

COUNTY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 19 APRIL 2023

PRESENT: Councillor R.E. Evans (Chair) (In Person)

Councillors (In Person):

S.M. Allen	K.V. Broom	J.M. Charles	P. Cooper
C.A. Davies	B. Davies	G. Davies	H.L. Davies
K. Davies	L. Davies	T. Davies	L.D. Evans
N. Evans	W.T. Evans	S. Godfrey-Coles	T.M. Higgins
P.M. Hughes	P. Hughes-Griffiths	M. James	G.H. John
D. Jones	H. Jones	A. Lenny	A. Leyshon
M. Palfreman	D. Price	E. Rees	B.A.L. Roberts
E. Skinner	D. Thomas	E.G. Thomas	G.B. Thomas
M. Thomas	J. Tremlett	A. Vaughan Owen	

Councillors (Virtually):

L.R. Bowen	M.D. Cranham	D.M. Cundy	S.A. Curry
A. Davies	W.R.A. Davies	T.A.J. Davies	C. Davies
L.M. Davies	S.L. Davies	M. Donoghue	A. Evans
D.C. Evans	A.D. Harries	J.P. Hart	J.K. Howell
J.D. James	R. James	J.P. Jenkins	B.W. Jones
A.C. Jones	G.R. Jones	M.J.A. Lewis	N. Lewis
K. Madge	A.G. Morgan	D. Owen	B.D.J. Phillips
S.L. Rees	E.M.J.G. Schiavone	J. Seward	H.B. Shepardson
F. Walters	D.E. Williams		

Also Present (In Person):

W. Walters, Chief Executive
C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services
J. Morgan, Director of Community Services
G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services
A. Williams, Director of Place and Infrastructure
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance)
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law
G. Morgan, Head of Democratic Services
L. Jenkins, Cabinet Support Officer
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer
R. Morris, Members Support Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer
S. Hendy, Member Support Officer
N. Daniel, Head of ICT and Corporate Policy

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 am - 12.20 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H.A.L Evans, D.Nicholas, R. Sparks, P.T. Warlow, and J. Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS.

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
S.L Davies	10.1 - Empty Homes Policy- Our Approach to Bringing Empty Homes Back to Use.	Owns an empty property.
S.L Davies	12.2 - Notice of Motion Submitted by Councillor Hefin Jones, Edward Thomas, Rob James and John James.	Is Transport Development Officer for Dolen Teifi.
M. Palfreman	9 - Carmarthenshire Public Services Board's Well-Being Plan: The Carmarthenshire We Want.	Runs a social care consultancy.
F. Walters	12.1 - Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillors Edward Thomas & Arwel Davies.	Employed by Barclays Bank and has close associates employed in the Llandeilo branch.
K. V. Broom	10.1 - Empty Homes Policy- Our Approach to Bringing Empty Homes Back to Use.	Owns a property used as a holiday let.
M. James	10.1 - Empty Homes Policy- Our Approach to Bringing Empty Homes Back to Use.	Likely to inherit a house which could be empty during the period of the policy.
D.E. Williams	10.1 - Empty Homes Policy- Our Approach to Bringing Empty Homes Back to Use.	Has a share in his late mother's house.
S.A. Curry	10.1 - Empty Homes Policy- Our Approach to Bringing Empty Homes Back to Use.	Owns a holiday home.

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair stated that he and his Consort, Councillor Nysia Evans, had had the pleasure of attending a number of events including the new Pendine Attractor Project.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER, CABINET MEMBERS AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chair advised that he had not been notified of any announcements.

5. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON THE:-

5.1. 1ST MARCH 2023

It was raised that Councillor. K. V. Broom declaration of interest for item 5.1 Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26 (that daughter works in Social Care) should be attributed to K. Madge.

RESOLVED that subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 1st March, 2023 be signed as a correct record.

5.2. 8TH MARCH 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 8th March, 2023 be signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor. S. L. Davies in the list of apologies.

6. TO CONSIDER NOMINATIONS FOR THE CHAIR OF COUNCIL FOR THE 2023-24 MUNICIPAL YEAR

RESOLVED that Councillor B.A.L. Roberts be nominated Chair Elect of Carmarthenshire County Council for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

7. TO CONSIDER NOMINATIONS FOR THE VICE CHAIR OF COUNCIL FOR THE 2023-2024 MUNICIPAL YEAR

RESOLVED that Councillor H.L. Davies be nominated Vice-Chair Elect of Carmarthenshire County Council for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

8. APPOINTMENT OF LAY PERSON TO THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that, in order to satisfy the requirement of the Council's Constitution, the County Council appoint Karen Jones to the position of Lay Person on the Governance & Audit Committee for the period 19th April 2023 to 18th April 2028.

9. CARMARTHENSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD'S WELL-BEING PLAN: THE CARMARTHENSHIRE WE WANT

[Note: Councillor M. Palfreman having earlier declared an interest in this item and been granted dispensation by the Standards Committee to speak remained in the meeting during consideration of the item].

The Council received a report, presented by the Council Leader and Chair of the PSB, presenting the PSBs final Plan for consideration and approval by the four

statutory members of the Board (Carmarthenshire County Council, Hywel Dda University Health Board, Natural Resources Wales and Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority).

The Leader advised that the Partnership had a long and successful history of partnership working and promoting positive culture of collaboration focused on providing efficient and effective services to the local communities.

As part of the preparation of the Plan, Carmarthenshire PSB has undertaken a detailed Well-being Assessment of the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the county. The assessment, along with a series of engagement events were used to identify the Carmarthenshire well-being objectives and the actions to make progress against those objectives. The objectives and actions identified as part of the Plan focused on areas of collective action that the PSB could influence by working together and did not therefore replicate what was considered to be the core business of the individual member bodies of the PSB, unless there was added value to be gained by the PSB working together.

The Leader highlighted the five key well-being objectives that would be the focus over the next few years:

- Ensuring a sustainable economy and fair employment
- Improving well-being and reducing health inequalities
- Responding to the climate and nature emergencies
- Tackling poverty and its impacts
- Helping to create safe, diverse, bilingual communities.

It was noted that the Plan would then be adopted by the PSB at its meeting on the 25 April for delivery from May 2023 onwards.

The Leader took the opportunity to acknowledge the contribution and extended his thanks to the former PSB Chair Barry Liles of UWTSO and Coleg Sir Gâr. Before stepping down from as chair in July last year, Barry had been Chairman of the PSB since its inception in 2016 and had provided strong leadership in developing the Board.

RESOLVED To endorse the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board's Well-being Plan 2023-2028.

10. TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CABINET IN RESPECT OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM:-

10.1. EMPTY HOMES POLICY- OUR APPROACH TO BRINGING EMPTY HOMES BACK TO USE

[Note: Councillors S.L. Davies, K.V. Broom, M. James, D.E. Williams and S.A. Curry had earlier declared an interest in this item and remained in the meeting during the deliberation and voting thereof]

The Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 27th March 2023 (minute 8 refers) had considered a report which provided an introduction to

the Empty Homes Policy that set the vision and the work programme for the Council in tackling empty private residential homes within the County for the next 3 years. The report provided clear direction on the approach and where efforts would be focussed to meet this and other policy goals.

The Cabinet Member reported that empty homes were a wasted resource when there was a shortage of housing across the County, including rural wards. These properties were reported as being a blight on neighbourhoods and could be a focus for anti-social behaviour.

The Council had committed to bringing empty homes back into use as quickly as possible and had worked with the owners of empty homes and partners to take all available opportunities to help tackle the issue of long-term empty properties.

The Cabinet Members advised that bringing empty homes back into use could help address a number of housing and social issues by increasing supply in areas where there were housing shortages and pressures and where there were opportunities to link to other regeneration projects.

The Policy set out the approach and would allow officers to target certain types of properties, in certain areas, and would give clarity and confidence in any actions undertaken.

Additionally, it was noted that progress had been made over the past five years to reduce the overall number of empty homes through persistent activity and action to encourage/ enforce against homeowners to bring them back into use. The current number reported was 1,984 (Sep 2022). This represented approximately 2.1% of the overall housing stock within the County.

In response to a query regarding the timescales for turning around the Council's own empty properties the Cabinet Member advised that timescales varied considerably depending on the state of the property. It was noted that timescales had reduced significantly.

In response to a query regarding the potential use of pod type homes which are currently being trialled by Newport Council the Cabinet Member confirmed that the Authority had looked at this solution however the preference was to provide permanent homes to residents and that pods were only suitable for very short term occupation.

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

“

- **the Empty Homes Policy - “Our Approach to Bringing Empty Homes Back in to Use” be approved.**
- **the vision to reduce the number of empty properties in the County to 1500 by 2026 be agreed.**
- **the type of properties and the rating matrix applied to empty properties meets the policy goals be confirmed.**
- **the Empty Homes Policy aligns with the Council decision to impose Council Tax Premiums on long term empty properties and the way this is enforced through this policy be confirmed.**

- the performance measures were consistent and reflective of the efforts being made to bring empty homes back into use be agreed.”

11. TO RECEIVE THE REPORTS OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE:-

11.1. 13TH MARCH 2023

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13th March, 2023 be received.

11.2. 27TH MARCH 2023

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 27th March, 2023 be received.

12. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NOTICES OF MOTION:-

12.1. NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY COUNCILLORS EDWARD THOMAS AND ARWEL DAVIES

[Note: Councillor F. Walters had earlier declared an interest in this item and left the meeting during the deliberation and voting thereof].

Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Edward Thomas and Arwel Davies:-

“This council deplores the decision of Barclays Bank to close the Llandeilo branch on 23rd June .This decision leaves a large part of county without banking facilities. This council requests Barclays to review their decision or at the very least provide adequate alternatives for customers to deal with the bank.”

The motion was duly seconded.

The proposers 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.

A number of statements were made in support of the Motion.

RESOLVED that the Motion be supported.

12.2. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR HEFIN JONES, EDWARD THOMAS, ROB JAMES AND JOHN JAMES

[Note: Councillor S.L. Davies had earlier declared an interest in this item and left the meeting during the deliberation and voting thereof].

Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Hefin Jones, Edward Thomas, Rob James and John James:-

“This council:

1. Requests that the Welsh Government reconsiders its position in relation to the withdrawal of the emergency bus subsidy scheme and extends it until such a time as services are suitably restructured, ensuring no area is left without reasonable access to public transport.
2. Also, requests that urgent steps are taken in collaboration with this local authority to prioritise investment in, and the implementation of demand led bus services (bwcabus and dial a ride type services) in those areas that will be impacted by the withdrawal of the emergency bus subsidy scheme, strategically and flexibly aligning delivery with demand.
3. Notes the Welsh Government’s Bws Cymru plan and White Paper are aimed at delivering a bus service that will be governed and designed for the best interest of the people of Wales and requests that its inception be brought forward.”

The motion was duly seconded.

The proposers 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.

A number of statements were made in support of the Motion.

RESOLVED that the Motion be supported.

13. PUBLIC QUESTION:-

13.1. QUESTION FROM REV. ANGHARAD GRIFFITH M.A. TO COUNCILLOR GLYNOG DAVIES, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE.

“With a significant increase in the amount of children officially diagnosed with PDA, Pathological Demand Avoidance, as part of the Autistic profile, may I therefore ask:-

What plans/structures are already in place with you as an Education Department to ensure long and short term educational fairness for the children and what resources and training and understanding do you have in place for you as Education Department Staff, staff in schools and centres and indeed as a Council?”

Response by Councillor. Glynog Davies, Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language:-

I realise that you do have a great concern in this area. It’s a very complicated matter and you know that and a lot of us are aware of that. It is a very important question and it is a personal question to yourself and I would like to say that I am very pleased that this condition is being recognised. If you go back a few years the label of “naughty children” would have been given to those who are now autistic. We have moved on considerably from there. Inclusion and ensuring the

very best for every learner, I want to emphasise that – for every learner in our county is a priority for us. It is a priority that we consider regularly as an Education Department. Just as important for us to make sure that we do provide the best, we have to update our own information. Information in this area changes regularly and we are learning all the time about it and our understanding is just as important. How do we go about responding to the news that we receive. I understand, according to the National Autistic Society, PDA is a profile to describe those where the main characteristic is that they avoid expectations and tasks. We have better understanding of this all the time. It is a profile on the spectrum itself. The autistic spectrum, you have to remember, is a very complicated and widespread one but what we are discussing now, the PDA, is a profile on the autistic spectrum. The children and young people avoid day to day demands. They use strategies as part of this avoidance if you like. PDA individuals share autistic characteristics, what is familiar to a lot of us but they also have many other characteristics which is relevant to this PDA profile. So, with these learners we have to work in a very different way and collaborative methods of teaching and regular daily tasks are much more effective working with them as individuals. I have to emphasise that PDA is a diagnosis which is relatively new and we know that but despite it being new Carmarthenshire has raised awareness of it and I want to emphasise that. We have genuinely been raising awareness of this condition. Training involving PDA is very important and it has been now included into the training provision of the Authority. We had to put a lot of steps in place immediately to make sure that we were aware of the condition and also how to adapt our way of working. By now all the schools in the county are aware of PDA even though it is quite new and that it is part of the autistic spectrum. Training is provided and it has been given to those who are coordinating Additional Learning Needs and that information is available to all the staff of our schools. We share this information on our information sharing systems. We had an expert, Laura Kirby, to provide specific modules for us and all this is available online and there are videos which have been prepared and they are available as well to support pupils who have PDA. If they want, our schools can also ask for further specialist advice from our Psychologists. We have Behaviour Support Officers and they provide support to our staff and we have Advisory Teachers for autism and who are experts in this field. When we appoint staff to work in the autism area they have to have a specific understanding of PDA and how to put strategies in place Very often we refer schools to the resources from the PDA Association. I have looked at their website and it is excellent, and it is worth reading. In an area which can be so complicated and I realise that parents do have a big concern about this and we want to work together with parents by sharing information if possible. Very often, what works for one learner might not be suitable for another learner, so we have to discuss very carefully. Over the next academic year we will be providing training in relation to awareness of PDA and this will be further training. This sharing of information has to happen on a continuous basis as we learn more and understand more and we will be sharing all that information with the ALENCOs in the schools. This is done via the ALENCO Forum. I want to emphasise once again that we are genuinely doing our very best to ensure educational fairness for all our learners but you are more than welcome, like any other parent, to engage with us as a county if you have a specific concern that you want to address.

Supplementary question by Rev Angharad Griffiths:-

How can we move forward as a department and parents to ensure that there are less failings and less failings of our children in the current education system please?

Response by Councillor. Glynog Davies, Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language to the supplementary question:-

I really do sympathise with you personally and I am sure that we as a Council really do sympathise with you. The only thing that I can guarantee is that everything we are learning and the latest developments about this condition - we receive it and we understand it and then we share that information. If you see any weakness in any part of what we are offering at the moment, as I said earlier, I am very keen to hear.

I would very much welcome any further comments that you have. I can give you my word that myself and the Director will meet with yourself and any other parent to discuss your concerns. I can't say more than that but we are learning more and more about the condition all the time and we are sharing that information.

14. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS (NONE RECEIVED):-

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

15. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES:-

RESOLVED that:-

- 15.1 Councillor A. Leyshon be appointed to replace Councillor J.D. James on the Planning Committee.
- 15.2 Councillor R.E. Evans be appointed to replace Councillor J. Seward on the Health and Social Services Scrutiny Committee.
- 15.3 Councillor M. Thomas be appointed to replace Councillor N. Evans on the Communities, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.
- 15.4 Councillor H. Jones be appointed to replace Councillor L.M Davies on the Education, Young People and Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee.

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

The Chair stated that the minutes outlined on the agenda under 16.1 – 16.14 were available for information on the Council website.

CHAIR

DATE