

# COUNTY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 25 JANUARY 2023

**PRESENT:** Councillor R.E. Evans (Chair)

**Councillors (In Person):**

S.M. Allen	P. Cooper	D.M. Cundy	C.A. Davies
B. Davies	G. Davies	L. Davies	L.D. Evans
N. Evans	P.M. Hughes	J.D. James	R. James
G.H. John	B.W. Jones	D. Jones	H. Jones
A. Lenny	N. Lewis	A. Leyshon	K. Madge
D. Nicholas	D. Owen	D. Price	E. Rees
B.A.L. Roberts	H.B. Shepardson	E. Skinner	D. Thomas
E.G. Thomas	M. Thomas	J. Tremlett	A. Vaughan Owen

**Councillors (Virtually):**

L.R. Bowen	K.V. Broom	J.M. Charles	M.D. Cranham
S.A. Curry	A. Davies	W.R.A. Davies	T.A.J. Davies
C. Davies	H.L. Davies	K. Davies	L.M. Davies
S.L. Davies	T. Davies	A. Evans	H.A.L. Evans
W.T. Evans	A.D. Harries	J.P. Hart	T.M. Higgins
J.K. Howell	P. Hughes-Griffiths	J.P. Jenkins	A.C. Jones
A.G. Morgan	M. Palfreman	B.D.J. Phillips	S.L. Rees
E.M.J.G. Schiavone	J. Seward	R. Sparks	G.B. Thomas
F. Walters	P.T. Warlow	D.E. Williams	J. Williams

**Also Present (In Person):**

W. Walters, Chief Executive;  
C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services;  
J. Morgan, Director of Community Services;  
A. Williams, Director of Place and Infrastructure;  
J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities;  
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;  
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance);  
S. Burford, Project Manager;  
G. Morgan, Head of Democratic Services;  
C. Higginson, Media Manager;  
S. Jenkins, Economic Development Area Manager;  
A. Eynon, Principal Translator;  
L. Jenkins, Cabinet Support Officer;  
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer;

**Also Present (Virtually):**

I. Jones, Head of Leisure  
A. Thomas, Head of Education Services and Inclusion;  
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer.

**Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen and remotely: 10.00 am - 12.45 pm**

[Note: The Chair, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2(3) reconfigured the order of business on the agenda to enable Agenda Item 8 to be considered earlier in the meeting].

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Godfrey-Coles, D.C. Evans, M. James, G.R. Jones and M.J.A. Lewis.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Minute Number</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>
J. James	5.3 - Housing Revenue Account Budget 2023/24 to 2025/26 Revenue and Capital and Housing Rent Setting for 2023/24;	Daughters are council house tenants;
D. Price	5.3 - Housing Revenue Account Budget 2023/24 to 2025/26 Revenue and Capital and Housing Rent Setting for 2023/24;	Family member is council house tenant.

**3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The Chair stated that he and his Consort, Cllr. Nysia Evans, had attended a very successful Pembrey Walrus Dip on Boxing Day to raise money for charity. He thanked staff for their assistance at the event;
- The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture and Tourism, with the Chair's permission, informed Council that on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023 the Government had announced the successful bids in Round 2 of the Levelling-Up Fund. 525 bid applications had been received with 111 projects having been awarded funding amounting in the region of £2billion. Members were reminded that Carmarthenshire had submitted applications relating to the regeneration of Llanelli and the Llanelli Interchange Plus. Regrettably notification had been received that both applications had been unsuccessful. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture and Tourism commented that the news was disappointing, particularly given the clear need and the strength and the quality of the submissions and the vast amount of time and effort invested in submitting the applications. He thanked officers for the work they had undertaken in connection with the applications adding that the Authority had requested, and been promised, written feedback which could support future proposals and submissions bearing in mind that there would be a third round of the Levelling Up Fund in due course. Analysis of the round two awards had, he added, indicated that no authority had had success in both rounds. Only 4 local authorities in Wales had had no success after both rounds and, taking both rounds together, Carmarthenshire was second only to Cardiff on the total level of funding allocated to date. In conclusion he reiterated that the formal feedback was awaited with interest and there would be no further comment until then.

**4. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 7TH DECEMBER 2022**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 be signed as a correct record.

**5. TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CABINET IN RESPECT OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:**

**5.1. MID-YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022**

Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022 [minute 7 thereof refers], had, in accordance with the 2022/23 Treasury Management Policy and Strategy (adopted by Council on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022), approved an update on the treasury management activities from the 1st April 2022 to the 30th September 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that the investment balance at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 had stood at £195m and the total investments made and repaid had amounted to more than one billion pounds – being £1,060.5m. Gross interest earned for the period had been £920,000. The current investment level, was, he added, still significant with a balance of £210.5m. With respect to the Authority's borrowing activity within the reported period the total loans outstanding stood at £411.72m. Four new loans from the Public Works Loan Board had been taken during the period amounting to £20m. Interest paid during the period was £8.18m. The interest rate exposure indicator had been increased from 125% to 150% to accommodate the Authority's continued increased level of investment balances. In conclusion the Cabinet Member for Resources stated that all other Prudential Indicators were within the limits set by the Budget 2022-23 and the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for this financial year.

**RESOLVED** that the following recommendation of the Cabinet be adopted:

**'that the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Update Report for 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022, including changes to the limits for Interest Rate Exposure, be approved.'**

**5.2. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2023/24**

Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023 [minute 9 thereof refers], had considered a report which outlined information in regard to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023/24. The report had sought formal adoption of the Council Tax Reduction scheme (which replaced Council Tax Benefit in April 2013) for 2023/24. It was noted that subsequent to the Cabinet meeting the scheme regulations had been approved by Welsh Government and had come into force on 20th January 2023.

In presenting the report the Cabinet Member for Resources stated that the scheme itself was materially unchanged for 2023/24. However, in addition to the normal annual up-rating of certain financial figures used for assessing individual

entitlement and some technical adjustments the statutory instrument made a number of other smaller amendments which included amendments in respect of people from Ukraine, Ukrainian Hosts and European Economic Area citizens as outlined in the report.

**RESOLVED that the following recommendations of the Cabinet be adopted:**

**‘that (Council):-**

- 5.2.1. Formally adopts the standard all-Wales Council Tax Reduction scheme provided for in the a. Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, and**
- 5.2.2. Implements the annual up-rating figures (used in entitlement calculations) and other technical amendments, included in the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 due to come into effect 20th January 2023 and these Regulations apply in relation to a council tax reduction scheme made for the financial year beginning on 1 April 2023;**
- 5.2.3. Continues to exercise its discretion with regard to the limited discretionary elements of the prescribed scheme as outlined in the Executive Summary.’**

**5.3. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2023/24 TO 2025/26  
REVENUE AND CAPITAL AND HOUSING RENT SETTING FOR  
2023/24**

[NOTE: Cllrs. J. James and D. Price had earlier declared interests in this item and left the meeting during consideration thereof].

Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023 [minute 10 thereof refers], had considered the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2023/24 to 2025/26 and Housing Rent Setting proposals for 2023/24 prior to the consideration of Council. The report, prepared by the Director of Corporate Services in conjunction with officers from the Communities Department, brought together the latest proposals for the Revenue and Capital Budgets for the Housing Revenue Account 2023/24 to 2025/26. It was noted the report had also been considered, and endorsed, by the Community Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on the 19th December, 2022 as part of the budget consultation process.

In presenting the report the Cabinet Member for Resources reiterated the comments he had made at the meeting of Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023 [as detailed in minute 10 thereof] adding that he was sure the Council would appreciate the difficulty of achieving the fine balance of setting the rent within current Government policy at an affordable level for tenants whilst delivering on its housing aspirations. He emphasised that if the Cabinet’s recommendations were adopted by Council the average rental for its tenants would still be under £100 a week - one of the lowest rent levels out of the 11 stock-retaining Welsh Authorities, and significantly below the private sector.

**RESOLVED** that the following recommendations of the Cabinet be adopted:

**5.3.1 'To increase average housing rent by 5.5% (£5.18) per dwelling per week as per WG Social Housing Rents Policy;**

- **Properties at target rents will increase by 5.36%, and;**
- **Properties where rent is below target rent, rent will increase by 5.36% plus a maximum progression of £1.00;**
- **Those rents above target are frozen until such time that they meet the target.**

**This will produce a sustainable Business Plan, maintain CHS+, resource our Housing Regeneration and Development Delivery Plan and is supported by Housing and Regeneration Strategic Team;**

**5.3.2. To maintain garage rents at £9.00 and garage bases at £2.25;**

**5.3.3. Apply the Service Charge Policy to ensure tenants who receive the benefit from specific services pay for those services;**

**5.3.4. To increase charges for using our sewerage treatment works in line with rent increase;**

**5.3.5. To approve the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2023/26 (2024/25 & 2025/26 being soft budgets) as set out in Appendix A;**

**5.3.6. To approve the proposed Capital Programme and applicable funding for 2023/24 and the indicative spends for 2024/25 to 2025/26 as set out in Appendix B.'**

#### **5.4. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2023-26 CARMARTHENSHIRE'S HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME**

Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023 [minute 11 thereof refers], had considered the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023-26 Carmarthenshire's Housing Investment Programme which explained the vision and detail of the Council's Housing Investment Programme over the next three years, including the housing stock improvement plans, the new build programme and the plans to become net zero carbon.

The Cabinet member for Homes, in presenting the report, stated that the Plan outlined that the Council would continue to deliver a comprehensive programme of works to homes and maintain services to all of its tenants. In particular the income received from tenants' rents and other funding sources over the next three years would enable the Authority to develop a capital programme exceeding £103m, which would:

- improve and maintain the existing housing stock, reduce the number of empty Council homes and deal with the backlog of repairs, keeping tenants informed of progress;
- support the delivery of over 2,000 new affordable homes to ensure more homes were available for those in need;

- support the Council's Net Zero Carbon principles, creating energy efficient homes, minimising carbon emissions and promoting affordable warmth for tenants to reduce the cost of maintaining a home;
- help stimulate economic growth, creating jobs and training opportunities in the county; and
- help build strong sustainable communities – places people were proud to call home.

She expressed the hope that members would agree that the Plan was comprehensive and ambitious and would allow the Authority to achieve key priorities for the Council's tenants and vulnerable families. In conclusion she stated that this was a huge investment programme and thanked everyone who had contributed to its development and the staff who were always willing to help others.

In response to concerns over the proposed decrease in the budget for all internal works to council houses and voids and major works to homes, and whether the amount was sufficient to deal with the current backlog of work, the Cabinet member for Homes expressed confidence that the budget was sufficient but assured Council that the situation was reviewed regularly. She added that every effort was being made to attract builders etc to enter into the employ of the Council so that it had its own teams to carry out such work.

It was commented that the installation of solar panels on council homes could greatly help households facing increased heating costs.

**RESOLVED that the following recommendations of the Cabinet be adopted:**

**'To**

**5.4.1 Confirm the vision for our housing investment programmes over the next three years;**

**5.4.2 Agree that the 2023-26 Business Plan can be submitted to Welsh Government;**

**5.4.3 Note the contribution the Plan makes to the Housing Regeneration and Development Delivery Plan in supporting the delivery of over 2000 homes;**

**5.4.4 Note the importance of the investment included in this plan and its role in stimulating the local economy and creating local jobs and training opportunities.'**

**5.5. CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021/22**

Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023 [minute 14 thereof refers], had considered the Council's draft Annual Report for 2021/22, which had been produced in accordance with the requirements of both the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021 requiring the Council to produce an

Annual report on its Well Being objectives and to report on performance, based on a self-assessment approach.

The Cabinet Member for Organisation and Workforce presented the report which reflected feedback received during the rigorous consultation process which the report had undergone.

Arising from the decrease in recycling rates reference was made to the recent launch of the new recycling/kerbside glass collection schedules and what appeared to be confusion by the public, in spite of the publicity, as to when their blue/black bags and glass were due to be collected. The Director of Place and Infrastructure responded that the failure to achieve the 64% recycling rate in 2021/21 had been principally due to the fire in the CWM Nany y Caws recycling centre and the need to make alternative arrangements. The current recycling rate was 65% and it was hoped to continue on that trajectory. In regard to the new collection schedules these were being introduced on a phased basis and it was anticipated that the current issues being experienced would eventually be resolved.

Reference was made to the need, following consultation on any issue, to report outcomes to anyone, including members, who engaged in a consultation exercise and the Chief Executive agreed to ensure that this was the case. In this regard clarification was sought as to when the consultation on the A484 Sandy Road Corridor Improvements referred to in the Annual Report had taken place and the question was asked as to whether any analysis of the results of the consultation was publicly available. The Director of Place and Infrastructure Cabinet agreed to follow the matter up.

**RESOLVED that the following recommendation of the Cabinet be adopted:**

**‘that the Carmarthenshire County Council’s Draft Annual Report for 2021/22 be received.’**

**6. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:**

**6.1. 28TH NOVEMBER 2022**

**RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 be received.**

**6.2. 12TH DECEMBER 2022**

**RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 be received.**

**6.3. 9TH JANUARY 2023**

**RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 be received.**

## 7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

## 8. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

### 8.1. PETITION TO CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL TO STOP BANKING WITH BARCLAYS

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr. M. Reed who had been invited to present to, and address the Council on, the following petition relating to Barclays Bank:

'We call on Carmarthenshire County Council to:

- remove their business from Barclays at the earliest possible time and transfer to an ethical bank (or should there be no ethical bank able to deal with their corporate needs, move to the least worst bank in sector);
- apply pressure on Barclays to change their investments policies to those that prioritise the needs of the climate and future generations.'

Mr. Reed outlined to the Council the rationale for the petition.

The Cabinet Member for Resources 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, Mr. Reed formally handed the petition to the Council.

**RESOLVED that the petition be referred to the Cabinet for consideration.**

### 8.2. PETITION TO CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REGARDING THE DETERIORATION OF BURRY PORT HARBOUR

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr. D. Williams who had been invited to present to, and address the Council on, the following petition relating to Burry Port Harbour:

'We the undersigned electors in the County of Carmarthenshire petition the Carmarthenshire County Council:

- To recognise that the condition of Burry Port harbour and marina has steadily deteriorated to what is essentially an unworkable state despite the long term lease to a private marina operator, and we register our deep concern and dissatisfaction.
- To ensure, as Landlord and Statutory Harbour Authority, all terms of that lease are fully enforced without further delay.
- To inspect the property and issue notices of any breaches of these terms within the next month, and if the leaseholder fails to take appropriate and effective action, to pursue your rights under the lease.
- To take note that we have no faith or confidence that the Water Injection Dredging method will clear the harbour of the heavy sand that needs removing, which makes up the vast bulk of the accumulated sediment, and we do not consider this to be an appropriate or effective action.
- We want to see the harbour and marina return to the best possible condition, to be a safe, functioning, attractive facility that is a genuine benefit for both the harbour users and our whole community.'



Mr. Williams 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, Mr. Williams formally handed the petition to the Council.

**RESOLVED that the petition be referred to the Cabinet for consideration.**

## **9. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

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

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

The Chair stated that the minutes outlined on the agenda under 10.1 – 10.10 were available for information on the Council website.

## **11. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**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.**

## **12. PENTRE AWEL**

**Following the application of the public interest test it was RESOLVED pursuant to the Act referred to in minute no. 11 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 report contained details about potential academic partners who had not as yet signed memoranda of Understanding with the Authority. Although the public interest would normally favour transparency and openness, this is outweighed by the public interest in maintaining confidentiality in this case until the MOUs have been signed.**

The Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023 (minute 18 thereof refers), had considered a report which provided an update on the construction contract and affordability of Zone 1 of Pentre Awel.

In presenting the report the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture & Tourism advised that the summary table referred to in the Cabinet's recommendations [minute 18.4 thereof] would not need to be presented to Cabinet.

Members reemphasised the importance of ensuring that Welsh and local companies and businesses had the opportunity to benefit from the construction of Pentre Awel and thereafter. The Director of Corporate Services gave an assurance that this was an important element of the project and was being monitored.

The Chief Executive suggested that arrangements be made to convene an informal session for members to be updated on the Pentre Awel scheme particularly in view of the number of new members.

**RESOLVED that the following recommendations of the Cabinet be adopted:**

- 12.1 'To receive and note the conclusion and outcomes of the first phase of the two-stage design and build contract to deliver Pentre Awel Zone 1';**
- 12.2 'To proceed to the second phase of the contract with Bouygues, Construction, as per the recommendation in the report';**
- 12.3. 'To note the progress in securing tenancy agreements';**
- 12.4. 'That any shortfall in funding will be provided through a combination of external funder additional contribution, County Council Pentre Awel (City Deal) contingency funding and additional funding from the market. Upon finalisation of Bouygues' price, a summary table will be shared with Cabinet Members ~~presented to Cabinet~~. A programme of ongoing Value Engineering will be undertaken with Bouygues throughout the duration of the contract to ensure robust cost management';**
- 12.5 'To delegate authority to the Director of Corporate Services and Chief Executive to continue to negotiate the final contract price and agree this price in conjunction with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture & Tourism and Cabinet Member for Resources.'**

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**