to see all services provided as closely as possible to my doorstep and that’s certainly the view that was expressed to the Health Board in the session that we had a few weeks ago. Members to the east of the county, as I mentioned to you in the last Cabinet meeting, and in areas such as Llanelli, have clear concerns with regards to access times, whether the new hospital is situated in Whitland or St. Clears. But at the same time I’m mindful with my conversations with colleagues in Pembrokeshire that there are similar concerns on the western flank of that county. When we talk to representatives in the area of Fishguard and St. David’s there are clearly concerns there that any shift east towards Carmarthen will have an impact on access times in those areas. So I think what’s important is the history and as I mentioned and this has been an ongoing discussion and campaign for over 5 years now, I appreciate that your questions that have come in to Cabinet over the past 2 months but the number of members in this chamber and outside this chamber have been campaigning on this for quite some time. The notion that Glangwili can provide full A and E services and maintain the services that it currently provides has gone because the Health Board has not provided that option. From my perspective the key issue here is that we try and protect as many services as we can locally and ensure that there is safe access to services for the people of Carmarthenshire. I do note that in the presentation that was provided by the Health Board the strategy that they currently propose has been developed by clinicians and I know that the Tory Party are keen to ensure that professionals, be it teachers or doctors and nurses, are at the vanguard of that and leading change within their specific sectors and that has been the strong message that has come from the Health Board that this Plan is based on clinical need and has been put forward by clinicians and I think it is incumbent on all of us to take on board that view and to try and process that information and make sense in terms of how that pans out then for services across the county. But as I have mentioned on a number of occasions to you as this is a Health Board decision I would respectfully suggest that you engage with the Health Board on this matter and I am sure they would be more than happy to do so.”

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5.2. QUESTION BY HARVARD HUGHES TO COUNCILLOR ANN DAVIES, CABINET MEMBER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS AND PLANNING POLICY

[NOTE: Councillor C.A. Davies declared an interest in this item.]

“In its response as a statutory consultee, Natural Resources Wales highlights the risk that 'significant sections of [the Towy Cycle] path would be affected by flooding' and requests a Flood Risk Management Plan. When will this be completed and be made publicly available?”

Response by Councillor Ann Davies, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs and Planning Policy:-

“I have already declared an interest in this item as I farm and own land along the Towy Valley and as such I have a personal interest in the Towy Valley Cycle Path Project. I haven't sought dispensation from the Standards Committee as I feel I am too close to the path which comes directly through our land. I leave the chamber or any committee when this project is discussed and I will not be leaving today as there can be no discussion on the matter because of my interest. But I can however thank you very much for your question and let you know that your question has been referred to the relevant department for a response which will follow to you in writing. But I cannot discuss this matter. Thank you.”

There was no supplementary question.

6. PRESENTATION OF PETITION

Further to minute 9 of Council held on the 10th May 2023 the Chair welcomed to the meeting Mrs. Katherine Start who had been invited to present to, and address the Cabinet on, the following petition relating to toilets at Burry Port Harbour:

“We the undersigned, request immediate action from Carmarthen County Council to plan, finance and construct toilets at Burry Port Harbour east and Burry Port harbour west. Petition to rectify the absence of adequate and accessible public toilets at Burry Port Harbour.”

Mrs. Start outlined to the Council the rationale for the petition.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture & Tourism advised that the issues raised in the petition would be investigated by the department and a report would then be presented to a future meeting of the Council's Cabinet.

Following the presentation Mrs. Start formally handed the petition to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture & Tourism

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the petition be received and that a report on the issues raised be submitted to the Cabinet in due course.

7. STREET NAMING AND PROPERTY NUMBERING POLICY

Further to minute 9.1 of Council held on the 28th September 2022 the Cabinet considered a report on the comments received during the subsequent consultation period on the Draft Street Naming and Property Numbering Policy.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Six responses/comments had been received as detailed in appendix 1 to the report and it was noted that none had required a specific amendment to the draft Policy which was therefore recommended for adoption.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the Draft Street Naming and Numbering Policy be adopted.

8. COUNCIL'S REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Cabinet considered the revenue budget monitoring report which provided the latest budgetary position as at 28th February 2023 in respect of 2022/2023. Overall, the monitoring report forecast an overspend for the year at departmental level of £6.159m with a forecast overspend on the Authority's net revenue budget of £470k. At a high level, this was due to a combination of:

- nationally negotiated pay offers (as yet unresolved) at much higher levels than budgeted, for which additional governmental funding had not been provided;
- overspends in service areas driven by increased demand combined with reduced grant funding versus previous years, particularly Learning Disabilities and Childrens Service;
- a sustained reduction in commercial income, covering car parks, leisure centres and school meals;
- capital financing underspends due to scheme delays and reduced need to borrow.

The Housing Revenue Account was predicted to be underspent by £850k for 2022/23. This would be reviewed as the significant issues identified became clearer from a financial perspective.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

8.1 The Budget Monitoring report be received, and the budgetary position and appropriate corrective action taken be noted;

8.2 in respect of significant overspends on specific budget areas Chief Officers and Heads of Service critically review options available to them to address the ongoing impact.

9. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 UPDATE

The Cabinet considered a report which provided the latest budgetary position for the 2022/23 capital programme, as at the 28th February 2023 and detailed new projects for noting and Cabinet approval.

It had been reported as part of the December monitoring cycle that £56,878k had been slipped to future years and had been incorporated into the new Capital Programme 2023-2028, which brought the general fund working budget more in-line with the projected outturn for the year. HRA budgets remain unchanged.

Departmentally a net spend of £54,673k was forecast compared with a working net budget of £93,787k, giving a -£39,115k variance.

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Some budgets had been amended to account for differences in actual grant allocations compared with the anticipated allocations at the time the programme had been approved, and new grant awards received during the year to date.

It was noted that Appendix B detailed the main variances within each department.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

9.1 the capital programme update report 2022/23 be received;

9.2. the new projects as detailed within the report be noted and agreed.

10. WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION STRATEGY 2023-28

The Cabinet considered a proposed Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-28 which the Council was required to produce and publish in accordance with the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 and the subsequent Welsh Language Standards. The 5-year strategy established how the Council proposed to promote the Welsh language and facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in Carmarthenshire.

The County's Welsh Language Strategic Forum, which had been the main vehicle for the Strategy's planning as well as its scrutiny, was thanked for its contribution.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the proposed Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-28 to increase the number of Welsh speakers and promote the use of the Language across Carmarthenshire be approved.

11. POLICY ON AWARDING GRANTS AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE

The Cabinet considered a proposed Policy on Awarding Grants and the Welsh Language for the Council in order to ensure consistency across grant schemes. The Policy had been prepared in order to comply with the Welsh Language Standards (The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011). Carmarthenshire County Council's compliance notice stated that it must 'produce and publish a policy on awarding grants' that requires us to consider the effects that awarding a grant will have on 'opportunities for persons to use Welsh', and on 'not treating Welsh less favourably than English'. The Policy detailed the Council's commitment to administering Grants in accordance with the Standards and explained the way in which the Council would pass on these duties to the applicants.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the proposed Policy on Awarding Grants and the Welsh Language be approved.

12. CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2028

The Cabinet considered the proposed Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2028 the purpose of which was to capture at a high level the asset implications of property issues experienced by services brought about by various factors such

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as changes in local and national agendas, financial pressures and shifts in client needs. Where appropriate, the detailed property requirements of various services were captured in Service Asset Management Plans. The Plan also provided an overview of the Council's non housing asset portfolio in terms of running costs, sustainability, and maintenance matters, culminating in an action plan to cover the significant property related schemes.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the proposed Corporate Asset Management Plan and Summary 2023-2028 be approved.

13. SALARY SACRIFICE (CYCLE TO WORK) AND CAR LOANS

The Cabinet considered a report which provided an update following a review of the Authority's current Cycle to Work and Car Loans scheme.

The Cycle to Work scheme had been set up eleven years ago and deemed to be out of date. Enhanced technology within the cycling industry had not only led to increased purchase cost of traditional road bikes but the option to purchase new electric bikes had also become more attractive.

The current Car Loans (Assisted Car Purchase) scheme had been in operation since 1998. It was contained within the Council's Conditions of Service and any change to the current scheme or consideration of removal would require consultation with the recognised Trade Unions.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

13.1 that the limit for bike and accessory purchases under the Cycle to Work Scheme be increased from £1,000 to £3,500;

13.2 that the term of the agreement under the Cycle to Work Scheme be extended from the current 12 months to 24 months for purchases more than £1,000;

13.3 that, due to increasing costs and inflation, the maximum loan advance under the Car Loan Scheme be increased from £7,350.00 to £9,999.00 with effect from July 1st 2023.

14. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR DECIDES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY PURSUANT TO SECTION 100B(4)(B) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972

The Chair advised that there were no items of urgent business.

15. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED, pursuant to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item as the report contained exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

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16. PLOT 1 TROSTRE RETAIL PARK

Following the application of the public interest test it was **RESOLVED**, pursuant to the Act referred to in minute no. 15 above, not to publicise the content of the report as it contained exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act). The public interest test in respect of this report outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information contained therein as disclosure as disclosure would put the authority at a material disadvantage in any subsequent negotiations with third parties and potentially harm the public purse.

Further to minute 10 of the Executive Board meeting held on the 16th December 2019 the Cabinet considered a report detailing requests by the developer of the above site to

- extend the land agreement for a further 12-month period;
- consider a further reduction in the purchase price to reflect exceptional unforeseen abnormal costs;
- to incorporate a further area of land within the leased area to address ecological issues required by legislation.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the request for a reduction in the purchase price be not entertained.

CHAIR

DATE

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.