

COUNTY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2021

PRESENT: Councillor J.E. Williams (Chair)

Councillors:

S.M. Allen	L.R. Bowen	K.V. Broom	C.A. Campbell
J.M. Charles	D.M. Cundy	C.A. Davies	W.R.A. Davies
T.A.J. Davies	G. Davies	H.L. Davies	I.W. 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	T.J. Jones
H.I. Jones	A. Lenny	M.J.A. Lewis	K. Lloyd
A.S.J. McPherson	A.G. Morgan	S. Najmi	D. Nicholas
J.S. Phillips	D. Price	J.G. Prosser	H.B. Shepardson
E.M.J.G. Schiavone	A.D.T. Speake	B. Thomas	D. Thomas
E.G. Thomas	G.B. Thomas	G. Thomas	J. Tremlett
A. Vaughan Owen	D.T. Williams	D.E. Williams	

Also Present:

W. Walters, Chief Executive;
J. Morgan, Director of Community Services;
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance);
C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services;
J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities;
G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services;
R. Mullen, Director of Environment;
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;
G. Morgan, Head of Democratic Services;
L. Jenkins, Executive Board Support Officer;
M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer;
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer;
A. Eynon, Principal Translator;
R. Morris, Members Support Officer;
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer (Minute Taker).

Virtual Meeting:- 10:00am - 11:45am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F. Akhtar, S.A. Curry, A Fox, K. Madge, E. Morgan, S. Matthews, B.D.J. Phillips, B.A.L. Roberts and L.M. Stephens.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS.

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
S.J.G. Gilasbey	8.1 – To receive the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 8 th November 2021.	Councillor Gilasbey has a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to the review of the Primary Education Provision in the Mynyddygarreg and Gwenllian Areas, a matter within Minute Item 5.1. Cllr Gilasbey had a dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak on the matter but not vote.

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- The Chair conveyed his best wishes to Councillor Eryl Morgan who had recently been admitted to hospital following a fall. On behalf of the Council, the Chair wished Councillor Morgan a speedy recovery.
- The Chair conveyed his best wishes to Councillor Mair Stephens who is currently unwell.
- The Chair wished to express a many happy returns to Miss Ethel Lewis who turned 100 on 1st December. Miss Lewis, with the support of her family and meals on wheels lives independently in her family home in Llandeilo.
- The Chair extended his congratulations to Roger Thomas who had been appointed the new Chief Fire Officer for Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service. Mr Thomas would start his new role upon the retirement of the current Chief Fire Officer Chris Davies in April 2022.
- The Leader, with the Chairs permission provided an update on the Covid situation in Carmarthenshire. The Leader highlighted that the first case of Omicron, the new variant of Covid-19, had been confirmed in Wales as announced by Public Health Wales last Friday. From experience it was likely that the number of cases would increase as the new variant proceeds to spread throughout communities. There was little confirmation of the transfer rate of the variant, but it had reached a point of community transfer in England which made it inevitable that it would reach Wales and Carmarthenshire in time.

In providing Members with an overview of the advice provided by Public Health Wales, the Leader re-iterated points raised in previous meetings that best form of protection against the new variants of Coronavirus would be to take up the offer of a vaccine. It was confirmed that as of Monday, all adults in Wales would be offered a vaccination by the end of January, the Leader encouraged all present to make every effort to attend their appointment and take up the offer.

Members were informed that the Welsh Government were expected to make an announcement later this week and that it was likely that new measures would be introduced.

Members were provided with an overview of the numbers across Wales. As of 5th December 2021, Wales had an incident rate of 484.2 per 100,000. It was reported that the rate in Carmarthenshire had decreased from 483.1 cases per 100,000 to 421.7 cases per 100,000.

Furthermore, it was encouraging to note that as of the 28th November, 2021 over 695,850 vaccines had been provided across the Hywel Dda region of which over 106,000 were booster vaccines.

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

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

5. ADDENDUM TO THE INTER-AUTHORITY AGREEMENT (IAA) OF THE WALES PENSION PARTNERSHIP (WPP)

The Council received a report which provided the required addendum to the inter-authority agreement (IAA) of the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) for approval.

It was reported that the IAA had been reviewed by the WPP Officer Working Group and WPP's legal advisers Burges Salmon to enable:

- a scheme member representative to sit on the WPP Joint Governance Committee,
- the appointment of Allocators for the Private Market Sub-funds,
- various other minor changes or updates since the WPP was established.

An addendum to allow for the changes was included within schedule 1 of the report.

RESOLVED that the addendum to the Inter-Authority Agreement of the Wales Pension Partnership be approved.

6. SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Chair announced that this item had been withdrawn to allow for further discussion to be taken place by the Constitutional Review Working Group (CRWG).

7. TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CABINET IN RESPECT OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:-

7.1. REINSTATEMENT OF PUBLIC ACCESS AT GILFACH IAGO

The Council received a report which provided a proposal to progress the completion of public access reinstatement at the Gilfach Iago, the former opencast site by securing funding and undertaking required legal processes.

It was reported that if approval was not given, Celtic Energy would remain liable for the current planning conditions in relation to reinstatement of roads and the public rights of way across the site, roads that were not needed. In addition, as stated within the report, there was a high risk that Celtic Energy would not deliver satisfactory reinstatement at this juncture.

After having explored all options for reinstating public access across the former opencast site, the recommendation outlined within the report was considered the best possible option available in terms of deliverability and finance. It was therefore recommended that the proposal be approved, and the Authority take responsibility to ensure appropriate public access was restored in a timely manner.

A query was raised regarding Celtic Energy and if the Council was confident in receiving a payment. It was stated that in accordance with the recommended solution, as stated within the report, Celtic Energy Ltd have been party to negotiating the solution and therefore it is anticipated will fully comply with the agreement with the Council.

RESOLVED that:

7.1.1. the proposal to apply to the Magistrate's court for reclassification of three unclassified roads to bridleway status be approved;

7.1.2. the financial settlement offered by Celtic Energy to take responsibility for and to undertake all public access reinstatement works across the former opencast site be accepted.

8. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE:-

8.1. 8TH NOVEMBER 2021

[NOTE: Cllr. S.J.G. Gilasbey having earlier declared an interest in this item remained in the meeting for its consideration but then left prior to the vote. Cllr Gilasbey had received a dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak but not vote.]

In response to a query raised in relation to minute number 5.1, it was confirmed that the review of ALL schools in Carmarthenshire had commenced as part of the Modernising Education Programme (MEP). However, due to the complex nature of the review, it was not yet determined when the review would be completed. Members were assured that they would be kept updated with its progress.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 8th November, 2021 be received.

8.2. 22ND NOVEMBER 2021

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 22nd November, 2021 be received.

9. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NOTICES OF MOTION:-

9.1. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR JOHN JAMES

Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor John James:-

“That this Council:

- 1) Acknowledges the great efforts and professionalism the Dyfed Powys Police Force makes in carrying out its duties
- 2) Further recognises how important that calls from members of the public are in assisting the Force by reporting incidents and giving intelligence on issues of crime and disorder.
- 3) Notes that residents in Carmarthenshire are finding it difficult to access the 101-call system of reporting due to long delays in answering.

Council therefore:

Respectfully calls on the Chief Constable of Dyfed Powys Police to initiate a revamp of the 101-call system that will reinstall the confidence of the residents of Carmarthenshire in using this system which in turn will give a more accurate account of crime and disorder statistics.”

The motion was duly seconded.

The proposer and seconder of the Motion were afforded the opportunity of speaking in support thereof and outlined the reasons for its submission, as set out in the Motion.

Statements were made in support and against the Motion.

Following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED that the Motion be supported and referred to the Cabinet.

10. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED).

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

11. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS:-

11.1. QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR GARY JONES TO COUNCILLOR ALUN LENNY, CHAIR OF PLANNING COMMITTEE

“In view of the excellent initiative from Carmarthenshire County Council in working on a new strategy to develop natural outdoor features and spaces, can planning applications on the current LDP and proposed LDP be challenged via this strategy? And if so, should not this be on top of any consideration when planning applications are received, along with residents views on retaining Green spaces in their locales”

Response by Councillor Alun Lenny – Chair of Planning Committee:-

I would like to thank Cllr Gary Jones for the question – as it’s the first one I’ve had during over six years as Chair of the Planning Committee! I must admit, however, to being a little bemused as to why the question is directed at me, as we have a Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning – including the Green and Blue Strategy and the revamped LDP. But no matter, I’m quite happy to reply.

As members are aware, the green and blue infrastructure strategy aims to create a network of natural and semi-natural spaces and corridors between towns and villages, and threads through them – parks, allotments, hedges, woodland and the like. It is indeed an excellent initiative which has potential to help deliver on many of the corporate objectives of the Council, including the declaration of a climate emergency in February 2019.

There are, of course, already a number of policies contained within the current LDP that reflect the emphasis on conserving and enhancing the natural environment, as well as promoting good design – such as carbon neutral housing. This agenda has been developed further in the Revised LDP with placemaking and green infrastructure very much part of the requirements for new developments.

The LDP and determination of planning applications are underpinned by consultation processes – including those with members of the public and our colleagues in Parks and Leisure, and Ecology. These are fed into the decision-making process, with any material planning comments and evidence given due weight as part of this process.

As regards the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, yes – it will be used to inform decision making and to inform the emerging Revised LDP – alongside a whole raft of other information, policies and evidence. Although it does not necessarily trump other factors, the strategy is informed by consultation responses from a range of bodies and interested parties – and such feedback is always given full consideration.

We as a Council, and the Planning Committee, always have to weigh various demands against policies and evidence and consider matters as objectively as possible. Planning has a key relationship with this council's regeneration vision and delivery. We're investing countless millions of pounds in Llanelli in particular, in Carmarthen, Ammanford and in our smaller market towns in rural areas. Young people need 21st century education, decent jobs – and affordable housing, which this council is providing by the hundreds, in addition to the 900 council houses we've started building. Obviously, we need land to do that.

For example, within Cllr Gary Jones' own ward, the allocated site at Plas Isaf is included within the Housing Department's ambitions Affordable Housing Programme. Also, at Harddfán on the Bryn, a smaller site is earmarked for inclusion in the Welsh Government's Self Build for Wales scheme.

I hope this clarifies the situation. I also hope that members will take every opportunity to promote the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy as an important element in shaping the future of our communities.

There were no supplementary questions.

11.2. QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR GARY JONES TO COUNCILLOR HAZEL EVANS, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

“I found this gas canister whilst litter picking in the village. There's no information on the bottle of where to return it to, so I booked a slot at Trostre, I knew there would be a charge but was shocked at the £20 charge. This will discourage people from returning them here and will stop people recycling. I understand that Cwm Environmental is a standalone company, but can we exert any influence on them to amend this, and charge a nominal amount?”

Response by Councillor Hazel Evans – Cabinet Member for Environment:-

The charges currently levied by CWM reflect the actual cost of disposing of gas canisters as they are classed as hazardous waste and must be disposed of in a safe and proper manner. The charge covers the operational costs of handling, storage, transportation and disposal by an authorised specialist.

Due to the wide range of cylinders received, e.g. fire extinguishers, gas canisters, helium cylinders, Calor gas cylinders etc. CWM operate two levels of charge; £20.00 for large cylinders and £8 for smaller cylinders.

Whilst I can understand the basis of the question, we are of course relying on people to dispose of the items in a responsible manner. Commercial operators will have a duty of care to dispose of such items in a safe manner. However, I recognise that there will be a level of unscrupulous practice out there that could cause issues in our communities.

I am happy to look into the matter to establish the facts. CWM of course is a commercial entity in its own right so CWM would not be expected to take on the cost of disposal. That would rest with the Council. As you have rightly said there are outlets that take the cylinders back.

There were no supplementary questions.

12. MINUTES FOR INFORMATION

The Chair stated that the minutes outlined on the agenda under 12.1 – 12.3 were available for information on the Council website.

13. URGENT ITEM

In accordance with Corporate Procedure Rule CPR 2.4 the Chair, following a request agreed to allow an urgent request for an update in relation to the damage caused as a result of Storm Barra.

The Chief Executive reported to Council Members that the evenings severe winds had caused extensive structural damage to two Council buildings emphasising that no one had been injured.

It was reported that the wind had removed a section of Bryngwyn School's roof and that a full assessment of the damage was currently being carried out this morning. Whilst the roof had been made safe with the help of the Fire Service, the highway remained closed. In the meantime, all pupils of Bryngwyn School would be carrying out their learning online. Recovery and repair plans would be made accordingly.

It was further reported that significant damage had been caused to the roof of one of the buildings being developed as part of the Pendine Attractor Scheme. The roof debris had been blown onto the MoD land. Information would be cascaded to relevant parties within the village.

In addition, teams had responded to a number of calls from received from tenants.

Members wished to thank all staff, contractors and emergency services who worked tirelessly throughout the night to make situations safe in severe weather conditions.

CHAIR

DATE