

# COUNTY COUNCIL

**WEDNESDAY, 3 MARCH 2021**

**PRESENT:** Councillor I.W. Davies (Chair)

**Councillors:**

|                  |                 |                 |                     |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| S.M. Allen       | L.R. Bowen      | K.V. Broom      | C.A. Campbell       |
| J.M. Charles     | D.M. Cundy      | S.A. Curry      | W.R.A. Davies       |
| T.A.J. Davies    | G. Davies       | H.L. Davies     | J.A. Davies         |
| K.Davies         | S.L. Davies     | E. Dole         | J.S. Edmunds        |
| D.C. Evans       | H.A.L. Evans    | L.D. Evans      | R.E. Evans          |
| W.T. Evans       | S.J.G. Gilasbey | C.J. Harris     | P. Hughes-Griffiths |
| A.D. Harries     | T.M. Higgins    | J.K. Howell     | P.M. Hughes         |
| A. James         | J.D. James      | R. James        | D.M. Jenkins        |
| J.P. Jenkins     | G.H. John       | C. Jones        | B.W. Jones          |
| D. Jones         | G.R. Jones      | H.I. Jones      | A. Lenny            |
| M.J.A. Lewis     | K. Lloyd        | K. Madge        | S. Matthews         |
| A.S.J. McPherson | E. Morgan       | A.G. Morgan     | S. Najmi            |
| D. Nicholas      | B.D.J. Phillips | J.S. Phillips   | D. Price            |
| J.G. Prosser     | B.A.L. Roberts  | H.B. Shepardson | A.D.T. Speake       |
| L.M. Stephens    | B. Thomas       | D. Thomas       | E.G. Thomas         |
| G.B. Thomas      | G. Thomas       | J. Tremlett     | A.Vaughan Owen      |
| D.T. Williams    | D.E. Williams   | J.E. Williams   |                     |

**Also Present:**

W. Walters, Chief Executive  
J. Morgan, Director of Community Services  
C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services  
J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities  
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance)  
R. Mullen, Director of Environment  
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law  
G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services  
G. Williams, Team Leader  
R.M. Davies, Strategic Housing Delivery Manager  
G. Morgan, Head of Democratic Services  
M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer  
E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer  
C.J. Warwick, Digital Support Engineer  
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator  
J. Corner, Technical Officer  
J. Hawker, Digital Support Officer  
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer  
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

**Virtual Meeting - 10.00 am - 2.40 pm**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C.A. Davies, P.E.M. Edwards, A, Fox and T.J. Jones.

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS.

| <b>Councillor</b> | <b>Minute Number</b>   | <b>Nature of Interest</b>  |
|-------------------|--|--|
| S.J.G Gilasbey    | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | Family member works as a teacher in one of the schools mentioned in the report |
| S.J.G Gilasbey    | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | LA Governor at Ysgol Gwenllian   |
| S.J.G. Gilasbey   | 5.3 – Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Housing Rent Setting for 2021/22 Revenue and Capital | Family member is a council tenant  |
| K. Lloyd          | 5.4 – The Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus (CHS+) Business Plan 2021-24                                       | Owens shares in Carmarthenshire Energy Ltd                                     |
| K. Madge          | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | Daughter works in Social Care  |
| J. James          | 5.3 – Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Housing Rent Setting for 2021/22 Revenue and Capital | Family members are Council tenants   |
| J. James          | 5.4 – The Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus (CHS+) Business Plan 2021-24                                       | Family members are Council tenants   |
| H.A.L. Evans      | 5.3 – Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Housing Rent Setting for 2021/22 Revenue and Capital | Sister is Chief Executive of a Housing Association                             |
| H.A.L. Evans      | 5.4 – The Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus (CHS+) Business Plan 2021-24                                       | Sister is Chief Executive of a Housing Association                             |

|                |  |  |
|----------------|--|--|
| B.A.L. Roberts | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | Family member works in Social Care           |
| B.A.L. Roberts | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | LA Governor at Pen Rhos and Coedcae Schools  |
| S.L. Davies    | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | LA Governor at Schools                       |
| S.L. Davies    | 5.3 – Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Housing Rent Setting for 2021/22 Revenue and Capital | Family member owns property                  |
| D.C. Evans     | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | Wife works in the Council's Contact Centre   |
| S. Najmi       | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | LA Governor at Penygaer School               |
| G.L. Davies    | 6 – Meeting of the Executive Board – 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2021   | Minute 14 – Crown Precinct Building Llanelli |
| A.G. Morgan    | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | Tenant at Unit 4 Delta Lakes, Llanelli       |
| T. Higgins     | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | Niece works in the Library Service           |
| T. Higgins     | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | LA Governor at Tycroes School                |
| E. Dole        | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | Son works for the Authority                  |
| E. Dole        | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | Son works for the Authority                  |
| S. Curry       | 5.3 – Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Housing Rent Setting for 2021/22 Revenue and Capital | Family member is a council tenant            |
| D. Price       | 5.3 – Housing Revenue  | Family member is a                           |

|               |  |  |
|---------------|--|--|
|               | Account Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Housing Rent Setting for 2021/22 Revenue and Capital                       | council tenant                                     |
| R. James      | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | Partner works in the Library Service               |
| R. James      | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | L.A. Governor at Ysgol Dewi Sant                   |
| P.M. Hughes   | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | L.A. Governor at St Clears School                  |
| P.M. Hughes   | 5.3 – Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Housing Rent Setting for 2021/22 Revenue and Capital | Family member is a council tenant                  |
| D. Thomas     | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | LA Governor at Blaenau School                      |
| D. Thomas     | 5.3 – Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Housing Rent Setting for 2021/22 Revenue and Capital | Family members own house rented out by the Council |
| A.D.T. Speake | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | L.A. Governor at Model School                      |
| J. James      | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | L.A. Governor at schools in Burry Port             |
| J. Edmunds    | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | Family member works for the Authority              |
| J. Edmunds    | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | L.A. Governor at two schools in Llanelli           |
| A McPherson   | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26  | L.A. Governor at two schools in Llanelli           |
| D. Nicholas   | 5.1 – Revenue Budget   | Daughter works in                                  |

|                |   |   |
|----------------|---|---|
|                | Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24   | Planning  |
| D. Nicholas    | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26 | L.A. Governor at Llandybie school                               |
| B.D.J Phillips | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26 | L.A. Governor at Bro Brynach and Beca Schools                   |
| J.S. Phillips  | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26 | L.A. Governor at Pwll School and Ysgol y Ffwrnes                |
| J. Tremlett    | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24                    | L.A. Governor and Chair of Governors at at Laugharne VCP School |
| P.M. Hughes    | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24                    | Daughter works for the Authority                                |
| L. Bowen       | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24                    | Wife works for the Authority                                    |
| A Vaughan Owen | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24                    | Wife works for the Authority                                    |
| G. Jones       | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24                    | Wife works for the Authority                                    |
| G. Jones       | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26 | L.A. Governor at two schools in Llanelli                        |
| R. Evans       | 5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24                    | Family Member works for the Authority                           |
| R. Evans       | 5.2 – Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26 | L.A. Governor at two schools in Llanelli                        |

### 3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- The Chair, on behalf of the Council, conveyed his condolences to Councillor Dole, and his family, following the passing of Councillor Dole's mother;
- Councillor Carys Jones addressed Council on Endometriosis Awareness Week 2021 running from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021;
- Councillor Ken Lloyd extended his congratulations to Julia Ma from Carmarthen on winning the prestigious Richard & Judy "Search for a Best Seller" competition 2020 for her debut novel Happy Families.

**4. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 10TH FEBRUARY 2021**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 10th February, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

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

**5.1. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2021/22 TO 2023/24**

(NOTE:

1. The Monitoring Officer advised Councillors that if they had declared an earlier interest by virtue of being LA School Governor's they need not declare that interest again as the report related to the Council's general Revenue Budget
2. Councillors D. C Evans, E. Dole, T. Higgins, K. Madge, B.A.L Roberts, A.G. Morgan, and J. Edmunds, repeated their earlier declarations
3. Councillors L.R. Bowen, A. Vaughan Owen, G. Jones, P. Hughes and R. Evans declared an interest at the start of this item as they had family members employed by the Authority)

Council was informed that the Executive Board, at its meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2020 (Minute 6 refers) had considered the Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24 and made a number of recommendations, as detailed within the report of the Director of Corporate Services, for Council's consideration.

Council received a presentation by the Executive Board Member for Resources, on behalf of the Executive Board, in which he set out the background to the budget proposals being presented to the Council for consideration together with the responses received to the budget consultation.

The Executive Board Member for Resources informed Council that the report brought together the latest position on the Revenue Budget Strategy and detailed the Executive Board recommendations on concluding the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2021/22 to 2023/24. He added that the Welsh Government's budget process had been much later than normal for 2021/22 with the final settlement figures having been published the previous day (2<sup>nd</sup> March) and its final budget not being debated until the 9<sup>th</sup> March.

The Executive Board Member advised that the final settlement confirmed the Council's revenue and capital allocations had been unchanged in line with the provisional figures along with some changes to specific grants. The Welsh Government had also confirmed the sum of £206m for the Covid 19 Hardship Fund to support additional costs and loss of income relating to the pandemic for the first 6 months of the next financial year (2021/22).

The Executive Board Member advised that a review undertaken of the key components of the budget assumptions and allocations had provided some

increased budget headroom, when compared with the original budget proposal, resulting in some of the proposals being revisited and further options considered.

The Executive Board Member for Resources reported that full details of the provisional settlement were detailed within the report (which had been confirmed unchanged in the final settlement). The headline was on all Wales basis with the average funding for Local Government having increased by 3.8%, with Carmarthenshire also receiving 3.8%. Whilst this had enabled the authority to allocate funding in the budget for a significant amount of inflationary and unavoidable pressures, it still required savings to be made despite the welcomed funding increase, as the plan included a significant value of savings deferred into future years, due to the impact of covid. Whilst those changes had been accommodated within next year's budget, there would still be a need to deliver further significant savings over future years, which would need to recommence as the impact of covid hopefully receded.

He advised that, as detailed within the report, the Director of Corporate Services had made adjustments to some of the other figures within the strategy as part of the normal routine as clearer and more information became available and the current total validation added some £10.0m to the budget.

The Executive Board Member advised that whilst the report reduced the pay assumption from the allocated 2.75% in the draft budget to 2.5% for each year, that remained the most significant validation assumption. However, the pay offer did not apply to teachers who were covered by separate pay arrangements within the remit of Welsh Government. The September 2020 award equated to an increase of 3.1% and the part year effect of that was combined with a consistent assumption of 2.5% for any future awards, although it was also recognised as a key risk to the budget.

It was stated that the draft budget proposals, consulted upon in January 2021, assumed validation of confirmed pay and inflationary pressures to schools, and that remained the case for the final proposals. There were no savings allocated to schools next year, thereby enabling headteachers and all school staff to focus on helping Carmarthenshire's learners get back on track after a hugely disruptive year.

The Executive Board Member advised that, as stated earlier, changes to some of the key assumptions around future pay awards and the impact of delays in the capital programme had provided scope to make some changes to the Strategy. That had resulted in the sum of £958,000 being available to make some critical adjustments to the budget strategy and the Executive Board had made the following adjustments thereto, taking into account the outcome of the consultation process and responding to the feedback from both public and councillors:

- To remove both the gulley cleansing and road sweeping savings proposals;
- To reduce the highways surface dressing savings proposal from £300k down to just £100k.
- To provide additional funding of £75k for the TrueCall service
- To provide funding of £50k for increased Education department capacity to deliver improved financial and governance support as part of the department's responsibility for the overall schools' system

The Executive Board Member for Resources advised those changes had allowed the Executive Board to cap the council tax increase to 3.95% for 2021/22. However, as referred to earlier, the final settlement had only been received the previous day whereby clarity provided on the first six months funding of the Covid 19 Hardship Fund had eliminated significant financial risks within the budget. That had enabled the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader and himself, in accordance with the Executive Boards agreement, to make any necessary adjustments to the strategy. As a consequence, it was therefore now being proposed that the Council tax increase be further reduced to 3.45%, which could be achieved through the utilisation of an element of the forecasted current year underspend as a one-off contribution to the capital programme thereby releasing £450k of revenue funding to support the economic stimulus package.

The Executive Board Member for Resources advised that should the Council adopt the budget proposals, with the council tax amendment, it allowed the Executive Board to present a fair, balanced, sustainable and viable budget to County Council.

The following amendment was proposed and seconded:

“We feel this Council can do more and reduce the Council Tax increase to 2.95% and remove cuts in services to our most vulnerable.

This will be funded by additional efficiency and reducing contingency funds down to £490,000

Efficiencies to Introduce:

£200,000 employee travel costs (Revenue saving)

£100,00 consultants' fees (Revenue Saving)

Cuts to remove:

Coroners - £19,000

Surface Dressing - £100,00

Domiciliary Care - £218,000

Day Care Services - £50,000

Supported Living (Reducing package of support) - £23,000

Cost of 1% Council Tax Cut £900,00

Current proposed contingency fund £1,500,000

Efficiency savings £300,000

Cost of removing cuts and lowering council tax £1,310,000

New contingency fund £490,000

The Proposer outlined the rationale for the amendment

The Director of Corporate Services, in response to a question confirmed that while the proposed amendments were legal, he considered them to be imprudent given current financial challenges and risks faced by the authority in the forthcoming years and the issue of reducing the proposed contingency fund.

Following consideration, it was



**RESOLVED that the Amendment to the Motion be not supported**

Council thereupon proceeded to vote on the substantive Motion and it was

**FURTHER RESOLVED that the Motion be adopted and the following recommendations of the Executive Board, as amended to further reduce the council tax increase to 3.45%, be adopted:-**

**6.1 That the following recommendations of the Executive Board be adopted:-**

**6.1.1 The Budget Strategy for 2021/22 (attached) be approved subject to the following amendments:**

**2021/22:-**

**The removal of the gully cleansing saving proposal of £70k;**

**The removal of the road sweeping saving proposal of £93k;**

**(The original efficiencies for these proposals would however still be implemented, leading to an overall increase in capacity in recognition of concerns over the impact of adverse weather events)**

**The reduction of the highways road surfacing saving proposal from £300k to £100k;**

**Funding of £75k to be provided to support wider rollout of the TrueCall service to vulnerable residents to prevent telephone fraudsters;**

**Funding of £50k to provide a new challenge advisor role to provide additional governance and finance support.**

**6.1.2 That the Band D Council Tax for 2021/22 be set at £1,361.97 (an increase of 3.45% for 2021/22);**

**6.1.3 That of the £958k recurrent funding available, £488k be used in full to support the proposed amendments in 6.1.1, with the remaining £470k being applied to reduce the increase in Council Tax in 6.1.2 above in conjunction with the further £450k released from the revenue funding of the capital programme and noted by the Executive Board Member for Resources in his presentation**

**6.1.4 The Medium Term Financial Plan be approved as the basis for future years planning”**

**5.2. FIVE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME (COUNCIL FUND) - 2021/22 TO 2025/26**

(NOTE:

1. Councillors S.J.G Gilasbey, R. James and E. Dole having earlier made declarations on this item repeated those declarations;
2. Councillor A.D.T. Speake in response to a statement made during the meeting to him having been thrown out of the Plaid Cymru Group clarified that was not the position and he had left on his own volition)

The Executive Board Member for Resources presented to the Council, on behalf of the Executive Board, the Five-Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2021/22 to 2025/26, which took into account the consultation exercise undertaken and the Welsh Government settlement. The Executive Board, at its meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2020 [minute 7 refers] had considered the Programme and had made a number of recommendations for Council's consideration.

The Executive Board Member for Resources stated that the proposed capital programme which anticipated a spend of nearly £258m over the five years from 2021/22 to 2025/26, optimised funding opportunities and maximised funding from potential external sources. A combination of existing and new schemes would develop the local economy, create jobs and enhance the quality of life for our residents.

The detailed provisional capital programme had been presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> February for consultation and no matters of concern were raised during that consultation. An extract from the relevant minute of the meeting was included in Appendix C to the report.

He advised that County Council funding available for the programme was estimated to be £122.5m and included borrowing; both supported and unsupported, capital receipts, reserves, and direct revenue funding, with a further £135m anticipated from external grant funding bodies. While the final settlement from the Welsh Government for 2021/22 was received on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021, no additional general capital funding had been awarded to that set out in the provisional settlement - detailed in the main report. Furthermore, the Welsh Government had not provided any forward indicators in respect of general capital funding beyond 2021/22, and, therefore the proposed capital programme had been based on future years supported borrowing and general grant being at the same level as 2021/22.

The Executive Board Member for Resources further advised of additional currently unallocated funding capacity totalling £4m between years 4 and 5 of the programme which would remain unallocated for the time being and utilised as other costs and funding sources crystallised as time progressed.

The Executive Board Member advised while many of the investments in the report were familiar, including the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools programme, Highways, Regeneration and Housing, it had been possible to add investment to schemes considered to be important for the county to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. Those included:-

- Economic Regeneration – Targeted regeneration Investment (£1.2m); Commercial Property Development Fund (£1m); Rural Enterprise Fund (£500k) and £1m for the 'Ten Towns' growth plan enabling the authority to draw in considerable private sector investment to the county (Appendix B to

the report). Additionally, the £500k approved in 2020/21 for decarbonisation of the council's estate would be repurposed for Renewal Energy Initiative Grants to business to act as a catalyst for private investment in that area and reduce the county's carbon footprint;

- Infrastructure – Trebeddrod Reservoir (£1m), Morfa Bacas coastal path (£300k); public lighting column replacement (£400k p.a. from 2024/25) and a £300k commitment to invest in council owned farms for 2024/25;
- Community Services – ongoing commitment to supporting investment in culture at Oriol Myrddin and continued support for private sector housing in 2024/25 for Disabled Facilities Grants;
- Environment Department – continued support for Highways Improvements, Bridge Maintenance and Road safety schemes into 2025/26. Council funding on Highway maintenance would continue to be bolstered in 2021/22 via the Welsh Government Road Refurbishment Grant ;
- Council Estate – additional funding for essential works to County Hall (£500k) and health and safety works to Ty Elwyn (£700k) on top of the ongoing programme of capital maintenance across the wider estate;
- Education Department – although no new monies had been awarded at the present time, the Council's commitment to its 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools investment programme was unwavering
- In addition to the recovery package in 2021/22, the Regeneration budget was supported with further additional investment in the Transformation Strategy Project Fund in 2025/26 which had the potential to attract significant external funding to match the council's investment

The Executive Board Member advised that comprehensive details of the proposed programme was set out in Appendix A to the report and officers would continue to monitor individual schemes and funding availability. Whilst both those factors would need to be closely managed to ensure the schemes were delivered in full, the current programme was fully funded for the five years and included potential for further investments in years 4 and 5, given the yet unallocated £4m of funds available for those years.

He advised that Appendix D to the report detailed the council's Capital Strategy document, which was required by the prudential code of capital finance and set out the long-term context in which capital expenditure and investment decisions were made and gave due consideration to both risk and reward and the impact on achievement of priority outcomes.

The Executive Board Member for Resources advised that it was believed the proposed Capital Programme sought to maximise opportunities, was comprehensive and ambitious but above all, in these uncertain times, focussed on economic stimulation and recovery. He therefore, on behalf of Executive Board, commended the Capital Programme, as presented, for County Council for final approval.

Reference was made to the proposed fully funded capital programme and to the current unallocated sum of £4m for years 4 and 5 of the programme. The following amendment was therefore proposed, and seconded, that a proportion of that money be allocated as follows:-

- MEP school building programme - £2.5m
- Carbon Neutral Investment - Tree Planting on council land £200k and provision of electric vehicle charging points £250k
- Flood Defence works - £300k
- Changing places toilet provision - £100k

The Proposer outlined the rationale for the amendment

Following consideration, it was

**RESOLVED that the Amendment to the Motion be not supported**

**DURATION OF MEETING**

During the consideration of this item the Council's attention was drawn to Corporate Procedure Rule 9 – Duration of meeting and the fact the meeting had been underway for nearly three hours. It was therefore

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Corporate Procedure Rule 9 be suspended to enable the remaining items on the agenda to be considered.**

Council thereupon proceeded to vote on the substantive Motion and it was

**RESOLVED that the following recommendations of the Executive Board be accepted:-**

- “7.1 The Five-Year Capital Programme and its funding detailed in Appendix A to the report with 2021/22 being a hard budget and 2022/23 to 2025/26 soft/indicative budgets be approved;
- 7.2 The programme be reviewed, as usual, if anticipated external or County Council funding did not materialise;
- 7.3 The Capital Strategy, as detailed in Appendix D be approved.”

**At 12.53 p.m. the meeting was adjourned for a comfort break and reconvened at 1.00 p.m.**

**5.3. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2021/22 TO 2023/24 AND HOUSING RENT SETTING FOR 2021/22 REVENUE AND CAPITAL**

(NOTE: Councillors S. Curry, S.J.G. Gilasbey, H.A.L. Evans, P.M. Hughes, J. James, D. Thomas and D. Price having earlier declared an interest in this item, reiterated those declarations and left the meeting during its consideration)

Council was informed that the Executive Board, at its meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2021 [minute 8 refers] had considered the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Housing Rent Setting for 2021/22 and had made a number of recommendations, as detailed within the Director of Corporate Services' report, for Council's consideration. It was noted that the report had also been considered, and endorsed, by the Community Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 as part of the budget consultation process.

The Executive Board Member for Resources advised that the report brought together the latest proposals for the Revenue and Capital Budgets for the Housing

Revenue Account 2021/24 and reflected the latest proposals contained within the 30 year Business Plan, being the primary financial planning tool for delivering the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard *Plus* (CHS+) for the future.

The Executive Board Member for Resources advised that capital investment in the region of £231m had delivered the Carmarthenshire Home Standard for tenants and, more recently, up to the end of the current financial year, a further £64m would have been spent in maintaining the CHS+ home standard for properties and tenants. Over the next 3 years it was expected that a further £56m would be spent on maintaining and upgrading the housing stock. The budget also provided funding of some £49m over the next 3 years to support the Affordable Homes Programme, which was on top of the £45m expenditure already incurred to the end of this current financial year. The Strategy would also see the increase in the supply of affordable housing throughout the County through various solutions including our new build programme (such as Glanmor Terrace, Burry Port and Dylan, Bynea) and the buyback scheme.

The Council was reminded that since 2015 the Authority had been required to adopt the Welsh Government Policy for Social Housing Rent Harmonisation, meaning that the proposed rent increase was prescribed by Welsh Government guidance and provided an equitable distribution of the rents for the social sector tenants. While that policy ended in 2018/19, and an interim policy applied for 2019/20 the Welsh Government had subsequently developed a new policy for implementation in 2020/21 to apply for a period of 5 years from 2020/21 and contained some additional/amended requirements, as detailed within the report. The main elements of that policy allowed Local Authorities to uplift the total rent envelope by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) +1% for each of the five years to 2024/25. It also allowed for the level of rent for individual tenants to rise by up to an additional £2 over and above CPI +1% for rent harmonisation, on condition that total rental income collected by the social landlord increased by no more than CPI +1%.

The Executive Board Member advised that in order for the Authority to meet its previous commitment to tenants by implementing the harmonisation policy and establishing a fairer rent level for all tenants the Executive Board had made a number of recommendations as detailed within the report for Council's consideration.

Reference was made to the current economic climate resulting from Covid 19 and the following amendment was proposed and seconded

“that the Council freeze the proposed rent increases for 2021/22”

The proposer explained the rationale for the amendment

Following consideration, it was

**RESOLVED that the Amendment to the Motion be not supported**

Council thereupon proceeded to vote on the substantive Motion and it was:-

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

- “8.1 To increase the average housing rent as per the Welsh Government’s Social Housing Rents Policy i.e:-**
- a) Properties at target rents to increase by 1.27%**
  - b) Properties where rent was below target rent, rent to increase by 1.27% plus a maximum progression of £1.00**
  - c) Those rents above target rent be frozen until such time as they met the target**
  - d) This will produce an increase on the average housing rent of 1.5% or £1.35**

**Thereby producing a sustainable Business Plan, maintain CHS+, resource our Affordable Homes programme and was supported by the CHS+ Steering Group.**

- 8.2 To implement a maximum progression of £1.00 for rents below target, until target rents were achieved;**
- 8.3 To maintain garage rents at £9.00 per week and garage bases at £2.25 per week;**
- 8.4 To apply the service charge policy to ensure tenants who received the benefit from specific services paid for those services;**
- 8.5 To increase charges for using the Council’s sewerage treatment works in line with the rent increases;**
- 8.6 To approve the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2021/22 (2022/23 & 2023/24 being soft budgets) as set out in Appendix A to the report;**
- 8.7 To approve the proposed Capital Programme and applicable funding for 2021/22 and the indicative spends for 2022/23 to 2023/24, as set out in Appendix B to the report”.**

#### **5.4. THE CARMARTHENSHIRE HOMES STANDARD PLUS (CHS+) BUSINESS PLAN 2021-24**

(NOTE:

1. Councillor H.A.L. Evans having earlier declared an interest in this item was not in attendance during its consideration ;
2. Councillor K. Lloyd having earlier declared an interest in this item repeated that declaration)

The Council was informed that the Executive Board, at its meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 (Minute 9 refers) had considered the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus (CHS+) Business Plan 2021-2024, the purpose of which was to:-

- Explain the vision and detail of the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus over the next three years, and what it means for tenants
- To show the income received from tenants and other funding sources afforded a capital programme of £107m over the next three years to:

- Build over 400 affordable homes;
- Improve and maintain the existing stock
- Develop new standards for energy efficiency and move towards carbon neutral homes
- To show how the housing investment programmes could help stimulate the economy and recovery from Covid-19
- Produce a business plan for the annual application to Welsh Government for Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) for 2021/22, equating to £6.2m.

The Executive Board Member for Housing presented the annual Business Plan for the CHS+ that detailed the plans, priorities and actions for developing new homes for the future and maintaining current stock for the next period, in consultation with the Council tenants. It also enabled the Council to submit its annual application to the Welsh Government for the Major Repairs Allowance grant, which for 2021/22 was in the sum of £6.2m.

The Executive Board Member for Housing advised that Page 6 of the report detailed what works had been undertaken during the last period together with a chart showing what the rent income contributed towards. The Plan allowed the Authority to keep developing its standards and looking at its agenda as it moved forward towards its decarbonisation programme. It also ensured it remained ambitious in building more new affordable homes throughout Carmarthenshire. Pages 7 and 8 detailed the Plan's principles, being the basis of the Plan and, with solid foundations in place, the path ahead should be smooth.

The Executive Board Member for Housing advised the Plan was divided into the following four key themes aimed at driving the business forward for the next three years and she outlined the work being undertaken under each theme:-

1. Theme 1 – Supporting Tenants and Residents;
2. Theme 2 – Investing in Homes and the Environment, including the development of a new Welsh Home Quality Standard, building on that already achieved through the CHS+, featuring an increased standard for energy efficiency in the Council's homes;
3. Theme 3 – Providing 500 more homes by investing £60m in the next four years together with the development of a new 10 year Affordable Housing and Regeneration Masterplan by Autumn 2021;
4. Theme 4 – Foundational economy, community benefits and procurement via the authority's response to Covid-19 by further developing the Council's approach to procurement to ensure it maximised its contribution to local economy prosperity and enhancing its focus on social value and community wealth

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

- “9.1 The vision of the CHS+, the Council's new build programme, the financial and delivery programmes over the next three years be confirmed;**
- 9.2 The 2021/22 Business Plan be submitted to the Welsh Government;**
- 9.3 The principles behind moving towards carbon neutral homes**

- and developing a decarbonisation strategy to support that be noted;
- 9.4 The importance of the investment included in the plan and its role in simulating the local economy and recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic be noted”.**

## **5.5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY 2021-22**

Council was informed that the Executive Board, at its meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2021 (minute 10 refers) had considered the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2021/22.

The Executive Board Member advised Council that in line with the requirements of the revised CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Council must maintain a Treasury Management Policy detailing the policies and objectives of the Authority’s treasury management activities and also approve a Treasury Management Strategy annually before the start of the financial year to which it relates. In addition, under the Local Government Act 2003, the Council was required to approve the Treasury Management Indicators for the coming year.

In accordance with the above requirements, Council considered the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for the 2021/22 financial year.

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

- “10.1 The Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for 2021-22 and the recommendations contained therein be approved.**
- 10.2 The Treasury Management Indicators, Prudential Indicators, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, the Investment Strategy and recommendations therein be approved”.**

## **6. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD HELD ON THE 8TH FEBRUARY 2021**

(NOTE:

1. Councillor A.D.T. Speake having earlier declared an interest in this item, repeated that declaration and left the meeting during consideration of minute 3 within the report relating to Model School;
2. Councillor G. Davies having earlier declared an interest in minute 14 repeated that declaration but remained in the meeting as no discussion was undertaken thereon)

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Executive Board held on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021 be received.**

## **7. NOTICES OF MOTION (NONE RECEIVED)**

The Chair advised that no Notices of Motion had been received.

## **8. PUBLIC QUESTIONS:-**



## **8.1. QUESTION BY MR M. REED TO COUNCILLOR C CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

“Is Councillor Campbell happy with the progress that has been made by the Dyfed Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuels in accordance with the Council’s motion passed at the meeting on the 9th of October 2019 calling on the Fund to divest completely from fossil fuels within two years and to reinvest in local renewable energy projects?”

### **Response by Councillor Cefin Campbell, Executive Board Member for Communities and Rural Affairs:-**

“Thank you Mr Reed for your question and, as you know the Council is the administering authority for the £3bn Dyfed Pension Fund and you will also probably know it involves over 60 organisation members and the decision made on investments has to have the approval of all the members not just Carmarthenshire County Council. So, the fund is a long-term investor responsible for looking after the interests of beneficiaries over many decades into the future. But climate risk and progressing to a low carbon environment is top of the Dyfed Pension Fund Committee’s agenda.

Whilst it is difficult to be specific on fossil fuel investments, about 2.9% of the Fund is currently invested in the energy sector. Now this has come down from about 4.5% in 2018 so the direction of travel is obviously moving in the right way

The Fund has, as I mentioned, made great strides forward on transferring investments into low carbon funds which started by investing £120m in the BlackRock UK Strategic Alternative Income Fund which includes investments in local renewable power.

The Dyfed Pension Fund Committee has recently approved an allocation of 10% (which works out to be £300m) of the Fund’s assets to a BlackRock “Reduced Fossil Fuels” passive global equity strategy and this will further reduce the total investments in fossil fuels and this will be recalculated at a later date.

And, finally, the establishment of the Wales Pension Partnership, which is an investment pool for all 8 Welsh Local Government Pension Scheme. In 2017 it provided the opportunity to the Dyfed Pension Fund to increase by 5% (about £150m) of its allocation to the Wales Pension Partnership Global Growth Fund which includes an investment in a Paris Agreement Aligned Fund.

So, as you can see, from what I’ve just mentioned the Dyfed Pension Fund Committee has a strategy in place to further increase in low carbon fund investments over the next 12 months which will continue the measured and responsible journey. So, although the fund has made great strides, there is, I acknowledge, some distance to travel again before we reach our goal. I hope that answers your question Mr Reed.

**Mr Reed asked the following supplementary question:-**

“Carmarthenshire County Council are one of the main contributors of the fund and what more can be done to move maybe to a different pension provider, bearing in mind that the Dyfed Pension Fund lost £63m last year because of the falling value of fossil fuel shares. So, what’s your view on that?”

**Councillor Campbell responded as follows:-**

“Okay, so thank you for the supplementary. My view would obviously be an objective view in this instance. I don’t sit on the Dyfed Pension Fund Committee so, I have no direct influence on their investment strategy. But certainly, they have heard me talk many times about the need to disinvest. So, they are very much aware of that and as we all have investments, personal investments, they do fluctuate as we know and they can go up in value and then they can reduce in value. So that is the risk that we all take in making investments. But, I can certainly assure you Mr Reed that they in terms of the direction of travel are very much aware of the political pressure that I, and others, are putting on them to divest away from fossil fuels and, as I’ve mentioned, evidence has quite clearly shown that we’ve gone a long way to achieve that but I also acknowledge there’s quite a way to go yet and I will keep on putting pressure on the fund committee to divest even more.

**8.2. QUESTION BY MS. J MANSFIELD TO COUNCILLOR C CAMPBELL,  
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL  
AFFAIRS**

“Please could you itemise what progress has been made this year towards the goal of Carbon Neutrality for the Authority by 2030 and also indicate what progress is in the pipeline for the coming year towards the carbon neutral goal?”

**Response by Councillor Cefin Campbell, Executive Board Member for  
Communities and Rural Affairs:-**

“Thank you very much Jane for the question. As you will be aware, two years ago we declared a climate emergency and a year ago, as promised, we drew up a net zero carbon plan and it’s our intention to report on progress made against the actions and targets in that plan annually. So, the action plan on this first year is going before the Environmental and Public protection Scrutiny Committee this coming Friday. The report and the details around progress is now in the public domain. If you want to look at those details, they are available on Carmarthenshire County Council’s website or, alternatively, one of the admin staff can send you a link to that particular report at the end of this meeting if you so wish. But just to give a little bit of detail around the report, let me just put this in context first of all. Let me say this last year, as we all know, has been unprecedented as Covid 19 has presented many challenges for us a Council. And, as a result, many of our staff have been redeployed to help the county’s response to the pandemic. So, it means the people who would have normally been working on the net zero carbon plan were pulled away from that work for obvious reasons to deal with the urgency of the pandemic. But, nevertheless, considerable progress has been made on several initiatives. Now, I could list you a whole range of actions that we have done work on but, I’m just going to pull up maybe one or two but the rest of the detail is in the plan on our website

I think the first thing I need to say is that the headline figure for 2019/20 is that our overall carbon footprint reduced by 2.9% compared to 2018/19. And, it won't come as a surprise to you although, this isn't in the report that early figures and data that we've had for this last calendar year has seen a marked reduction in carbon emissions in Carmarthenshire and also an increase in air quality. Now this obviously has come about because of the pandemic and fewer people travelling by car and so on. But this will be reported in next year's action plan report.

Very briefly, If I can mention a few other projects in order to fulfil our net zero carbon ambition. We've delivered on the Re:fit Cymru project to achieve Energy and carbon savings. Although, work was delayed due to Covid, work recommenced last September and now most Phase 1 projects on the 30 sites will be completed by the end of this month. So, this will result in overall carbon savings of about 675 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year and, added to that we've added additional LED lighting into some of the sites as well.

We've also got some outstanding works to be completed by September of this year on LED lighting in two care homes facilities plus two solar PV schemes – one at a care home, and the other large one, potentially, at Parc Dewi Sant and we are, finally, working on the Re-Fit Cymru Scheme on new build developments and we currently have 5 new build schemes which will provide 114 homes, with a further 21 developments in the pipeline. In these homes we are putting in high levels of insulation in place using the 'Passivhaus' principles and also will include modern technologies such as Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery, electrical vehicle charging points, plus solar panels and battery storage.

So, Jane, I could go on, but I think that gives you a sense of what we've managed to achieve in a very very challenging year. I hope that answers your question

There was no supplementary question

### **8.3. QUESTION BY MR P. HUGHES TO COUNCILLOR C CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

"I was so pleased to see Carmarthenshire County Council declare a Climate Emergency in 2019.

As part of the budget debate I would like to ask how much has been invested in renewable energy generation by the Council since the declaration of the Climate Emergency of 20/2/19?"

### **Response by Councillor Cefin Campbell, Executive Board Member for Communities and Rural Affairs:-**

"Thank you for the question Mr Hughes. I think I need to start off by saying due to the historical development of Carmarthenshire County Council and the nature of the buildings that we have we will never be able to reach a point where we are completely carbon free because of the residual output relating to some of our old, very old buildings which is why we emphasise that we aim to be net zero carbon by 2030. Now the net zero is an important element of our declaration because we

aim to primarily compensate or, off set, our residual carbon footprint by increasing the amount of renewable energy we generate on the Council's estate.

However, we do face a problem and this was raised earlier on in our budget debate this morning by Councillor Aled Vaughan Owen. We have a problem with our Distribution Network Operator - Western Power – We have a blockage, we have a lack of capacity on the national grid which hinders our ambition to create more renewable energy projects. There is very little additional capacity available on the electricity distribution network as I mentioned for large-scale renewable energy installations. Which is what we ideally need in terms of solar panels and wind turbines and even hydro. I was talking about large scale renewal energy projects that we absolutely need in order to provide that offsetting exercise. So we are in discussions with Western Power, we are in discussions as well on a regional basis with other local authorities to see whether we can put some influence on the distribution network to allow us more capacity. But, unfortunately, this is beyond our control because obviously Western Power and Welsh Government need to get involved and it is some thing we are giving priority to.

However, despite the blockages and the challenges we face in getting large scale projects on board, we have achieved some positive outcomes with much smaller projects and some of them I'll just quickly refer to. We put solar pv panels on 10 sites in our Re-fit Cymru project and this equated to about an installed capacity of **460 kW**. And also in in our new build programmes, which I was referring to in an earlier question. So, it is frustrating for us but we can do small scale projects, which we have been doing, on our properties, but it's only going to scratch the surface until we grasp the major hurdle or cross that major hurdle we have in getting more capacity in the national grid network. So, I hope that explains our frustration Mr Hughes but also giving you an insight to the small projects that we are undertaking.

Mr Hughes, before asking a supplementary question asked if his first question could be answered first which 'how much has been invested in renewable energy not, what are the issues and the frustrations you've got. The question I asked was how much has been invested.

Cllr Campbell in response stated "Okay, as I explained, what we have done is invested in the retro-fit programme on the new development sites and also on some Council homes that we own and this as I mentioned has increased our total installed capacity by 460kw to 1.65mw. I think that's quite a good increase and I fully understand we need to do more but, we will never reach our net zero target unless we sort out the problem with the national grid capacity issue. I can't really over-estimate how important it is to us to achieve that

Mr Hughes – So can you answer my question Councillor Campbell which is how much has been invested?

Councillor Campbell – Sorry do you mean in terms of the financial investment. I haven't got those figures at hand, I was wondering whether your question was around the actual outcomes of the investment in terms of carbon reduction which I guess would have been of more interest to you than the actual financial investment but, I'm happy to send on the data and the details around the financial investment we've made after today's meeting if that's okay with you?

**Mr Hughes asked the following supplementary question:-**

“I’m in the process of fitting solar panels, pv panels, to my house which to me seems a very simple way of generating renewable energy at home here. Can you tell me how many of the Council’s domestic homes are due to have solar panels fitted say, in the next year?”

**Councillor Campbell responded as follows:-**

“As I mentioned, all of our new developments are going to have the Re-fit scheme which includes solar panels, battery charging, insulation and so on. We’ve also got a scheme in Glanmor Terrace which includes I think about 18 homes where we are retro fitting with solar panels and other schemes as well and Councillor Linda Evans referred to this in an earlier presentation she made around our council housing stock is that we are using the rent on that housing stock to reinvest in decarbonisation. It is one of our major priorities and decarbonisation of our current stock of council homes is a priority and we are using some of that council rent revenue to make that investment.

**8.4. QUESTION BY MR G. PARKER TO COUNCILLOR C CAMPBELL,  
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL  
AFFAIRS**

“The Budget Digest 2020/21 published 1/2/21, made no mention of new renewable energy installations in the 5 year budget, which could help the Council meet its Net Zero Carbon Plan by 2030.

The entire energy requirements of the Council, 20GWh electricity and 44GWh heating per year, could be provided renewably by investing in solar panels with battery backup installed on buildings and car parks where the energy is used, for self-consumption only, at a cost of around £41m, fully funded by interest free Government Salix loans, at no cost to Carmarthenshire’s Council Tax payers.

The Salix loans would be paid back over 8 years through energy savings. Then all energy would be free of charge to the Council, saving £4.8m / year, which could be used to provide better services to the community.

Details and calculations have been given in the web page in your agenda pack

Why is the Council not taking advantage of this ideal opportunity to become self-sufficient in renewable energy?”

**Response by Councillor Cefin Campbell, Executive Board Member for  
Communities and Rural Affairs:-**

“Thank you Mr Parker for your question. A part of your question relates to again our ability to create renewable energy as a local authority and in my answer to a previous question, we are hindered by the lack of capacity on the local distribution network and that does cause us a great frustration as I mentioned earlier on because we have schemes on our brownfield land that we own as a local authority. We have schemes for solar panels and wind turbines but, unfortunately, we can’t proceed with those schemes at the moment. Hopefully, within the next

two years we can lobby Western Power and Welsh Government to provide the resources to enable us to do that, then we can move forward extremely quickly.

So, in terms of the Salix work that you refer to specifically, we have made great strides in reducing the carbon footprint in our non-domestic buildings and in particular with the interest free Salix invest to save programme, we have invested as a local authority in that particular scheme over £2m in some 200 energy efficiency projects. Now this investment is projected to save over 41,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent over the lifetime of the installed technology. This investment, coupled with the Council's on-going property rationalisation, which I mentioned regarding the council homes for example, the agile working that we are currently discussing and maintenance programmes as well is producing financial and carbon savings in times of increasing utility prices.

One final point, we are reducing our carbon footprint as well in terms of our street lighting. We recently completed the conversion of over 80% of our 20,000 street lighting lanterns to low energy light-emitting diode (LED lighting) with interest-free funding from Welsh Government's Programme. So, the remaining street lighting already use low energy dimming lanterns but these will be changed to LED at end of life. And, finally, we also maintain approximately 4,300 community Street Lights on behalf of the 72 town and community councils. These again are being converted to LED with energy efficient dimmable lanterns put in place as well.

So, despite our frustrations around the lack of capacity on the national grid, I can vouch that we are still managing to achieve a large number of energy savings. So, I hope that answers your question.

**Mr Parker asked the following supplementary question:-**

"There's a bit of a misunderstanding I think in my question. I had asked about installation of solar power and battery back up on local installations which do not need any export to the national grid, so there's no limitation by national power or Western Power. So, there's no reason not to go ahead with this today. It's very simple you just call up a solar installer and they install. You mentioned some spending with Salix which I understand was done quite a few years ago but that shows it is quite possible but, as an example you quoted £2m. Now, for the full investment to make the full energy for the council properties you need £41m. That's 5% invested over the last five years but, we only have nine years left for your 2030 deadline to be net carbon zero. So, I don't see how at that rate it can possibly happen. How can you speed these things up?"

**Councillor Campbell responded as follows:-**

"I'll take the last point first and then I'll go back to your opening statement in your second question.

I think you probably do understand that this last year, which is the first year of our action plan has been unprecedented as I mentioned earlier on. We've had to down tools on many of these developments in order to respond to the urgency of the pandemic and, as I've mentioned we've had staff who'd normally be working on this and on projects to decarbonise even further our housing stock and our non-domestic buildings, we've had them put on projects that have had a direct bearing

on tackling the pandemic. So, I hope you can excuse us, I'm not making excuses, but these are factual reasons why perhaps we haven't made the progress many of us were hoping to achieve during that first year. So, I hope you can understand the situation that many of our officers were faced with during this first year of working on the action plan. But, hopefully, if the health of the nation allows over the next nine year's we can certainly speed up our work on achieving our net carbon target.

So, specifically around battery storage, we are exploring opportunities as we speak with our new build housing development in Glanmor Terrace, which I referenced earlier on, which incorporates solar pv and, as I mentioned battery storage. Now, we're also looking at investing battery storage in our council housing stock as well, which I also mentioned earlier on. So, we're in the first year, we are feeling our way in what has been a challenging year for everyone. But, I'm hoping if you come back with a similar question next year about this time we will have achieved far more, the pandemic allowing of course. I hope that answers your second question.

#### **8.5. QUESTION BY MS. C. STRANGE TO COUNCILLOR C. CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

"Has Council considered using the "Climate Action Plan for Councils" published by Friends of the Earth as an aid to the Covid recovery programme? The guide aims to create a green, fair, equitable recovery whilst also taking into account the Climate and Ecological Emergency. It contains 46 recommendations relevant to Wales.

please see:-

<https://climate.friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/files/climate/documents/2020-06/Climate%20Action%20Plan%20for%20councils%20June%202020.pdf>

#### **Response by Councillor Cefin Campbell, Executive Board Member for Communities and Rural Affairs:-**

"Thank you Celia for your question and yes, absolutely, we are aware of the Friends of the Earth document which you refer to in your question and we are already giving this consideration but, we are also looking at other approaches as well outlined in other documents, in our own Net Zero carbon document and the COVID-19 recovery programme that we are working on at the moment and we are about to publish in the next week or two. There is another document as well which doubtless you are aware of which is the 'Public Sector Net Zero Carbon Route Map' which is currently being developed by the Local Government Decarbonisation Strategy Panel as a high-level thematic framework. Now, where possible, we propose to use this Route Map to help guide our approach. It should be noted that some of the Targets in this Route Map are particularly challenging for us and other local authorities as well, and appropriate Actions are currently being discussed with the relevant Lead Officers for incorporation into our Net Zero Carbon Plan.

So what we have is an array of documents, all with different route maps and ideas and what we hope to do is pick and choose some of the ideas and recommendations in there that are most appropriate to Carmarthenshire. In particular, given that we are facing huge economic challenges moving forward,

social challenges, environmental challenges as well as a result of Covid, the Council are, as I mentioned about to publish a draft economic recovery and delivery plan which identifies some 30 actions to support the Carmarthenshire economy and that addresses the impacts of COVID and Brexit as well I may add. It sets out our priorities for supporting Business, People and Place. At the heart of it you will obviously understand that we are looking to create a more equal, greener, healthier, and more sustainable community within Carmarthenshire.

So that, I hope answers your question. Yes, we are aware of the document but, we're also aware of other relevant documents as well.

**Ms Strange asked the following supplementary question:-**

“As suggested in my question about 46 of the 50 Friends of the Earth recommendations are relevant to Wales and I've picked up just two of these and combined them. Will the Council produce a Nature and Eco system restoration plan to reverse and restore habitat species and eco system quality and function to include management of council owned land and road verges?”

**Councillor Campbell responded as follows:-**

“Yes, we are doing a lot of work on conservation and biodiversity. We have a team of officers that are doing this work on a daily basis. So, all of that which you mention is clearly important to us because having that balance between development and Biodiversity and protecting the environment is so crucial for us moving forward. There's one thing the pandemic has highlighted is we need to look local, we need to look at the challenges that are within a close proximity of where we all live because we can all do more. So, absolutely, we are doing that already and we will be ramping that work up as we move forward.

**8.6. QUESTION BY DR T. LAXTON TO COUNCILLOR C. CAMPBELL,  
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL  
AFFAIRS**

“I have been dismayed by the apparent backsliding on the commitment for the Pension Fund to divest from investment in fossil fuels:

Can you please tell me how much has been invested in the Councils' fleet of vehicles since the declaration of the Climate Emergency and how much of this has been for electric or other non-fossil fuel vehicles? Can you reassure me that with Council vehicles at least, great progress has been made and we are not being left behind other Councils such as Swansea, and also, much of Europe.”

**Response by Councillor Cefin Campbell, Executive Board Member for  
Communities and Rural Affairs:-**

“Thank you Dr Laxton for your question. I'm not quite sure whether I agree fully with the opening comment about backsliding on the commitment of the pension fund. I've already given a comprehensive answer on that which shows that we are moving in the right direction and have made great strides over the last three years in divesting away from fossil fuels. But, I do acknowledge there's a way to go again.



So, in terms of fleet replacement, we have a rolling five-year programme and by the end of this month the authority will have purchased an additional four ultra-low emission vehicles which, basically are electric pool cars. By the end of 2021/22 we will also conclude a review of the Fleet Replacement strategy which will include an assessment of the supply market for Ultra Low Emission Vehicles. In addition to this, we've included an action in the Transport business plan to update the Council's Fleet Strategy in order to reduce the level of Carbon and Nitrogen Dioxide emissions from our transport operations over the next five years. The way we're hoping to achieve this is by reducing fossil fuel use by introducing alternative powered ULEV vehicles and also procure more vehicles and plant using whole of life costings for procurement. I have a long list here that I can add to but, I'm aware of the time so what I could do is send you this whole list of the Actions in the Transport Business Plan that we are currently looking at. So, hopefully, we can invest more on ELV vehicles as we move forward and you will remember that we were the first local authority in Wales to introduce electric pool cars back in 2012 and, just as an additional bit of information over the last 6 years we've reduced the number of miles travelled by our staff in private vehicles by over 1.3 million miles per annum. So, that's quite an achievement but, again, I'm not complacent we have a long way to go. I hope that answers your question.

**Dr Laxton asked the following supplementary question:-**

"I am very re-assured to see that much is being done and I was pleased to see the installation of solar panels for example on the leisure centre roof down in Johnstown. I'm sure that you are aware that electric vehicles are not the only game in town when it comes to vehicles and can you tell me if the council is looking at not just electric vehicles but other low carbon vehicles such as for example hydrogen power for buses and such like"

**Councillor Campbell responded as follows:-**

"Yes, absolutely, is the straight answer to that. Electric vehicles are starting to become some developments in the past as we're moving on quickly to hydrogen powered vehicles. But, certainly, the challenge for us is in terms of our fleet and the nature of the fleet vehicles that we have. I'll just use the refuse vehicles that collect our bins every week as an example. The challenge we have is the rurality and the geographical size of Carmarthenshire. If we were to fit for example one of our refuse lorries with a battery instalment, that poses a challenge especially if going out to rural communities to collect bins in terms of how far or how long that battery can last. So, we need to do many things. We need to invest in more battery powered vehicles and hydrogen powered vehicles but, we also need to increase the number of battery charging points as well so these refuse lorries can go out into rural communities recharge their batteries and then move onto the next piece of work. So, all of this is in the early stages. We would have done more as I've mentioned already if it weren't for the pandemic. But we are hoping now that the worst of that is behind us and we can move forward with confidence in looking at new ways of using our fleet and also investing in decarbonisation programmes.

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

The Chair advised that no questions from Members had been received.

**10. MINUTES FOR INFORMATION (AVAILABLE TO VIEW ON THE WEBSITE)**

The Chair stated that the minutes outlined on the agenda 10.1 – 10.7 were available for information on the Council website.

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**