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THURSDAY, 13 APRIL 2023

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

I HEREBY SUMMON YOU TO ATTEND THE **MULTI LOCATION MEETING OF CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL** WHICH WILL BE HELD IN THE **CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, CARMARTHEN. SA31 1JP AND REMOTELY AT 10.00 AM, ON WEDNESDAY, 19TH APRIL, 2023** FOR THE TRANSACTION OF THE BUSINESS OUTLINED ON THE ATTACHED AGENDA

Jake Morgan

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Democratic Officer:	Emma Bryer
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THE MEETING CAN BE VIEWED ON THE AUTHORITY'S WEBSITE VIA THE FOLLOWING LINK:-
<https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Wendy Walters Prif Weithredwr, *Chief Executive*,
Neuadd y Sir, Caerfyrddin. SA31 1JP
County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS.
3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)
4. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER, CABINET MEMBERS AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (IF ANY)
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10. TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CABINET IN RESPECT OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM:-
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12. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NOTICES OF MOTION:-
 - 12.1 NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED 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 ."

12 .2 NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR 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.”

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?”

14. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS (NONE RECEIVED):-

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

15 .1 THE LABOUR GROUP HAS NOMINATED COUNCILLOR ANTHONY LEYSHON TO REPLACE COUNCILLOR JOHN JAMES ON THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

15 .2 THE LABOUR GROUP HAS NOMINATED COUNCILLOR ROB EVANS TO REPLACE COUNCILLOR JACQUELINE SEWARD ON THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 15 .3 THE LABOUR GROUP HAS NOMINATED COUNCILLOR MICHAEL THOMAS TO REPLACE COUNCILLOR NYSIA EVANS ON THE COMMUNITIES, HOMES AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
- 15 .4 THE PLAID CYMRU GROUP HAS NOMINATED COUNCILLOR HEFIN JONES TO REPLACE COUNCILLOR LLINOS DAVIES ON THE EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
- 16. MINUTES FOR INFORMATION (AVAILABLE TO VIEW ON THE WEBSITE)**
 - 16 .1 COMMUNITIES HOMES AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 23RD FEBRUARY 2023**
 - 16 .2 PLACE SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 24TH FEBRUARY 2023**
 - 16 .3 STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 27TH FEBRUARY 2023**
 - 16 .4 LICENSING COMMITTEE - 28TH FEBRUARY 2023**
 - 16 .5 PLANNING COMMITTEE - 2ND MARCH 2023**
 - 16 .6 STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 7TH MARCH 2023**
 - 16 .7 HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 9TH MARCH 2023**
 - 16 .8 GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE - 17TH MARCH 2023**
 - 16 .9 APPEALS COMMITTEE 20TH MARCH 2023**
 - 16 .10 EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 24TH MARCH 2023**
 - 16 .11 DYFED PENSION FUND COMMITTEE - 28TH MARCH 2023**
 - 16 .12 PLANNING COMMITTEE - 30TH MARCH 2023**
 - 16 .13 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 31ST MARCH 2023**
 - 16 .14 GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE - 31ST MARCH 2023**

COUNTY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 1 MARCH 2023

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

Councillors (In Person):

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

Councillors (Virtually):

K.V. Broom	J.M. Charles	M.D. Cranham	D.M. Cundy
S.A. Curry	A. Davies	W.R.A. Davies	T.A.J. Davies
L.M. Davies	S.L. Davies	T. Davies	A. Evans
D.C. Evans	H.A.L. Evans	W.T. Evans	A.D. Harries
J.P. Hart	T.M. Higgins	J.K. Howell	P. Hughes-Griffiths
J.D. James	M. James	J.P. Jenkins	B.W. Jones
A.C. Jones	G.R. Jones	M.J.A. Lewis	A.G. Morgan
D. Owen	S.L. Rees	H.B. Shepardson	R. Sparks
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
 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
 R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services
 L. Jenkins, Cabinet Support Officer
 S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator
 K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

K. Evans, Assistant Democratic Services Officer
 J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer
 S. Hendy, Member Support Officer
 R. Morris, Members Support Officer

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 am - 2.10 pm

(Note:

- At 12:55pm the Council's attention was drawn to Council Procedure Rule (CPR) 9 – Duration of Meeting and, as the meeting would have been underway for three hours at 1:10pm, it was resolved to suspend standing orders, in accordance with CPR 23.1, to enable the remaining business on the agenda to be considered.
- The Council also adjourned at 12.55 for a 20 minute comfort break]

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Bowen, C. Davies, H. Davies, S. Godfrey-Coles, E. Rees and J. Seward.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS.

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
A Vaughan-Owen	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Wife is a primary school head teacher
L.M. Davies	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Husband teaches as a head of Music
N. Evans	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Daughter works for the library service
R. Evans	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Daughter works for the library service
L.D. Evans	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Daughter is a teacher
H. Shepardson	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Daughter is a teacher
H. Shepardson	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Member of the Fire Authority
G. Morgan	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Tenant at Delta Lakes
T. Higgins	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Niece works in the library service
D.C. Evans	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Wife works in the Council's Contact Centre
K. Broom	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Member of the Fire Authority
K. Broom	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Daughter works in Social Care
J. Hart	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Sister is a teacher
B. Jones	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Son is a Head Teacher
P. Warlow	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Wife works in Social Care
A Evans	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Mother works in the Chief Executive's Department
F. Walters	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Family members are teachers

A Leyshon	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Daughter works in the library service
D. Nicholas	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Daughter works in the Planning Department
C.A. Jones	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Daughter-in-law works in Education
E. Williams	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Chair of the Fire Authority
D. Cundy	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Relatives work for the Council
E. Skinner	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Niece works for the Authority
R. Sparks	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Has a business in the leisure industry and has dispensation to speak but not vote
L. Roberts	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Family members work for the Council
G.B. Thomas	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Member of the Fire Authority
M. Palfreman	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Runs a Social Care Consultancy Business – Has dispensation to speak but not vote
B. Davies	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Wife works for Social Care
G. John	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Family Members work for the Authority
T.A.J. Davies	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Sister-in-Law works for the Council
Andrew Davies	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Wife is a Teacher
J. James	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Son-in-Law works for the Authority
R. James	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Partner works for the Authority
P.M. Hughes	5.1 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26	Family Member works for the Council
M. Charles	7.1 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Rob James, Deryk Cundy, Andrew Davies and Arwel Davies	Is a landowner and previously expressed an opinion on the matter. Has dispensation to speak but not vote
C.A. Davies	7.1 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Rob James, Deryk Cundy, Andrew Davies and Arwel Davies	Has dispensation to speak but not vote

H. Jones	7.1 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Rob James, Deryk Cundy, Andrew Davies and Arwel Davies	Has Dispensation to speak but not vote
W.T. Evans	7.1 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Rob James, Deryk Cundy, Andrew Davies and Arwel Davies	
M. Charles	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Is a landowner – has dispensation to speak and vote
C.A. Davies	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Has dispensation to speak and vote
Andrew Davies	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Has dispensation to speak and vote
B. Davies	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Has dispensation to speak and vote
T.A.J. Davies	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Has cattle on the farm. Has dispensation to speak and vote
H.A.L Evans	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Has dispensation to speak and vote
L.D. Evans	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Close family member who farms. Has dispensation to speak and vote
W.T. Evans	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Has dispensation to speak and vote

J.K. Howell	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Is a Farmer. His dispensation to speak and vote
H. Jones	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Has dispensation to speak and vote
J. Lewis	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Has cattle on the farm. Has dispensation to speak and vote
G.B. Thomas	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Has dispensation to speak and vote
S.M. Allen	7.2 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies	Husband is a vet and involved with TB eradication and treatment

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- The Chair reported on his attendance at a recent visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales to the Wales Air Ambulance Station in Dafen, Llanelli,
- The Chair welcomed to the meeting Magda Smith, Marianna Pilichowska, Tom Vaughan-Jones, Jacob Eatly and Iestyn Davies, members of the Youth Council who were working towards their Councillor Shadowing Award that recognised young people's understanding and involvement in local democracy,
- Councillor Gareth Thomas extended his congratulations to the staff and pupils at Hendy Primary School on winning Heno's 'Carol yr Wyl 2022 (Carol of Christmas) competition.

4. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 25TH JANUARY 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 25th January, 2023 be signed as a correct record.

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

5.1. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2023/24 - 2025/26

(NOTE: Councillors A Vaughan Owen, L.M. Davies, N. Evans, R. Evans, L.D. Evans, H. Shephardson, G. Morgan, T. Higgins, D.C. Evans, K. Broom, J. Hart, B. Jones, P. Warlow, A. Evans, F. Walters, A. Leyshon, D. Nicholas, C.A. Jones, E. Williams, D. Cundy, E. Skinner, R. Sparks, L. Roberts, G. Thomas, M. Palfreman, B. Davies, G. John, T.A.J. Davies, Andrew Davies, J. James R. James and P.M. Hughes had earlier declared an interest in this item remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting thereon)

Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 20th February 2023 (Minute 5 Refers) had considered the Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26 and made a number of recommendations, as detailed within the report of the Director of Corporate Services, for Council's consideration.

The Council received a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Resources, on behalf of the Cabinet, 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.

It was explained that with the Welsh Governments budget process being much later than normal, the report being presented to Council that day had been prepared prior to the Welsh Government announcing its final settlement figures on the 28th February. Nevertheless, it had been possible for some of the key components of the Council's budget assumptions and allocations to be reviewed. That had enabled some of the original proposals in the budget outline to be revisited and for further options to be considered and presented as part of the report to Council. On an all-Wales basis, whilst the provisional settlement figures reflected a 7.9% funding increase, with Carmarthenshire having received an 8.5% uplift, the final settlement figure had also provided Carmarthenshire with an additional £10.7k which would be added to its contingency budget.

Due to the lateness of the final settlement, Council was advised that the report provided for delegation to be granted to the Director of Corporate Services, in liaison with the Leader, Chief Executive and Cabinet Member for Resources to make any adjustments as necessary, upon receiving the final settlement. Whilst the Council had been informed of those amendments that day, the Director would still need to follow those adjustments through in the budget tables following its meeting. The Director had also adjusted some of the other figures within the strategy as part of the normal routine as clearer and more information had become available, with the current total validation having added more than £30m on to the budget.

The Cabinet Member advised that although the report maintained a pay assumption of 5% for 2023/24 for both NJC, as well as teaching staff, the national employers in respect of NJC staff had, subsequent to the Cabinet's meeting on the 20th February, made a cash offer to the Trade Unions similar to 2022/23. That offer was estimated to reflect a 6.7% increase resulting in a 1.7% shortfall equivalent to approximately £3m on net budgets. With that offer having only recently been made, the Welsh Government had not been able to consider how it may be supported given the fact it was again above almost all Local Authorities assumptions. As a consequence, it was considered prudent for the

Cabinet Member for Resources together with the Director to give consideration on how to accommodate the additional budgetary pressure, especially as Welsh Government funding was unclear with the Director having advised the Council would need to use a combination of the following measures to fund the shortfall, should it be accepted:

- Allocate £1m from the contingency budget,
- Utilise the National Non Domestic Rate revaluation adjustment, estimated at around £500k and,
- Allocate £1.5m from general balances, if it was not possible to recover the funding from underspends during the year,

Whilst the above proposal was not considered an ideal scenario it was considered to be a practical and prudent approach at the current point in the budget process. Additionally, the Authority also had to recognise the potential risk of negotiations going further during the forthcoming year.

With regard to the teachers' pay awards, an offer of 1.5% consolidated and 1.5% unconsolidated had been put forward by the Welsh Government Minister in respect of the pay settlement applicable from last September. As the Authority had accommodated a 5% increase within its budget strategy, there was a potential shortfall in the region of £1.9m. Whilst it was expected Welsh Government would fund a substantial part of the additional offer, nothing had formally been confirmed at the present time and the position would need to be monitored during the year, as negotiations were finalised.

The Council was advised that the budget proposals had been widely consulted on for nearly six weeks with approximately 2,000 responses having been received. Meetings had been held with the Leader of the Opposition and their Resources Spokesperson. Additionally, 80 young people from the Council's secondary schools had met with cabinet members and officers to express their views on budget priorities. It had become evident from all who participated in the consultation they appreciated that difficult choices that had to be made.

As referenced above, the Council was advised that changes to some of the key assumptions such as pay and income calculations, updated energy prices based on the latest information, and the release of capital charges had enabled some changes to be made to the final budget proposals, as detailed in paragraph 3.2.5 of the report, resulting in a total sum of almost £1.8m being available to make changes to next year's budget. Accordingly, the Cabinet had recommended that to make best use of that sum the following adjustments be made to the Budget Strategy, that took account of the consultation process and responded to the feedback received from both public and councillors:

Firstly:

£1.3million be provided to remove or reduce the 9 specific budget reductions on paragraph 3.2.5 including:

- keeping St Clears Leisure centre open whilst we work with the community to set it on a viable financial path,

- restoring 1/4 of a million pounds back to children's and youth services to invest in the prevention agenda,

- lessening the impact on both the school music service and learning disability services.

- reducing the financial ask on schools by £700,000, and also deferring any changes to the rising 4s policy by a year to ensure wider consultation and allowing the proper time to plan any possible changes.

Secondly:

- The Introduction of charging at the 9 car parks that were currently free be deferred, to allow the Authority time to assess and consider the wider impact on the individual areas. The value of the deferment in year 1 was £10k. and

- The withdrawal of the reduction of £22k in the Welsh Language budget under the Corporate Policy section, which was used to support projects and commission related work and research.

Thirdly,

that £385k be used to support both hard working families and businesses by restricting car park charges and school meals to a 5% increase, half the current rate of inflation.

Fourthly,

responding to concerns over highways and town centres, that £262k is allocated directly towards these priorities. We recognise that Welsh Government had suffered a significant contraction in its capital budgets, and therefore some of the historical support provided for public realm works had dried up in recent years – this funding allocation will act as at least partial mitigation.

Finally, and most importantly, that left sufficient funding available to reduce the council tax increase to 6.8% for next year which it was felt struck the right balance in terms of protecting vital services which our citizens rely upon and look to the council to deliver each and every day.

The Cabinet Member advised that adopting the proposals would allow the Council to present a fair and balanced budget for next year, that responded to the views fed back from the consultation. If all the proposals outlined in the report and summarised to the County Council were implemented, he confirmed a sustainable and viable Budget Strategy would be provided which:

- Responded to the consultation,
- Ensured, as far as possible, that service level and standards were maintained,
- Recognised that citizens were finding it hard in the current climate and ensured core services were protected,
- As far as possible prepared the Authority for the significant uncertainties that lay ahead.

However, he also advised that unlike previous years, the recent pay award was a significant financial risk to the budget moving forward and whilst the management of that additional cost in the current year had been addressed, the level of additional cost and uncertainty presented a significant risk to the medium term sustainability of services in the years 2025/26 onwards, depending on the future Welsh Government settlements that would require careful monitoring during the forthcoming years.

In concluding the Cabinet Member, on behalf of the Cabinet, moved the Budget Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26 recommendations as noted in the report, setting a Band D Council Tax for 2023/24 of £1,490.97, which was an increase of 6.8 %.

RESOLVED that the following recommendations of the Cabinet be adopted and approved:

“the Budget Strategy for 2023/24, which includes the amendments at paragraph 4.1.4;

the Band D Council Tax for 2023/24 be set at £1,490.97 (an increase of 6.80%);

The removal of specific savings proposals as identified in paragraph 3.2.5 of the report with the following amendments;

- i) To defer until 2024/25 the introduction of new charges at 9 car parks that are currently free to allow the authority to assess and consider the wider impact on the individual areas on a case-by-case basis. The value of the deferment in year 1 is £10k,**
- ii) To remove the £22k Welsh Language saving from the Corporate Policy Budget**

the restriction of income uplifts to school meals and car parks as identified in paragraph 3.2.5;

The discretionary allocation of pressures funding to highways and town centres as identified in paragraph 3.2.5 amended to a value of £262k to accommodate the two changes proposed by Cabinet

the Medium Term Financial Plan which will form the basis for future years financial planning;

the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, be granted delegated authority to make any amendments necessary as a consequence of the Welsh Government final settlement due on the 1st March 2023”.

5.2. FIVE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME (COUNCIL FUND) 2023/24 - 2027/28

Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 20th February 2023 (Minute 6 refers) had considered the Five Year Capital Programme (Council Fund) 2023/24 to 2027/28 taking into account the consultation exercise undertaken and the revenue implications arising from the capital programme.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented to the Council, on behalf of the Cabinet, the report on the Five Year Capital Programme which would see £265m of investment over the next five years, £73m of which was for the continued commitment for improving our school buildings, £27m for Regeneration projects to boost economic activity, £86m for City Deal backed projects which included a new leisure centre for Llanelli, and £59m to improve the local economic infrastructure and wider environment. The programme provided a comprehensive and wide-ranging package supported by funding from the Welsh Government, the UK government, and the council's own resources.

It was noted that the detailed provisional capital programme had been presented to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 30th January for consultation. Following concerns about the lack of Provision for flood prevention and the lack of Welsh Government grant funding for decarbonisation measures, the programme had been revised to include further commitments in those areas. No other matters of concern were raised during this consultation and an extract from the relevant minute of the meeting was included in Appendix B for information.

It was reported that as the previous capital programme focused support for businesses on the need to boost the local economy that remained the focus as the Council continued to maintain support for the local economy with major investments in levelling up projects and continued support for investment in infrastructure.

The programme included three ongoing transformational projects each focused on a different primary town area.

Firstly - the agreement to start construction on Zone One of the Pentre Awel development in Llanelli had been signed, at a contract price of £86m creating five dedicated buildings associated with "street" space, which would also include an aquatic centre, sports hall, multipurpose sports and fitness rooms and gymnasium, education and training facilities, clinical and research provision, and innovation and business space. The project would transform the landscape and economy of south Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, and a greater part of West Wales.

Secondly, a £19.6m hub would be provided at the heart of Carmarthen Town Centre boosting footfall in the town centre as the Council built back from the pandemic providing a home for the County's art collection, health and education facilities as well as being the new home to the authority's Carmarthen Hwb and retail units. The investment would also act as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the town centre.

Thirdly, a £19m investment to complete the Tywi Valley Path within the Dinefwr area would bring significant benefits to the rural economy and improvements to health and wellbeing of residents.

The Cabinet Member advised that in addition to these large flagship projects, the Council would continue to support its ongoing programmes of investments in infrastructure and property portfolio in year five of the programme:

The programme would continue to support Schools and Sustainable Communities for Learning which, in recent years, had seen the completion of new school buildings and refurbishment across the county, most recently with the opening of the new Ysgol Gynradd Gorslas, and Ysgol Gynradd Pum Heol and the current construction of Ysgol Pembrey. Provision was therefore made in the programme for further feasibility developments, as the authority continued to work with Welsh Government to work up plans for other communities across the county to benefit from this investment in schools and delivering a 21st Century education experience for our 21st Century children and future generations.

It was noted that such feasibility works had been ongoing in the 2022/23 financial year on several schools and therefore those projects were not listed as part of the new programme. The fruits of that work would be seen in the future as the projects secured grant funding from government and were supported in coming years. It was also noted that the primary schools in Ammanford, which were part of the programme, were not listed because they were part of Mutual Investment Model (MIM) bids and would therefore be delivered in conjunction with partners in the private sector funded through revenue in due course.

The Cabinet Member advised that in addition to the flagship projects outlined, the authority would seek to continue supporting its our ongoing rolling programmes of investments in infrastructure and the authority's property portfolio in year five of the programme i.e:

£2.5m for Disability Facilities Grants.
£250k to improve Road Safety.
£250k for highways drainage
£400k for Bridge Strengthening
£600k for ongoing Highway Refurbishment
£400k for Public Lighting
£500k for Education General Works including adaptations to comply with the Equalities Act
£2m for the Strategic Regeneration Project Fund.
£3m for Capital Maintenance for investment in our property estate.

Collectively, over the next five years investment in these rolling programmes would amount to over £48m.

It was noted that 2026/27 would also see the proposed continuation of the £66k annual allocation to Rights of Ways and Byways, in recognition of the Council's obligations in that area and the wider community health and environmental benefits provided by these valuable resources.

The Cabinet Member advised that further investments would also be made across the programme as follows:

In Education – additional funds would be made available to complete the bus bays at Ysgol Dyffryn Taf. Approval would be sought for the inclusion of further bus bays at other schools, namely: Glanymor, Amman Valley and for traffic management improvements at Bro Myrddin. A package of £1.7m new monies. Given the urgency of these projects they would all be included in the first year of the new programme. Additionally, given the urgent need for the provision of an ASD unit for secondary age pupils in the east of the county, a proposal for such a unit in the Llanelli/Burry Port area was also included in the first year - 2023/24, at a value of £2m.

In Communities - in addition to the continued funding for Disability Facilities Grants, already mentioned, within the leisure portfolio a 4G pitch would be provided at the Amman Valley Leisure Centre. Work would also commence on the redevelopment of Oriel Myrddin complimenting other cultural projects completed in recent years such as the new Carmarthenshire Archive – Y Stordy, and redevelopments of the County Museum at Abergwili and Parc Howard.

In Environment - £75k would be provided in 2023/24 to match fund flood management and £1m for flood mitigation works. £4.7m would be provided for the replacement of refuse and recycling vehicles, included as part of the commitment to the rollout of kerbside sorting and recycling collections. As the authority looked to transition to a low carbon economy its highways would still continue to play an important role, therefore, in recognition of their importance to the local economy, and to mitigate the lack of Welsh Government support specifically for investment for highways, a sum of £1m of new money was included in the programme funded from borrowing for highway improvements. That was in addition to the £600k ongoing annual rolling programme and complimented the significant investments in highway improvements in recent years.

With regard to Decarbonisation, the Council had the previous year introduced £500k for the decarbonisation of its built estate and would continue that investment with a further £500K in 2023/24. That came on the top of grants made available to local businesses to introduce renewable energy measures awarded in recent years and demonstrated Carmarthenshire's commitment to the climate change and decarbonisation agenda.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) was crucial to future ways of working; therefore, the programme included £2.4m in this purpose. It includes annual funding of £200k to support digital transformational projects across council services. The County would also see the benefit of the Swansea Bay City Region Digital Project in the coming years.

Overall, the proposed capital programme committed the Council to significant investment over the five years by optimising funding opportunities and maximising the funding from potential external sources. A combination of existing and new schemes in line with the corporate vision would develop the local economy, create jobs, and enhance the quality of life for our citizens and visitors to the county, while safeguarding resources for future generations.

It was noted that County Council funding available for the programme was currently estimated at £168m and included borrowing, both supported and unsupported, reserves and direct revenue funding, Capital Receipts from the sale of surplus assets and Capital grants and contributions of £100m would come from external grant funding bodies. As part of this year's settlement, Welsh Government had provided indicative general capital funding figures up to 2024/25, as reflected in the programme. Funding for years three, four and five of the programme were based on an assumed level of support equivalent to that received in 2024/25 going forward. It was noted that the WG funding for 2023/24 was 55K less than previously expected. The overall level of assumed funding in the later years of the programme was in excess of the current commitments. That uncommitted funding would allow the authority the flexibility to meet future pressures associated with rising costs and other challenges.

As noted with the Revenue Budget Strategy, the final settlement had been received on the 28th February and officers had assessed the main funding sources for the capital programme and confirmed they had not changed from the provisional settlement. However further work would be required to assess direct capital grants and any amendments as a consequence of those and, if required would be addressed by the final recommendation in the report.

The Cabinet Member advised that comprehensive details of the proposed programme were set out in Appendix A to the report and officers would continue to monitor individual schemes and funding availability. Whilst both would need to be closely managed to ensure the schemes were delivered in full, he confirmed the programme was fully funded for the five years.

It was noted that Appendix C, as required by the prudential code of capital finance, included the Council's Capital Strategy Document 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 Cabinet Member advised that the Capital Programme sought to maximise opportunities was comprehensive and ambitious, with the focus on economic stimulation and the provision of high-quality facilities for our residents.

RESOLVED that the following recommendations of the Cabinet be adopted:

- “5.2.1 The Five-Year Capital Programme and funding as detailed in Appendix A to the report with 2023/24 being a hard budget and 2024/25 to 2027/28 soft/indicative budgets be approved;**
- 5.2.2 The programme be reviewed, as usual, if anticipated external or County Council funding did not materialise;**
- 5.2.3 The Capital Strategy, as detailed in Appendix C be approved;**
- 5.2.4 The Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources**

be delegated authority to make any adjustments necessary as a consequence of the final settlement from the Welsh Government due on the 1st March 2022”.

5.3. TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY 2023-24

Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 20th February, 2023 (minute 7 refers) had considered the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2023/24.

The report had been produced in accordance with the requirements of the revised CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2017, whereby the Council had previously agreed to maintain a Treasury Management Policy detailing the policies and objectives of the Authority’s treasury management activities. It was noted that it was also a requirement that the Council approved a Treasury Management Strategy annually before the start of the financial year to which it related. In addition, under the Local Government Act 2003, the Council was required to approve the Treasury Management Indicators for the coming year.

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

- 5.3.1 The Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for 2023-24 and the recommendations contained therein be approved;**
- 5.3.2 The Treasury Management Indicators, Prudential Indicators, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, the Investment Strategy and recommendations therein be approved.**

5.4. CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CORPORATE STRATEGY 2022-27

Council was informed that Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 13th February 2023 (Minute 6 refers) had considered the Council’s Corporate Strategy 2022-2027, that included the Council’s well-being objectives and setting out the direction of travel and priorities for the organisation over the period of the current administration, whilst also providing the delivery framework on the Cabinet’s vision and commitments during the period. The new strategy would focus on a smaller number of population-based objectives whilst identifying the thematic priorities, service priorities and core business enablers that the Council would aim to progress during that period.

RESOLVED that the following recommendation of the Cabinet be accepted:

“that the Council’s Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 be approved”.

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

6.1. 30TH JANUARY 2023

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 30th January, 2023 be received.

6.2. 13TH FEBRUARY 2023

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

7. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NOTICES OF MOTION:-

7.1. NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY COUNCILLORS ROB JAMES, DERYK CUNDY, ANDREW DAVIES AND ARWEL DAVIES

[NOTE:

Councillors M. Charles, C.A Davies and H Jones having earlier declared an interest in this item, and been granted dispensation by the Standards Committee to speak on the item remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion but left the meeting during the vote]

Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Rob James, Deryk Cundy, Andrew Davies and Arwel Davies:-

“That Carmarthenshire County Council supports residents' and local businesses' concerns regarding the proposal to erect pylons to link Mithil Energy Park to the National Grid in Carmarthenshire; believes that Bute Energy should work with landowners to place the cables underground; and that we, as an Authority, writes formally to the energy firm to support the concerns raised.”

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.

7.2. NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY COUNCILLORS GARETH THOMAS, ANN DAVIES, ROB JAMES AND CRISH DAVIES

[NOTE:

Councillors M. Charles, C.A Davies, A. Davies, B. Davies, T.A.J. Davies, H.A.L. Davies, L.D. Evans, W.T. Evans, J.K. Howell, H. Jones, J. Lewis and G.B. Thomas having earlier declared an interest in this item, and been granted

dispensation by the Standards Committee to speak and vote on the item, remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and vote

Councillor S.M. Allen having earlier declared an interest in this item left the Council Chamber and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon]

Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gareth Thomas, Ann Davies, Rob James and Crish Davies:-

“An effective eradication strategy for Bovine TB

This council requests that Welsh Government uses the opportunity presented by the refreshed Bovine TB eradication strategy to establish its effectiveness in respect of animal welfare (both wildlife and livestock), public health and cost.

Persistently high infection levels, its impact on both animal welfare and public health combined with an ever increasing cost to the public purse suggest that existing measures are not fit for purpose.

We ask Welsh Government to note and take action on the following points :-

- Bovine TB is a communicable disease that should be addressed holistically as both a wildlife and farmed animal welfare issue, using a comprehensive suite of measures, guided by the best scientific advice available.
- The requirement to frequently test cattle raises stress to livestock and presents a high risk of injury and even fatalities for those involved in conducting tests for Bovine TB.
- The continuous failure to address Bovine TB triggers significant levels of mental health issues among farming families and persons in associated roles.
- Disease outbreaks on holdings need to be dealt with sensitively with effective and simplified communication.
- The eradication programme board should have a balanced representation including all impacted stakeholders.”

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.

8. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED).

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

9. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS (NONE RECEIVED)

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

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

The Chair stated that the minutes outlined on the agenda under 10.1 – 10.8 were available for information on the Council website.

CHAIR

DATE

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WEDNESDAY, 8 MARCH 2023

PRESENT: Councillor R.E. Evans (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

S.M. Allen	W.R.A. Davies	T.A.J. Davies	B. Davies
G. Davies	L. Davies	L.D. Evans	N. Evans
P.M. Hughes	G.H. John	D. Jones	H. Jones
A. Lenny	D. Nicholas	D. Price	B.A.L. Roberts
E.G. Thomas	M. Thomas	J. Tremlett	A. Vaughan Owen

Councillors (Virtually):

K.V. Broom	J.M. Charles	M.D. Cranham	D.M. Cundy
S.A. Curry	A. Davies	C. Davies	H.L. Davies
K. Davies	L.M. Davies	T. Davies	M. Donoghue
A. Evans	H.A.L. Evans	W.T. Evans	S. Godfrey-Coles
A.D. Harries	J.P. Hart	T.M. Higgins	J.K. Howell
P. Hughes-Griffiths	J.D. James	M. James	R. James
J.P. Jenkins	A.C. Jones	N. Lewis	A. Leyshon
K. Madge	A.G. Morgan	D. Owen	M. Palfreman
B.D.J. Phillips	S.L. Rees	E.M.J.G. Schiavone	H.B. Shepardson
E. Skinner	R. Sparks	D. 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;
 G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services;
 A. Williams, Director of Place and Infrastructure;
 L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law
 R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services;
 P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance);
 G. Morgan, Head of Democratic Services;
 A. Wood, People Services Manager;
 C. Higginson, Media Manager;
 L. Jenkins, Cabinet Support Officer;
 S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;
 M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer;

Also Present (Virtually):

J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer.

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen and remotely: 10.00 am - 12.30 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Davies, D.C. Evans, B.W. Jones, G.R. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, E. Rees, J. Seward and G.B. Thomas.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
L.R. Bowen	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Wife works in Council's Translation Unit;
K. Broom	6 - Second Homes and Empty Properties Council Tax Premiums;	Owns a property used as a holiday let;
J.M. Charles	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	A relative works in a non-teaching capacity in a secondary school;
M.D. Cranham	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Son works for the Council;
S. Godfrey-Coles	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Partner works for the Council;
D.M. Cundy	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	A number of relatives work for the Council;
D.M. Cundy	6 - Second Homes and Empty Properties Council Tax Premiums;	A relative owns a second home;
S.A. Curry	6 - Second Homes and Empty Properties Council Tax Premiums;	Owns a holiday home;
B. Davies	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Wife works in the Community Services Department of the Council;
L.M. Davies	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Sister-in-Law works as a teaching assistant;
T. Davies	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Family member works as a Teaching Assistant;
T.A.J. Davies	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Sister-in-Law works for the Council;
A. Evans	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Mother works in the Council's Democratic Services Section;
H.A.L. Evans	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Friend works for the Council;
H.A.L. Evans	6 - Second Homes and Empty Properties Council Tax Premiums;	Relative owns a holiday home;
L.D. Evans	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Relative works as a Teaching Assistant;
L.D. Evans	6 - Second Homes and Empty Properties Council Tax Premiums;	Relative owns a holiday home;
N. Evans	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Daughter works in Council's Library Services;
R.E. Evans	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Daughter works in Council's Library Services;

J.P. Hart	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Family members work for the Council;
T.M. Higgins	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Niece works in the Council's Libraries services;
P.M. Hughes	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Family member works for the Council;
J.D. James	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Son-in-Law works for the Council;
M. James	6 - Second Homes and Empty Properties Council Tax Premiums;	Likely to own an additional property during the period in question;
R. James	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Partner works in Council's Library Services;
G.H. John	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Family member works for the Council;
A.C. Jones	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Daughter-in Law works for the Council;
H. Jones	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Family member works as a teaching assistant;
A. Leyshon	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Daughter works in Council's Library Services;
K. Madge	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Daughter works in Social Care section of the Council;
D. Nicholas	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Daughter works in the Council's Planning Section;
M. Palfreman	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Friends work for the Council;
B.D.J. Phillips	6 - Second Homes and Empty Properties Council Tax Premiums;	Owens a holiday let;
B.A.L. Roberts	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Family members work for the Council;
F. Walters	5 – Pay Policy Statement 2023/24;	Family members work for the Council;
E. Williams	6 - Second Homes and Empty Properties Council Tax Premiums;	Has a share in his late mother's house.

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Chair stated that he and his Consort, Cllr. Nysia Evans, had had the pleasure of attending a number of events recently including the 111th birthday celebration of Mary Kier at Awel Tywi Care Home, Ffairfach, Llandeilo;

The Chair welcomed Lili Evans, Sam Williams, Magda Smith, Olivia Smolicz, Marianna Pilichowska and Zach Davis, members of the Youth Council, who were watching the proceedings on line. They were all working towards their Local Councillor Shadowing Award and some had been present in the Chamber at the previous Council meeting;

- Councillor Tyssul Evans stated that on St. David's Day he had had the pleasure of attending celebrations at Llangyndeyrn Village Hall to commemorate 60 years since the village had been saved from being drowned in 1963. Councillor Evans recounted his own recollections from 1963.

4. **SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24**

The Council received a report, presented by the Cabinet Member for Resources, setting out the financial details relevant to the setting of the Council Tax for the 2023/2024 financial year together with the Council Tax amounts in respect of the different Council Tax Valuation Bands, as applicable to each of the individual Community and Town Council areas.

It was noted that the recommendations contained within the report brought together the authority's budget requirement and the precepts for the Police Authority and the Town and Community Councils into the consolidated Council Tax amounts in respect of the individual Council Tax Valuation bands.

RESOLVED that, in order for the Council to comply with legislative requirements, the report and recommendations of the Director of Corporate Services on the setting of the Council Tax for the financial year 2023/24 be adopted.

5. **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/24**

[NOTE:

1. Councillors L.R. Bowen, J.M. Charles, M.D. Cranham, S. Godfrey-Coles, D.M. Cundy, B. Davies, L.M. Davies, T. Davies, A. Evans, H.A.L. Evans, L.D. Evans, N. Evans, R.E. Evans, J.P. Hart, T.M. Higgins, P.M. Hughes, J.D. James, R. James, G.H. John, A.C. Jones, H. Jones, A. Leyshon, K. Madge, D. Nicholas, M. Palfreman, B.A.L. Roberts and F. Walters had earlier declared interests in this item and, left the meeting;
2. All officers in attendance were deemed to have a personal interest in this item and left the meeting prior to its consideration with the exception of the the Democratic Services Manager, Democratic Services Officer and officers who were facilitating the webcasting of the meeting.
3. As the Cabinet Member for Organisation and Workforce had declared an interest in this item and left the meeting the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Services presented the report on his behalf.]

Prior to the departure of the aforementioned from the meeting, which included the Chair and Vice-Chair, it was moved, seconded and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Cllr. Dot Jones be appointed to Chair the meeting for this item.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Services, on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Organisation and Workforce, presented the report which outlined that, under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 all Local Authorities were

required to prepare a Pay Policy Statement which must be agreed and published by 1st April every year.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Services stated that, unlike many Authorities, Carmarthenshire County Council had a politically balanced Pay Policy Advisory Panel, which have already considered and advised on the Pay Policy Statement. The format of the Statement was, she added, compliant with the relevant legislation and guidance including guidance issued by the Welsh Government and best practice developed by the former Public Services Staff Commission. This year's Pay Policy Statement did not differ hugely from what had been presented this time last year. The key amendments were updated introductions from the Leader, and Chief Executive, which reflected the very different demands which had been placed upon the Council, post the COVID-19 pandemic and the current economic and financial pressures that society in general was facing.

It was the Authority's wish to continue to support the lowest paid, by ensuring that the voluntary Real Living Wage threshold was met by paying the equivalent of £10.90 per hour from 1st April 2023. The 22/23 Pay Award also removed point 1 of the salary scales and therefore the lowest hourly rate would be £10.59. The Pay Advisory Panel had therefore recommended that support for the lowest paid be continued by paying a supplement to bring hourly rates up to the Real Living Wage rate of £10.90.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Services advised on the further support for lowest paid staff, particularly our Home Care and Residential Care Workers and Refuse Loaders and Drivers. Trade Unions had raised an issue with the pay grading of the Refuse Loaders and refuse Drivers over a year ago. As a result the job profiles for both had been revised to reflect the new and proposed duties that both sets of workers would be undertaking to deliver the expectations of the new Waste Strategy. Both had seen an increase in their grades, with the Refuse Loaders going from a Grade C to a Grade D, and the Drivers going from a Grade E to a Grade F. Comparing the salaries from April 2023 to the same period last year this represented an increase in salary of 24% for the loaders. For the drivers compared with this time last year the total increase for their pay would be 27% overall. Taking into account the 2023/24 pay award that had yet to be agreed. The trade unions had confirmed that they were still in dispute with the authority on this issue and intended to ballot their members.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Services commented that the Pay Panel Advisory Panel had considered a number of Pay Model Options to include one that reflected the removal of Scale Point One as this has been agreed nationally, at an additional cost of £10k. The preferred Pay Model submitted by the Trade Unions had seen the removal of all the overlapping grades and also the reduction of the number of scale points per grade to two. This option had been costed at nearly £5m. The Panel had taken into account the challenges brought about by Government economic Policies in the Autumn which had led to the Authority potentially facing a budget deficit of around £40m. It was considered, therefore, that the Council had little choice other than to use the salaries headroom budget relied on by the Trade Unions to fund their preferred model to assist in producing a balanced budget.

The Panel had also considered a Pay Model that removed all overlapping grades at an estimated cost of £2.5m, a further Pay model that removed overlapping grades up to and including Grade F, at an estimated cost of £1.25m, and, finally, a pay Model that removed overlapping grades up to and including Grade D, at an estimated cost of £200k. It had accepted the financial difficulties that the Authority, like all other Authorities, was facing, but had expressed a commitment to review the bottom end of the Payscale during the next financial year, and possibly consider a 'phased approach' to implementing any changes. Members of the Panel had requested that a review be undertaken of the Authority's current pay model within the next financial year, to take into account the statutory national living wage as well as the voluntary Real Living Wage.

Council was reminded that teachers pay did not fall within the scope of this pay policy statement as teachers had their own pay policy which school governing bodies were required to adopt.

RESOLVED that the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 be approved in compliance with Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011.

[Whereupon the members who had declared an interest and had left the meeting were readmitted and Cllr. R.E. Evans took the Chair].

6. SECOND HOMES AND EMPTY PROPERTIES COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS

Following a debate as to whether the issue of adopting a premium on second homes, referred to in the circulated report, could be considered and determined separately from the adoption of a premium on empty properties, also referred to in the circulated report, it was moved, seconded and duly

RESOLVED that the report on Second Homes and Empty Properties Council Tax Premiums be considered as circulated.

[NOTE: Councillors K.V. Broom, M. James, D.M. Cundy, S.A. Curry, H.A.L. Evans, L.D. Evans, B.D.J. Phillips and E. Williams had earlier declared interests in this item and left the meeting.] Cllr K.V. Broom having been granted dispensation to speak but not vote remained in the meeting during the debate but was placed in the waiting room during voting.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented a report which sought approval for the adoption of premiums on second homes and empty properties. He commented that there were over 800 second homes in Carmarthenshire and 1,800 houses that had been empty for at least over a year – and a number for many years. Both categories of properties had, he stated, an adverse effect on local communities and the purpose of the report was to either encourage greater use of these properties or ensure that their owners contributed more towards local communities through a Council Tax premium.

In the case of the long-term empty houses the Cabinet Member for Resources highlighted the negative effect they had on streets, often becoming the target of vandalism and a wasted resource. Turning these into homes once more should result in less demand for new houses to be built on green fields. He commended the council for bringing 700 empty houses back into use since 2016 and

considered that a new policy was needed for further improvement. The Council, he pointed out, had consulted widely on this issue with 61% of respondents agreeing that long-term empty housing adversely effected local communities and a majority agreeing with charging a premium. It was proposed to charge a 50% premium on houses that had been empty from one to two years, rising to 100% between two and five years, and 200% after five years.

On the issue of second homes the Cabinet Member for Resources expressed the view that the answer lay, in part, in the legislation passed by the Welsh Government in 2014 and recently amended and strengthened. The legislation aimed to ensure that Second Homes which were holiday lets were either let for at least 182 days a year, which would boost the tourism industry, or that owners paid a premium on the Council Tax. This contribution could, it was suggested, alleviate the negative impact of Second Homes when they reduced the local housing stock and pushed up house prices to the extent that even essential workers like nurses and teachers were unable to afford to live in the communities in which they had been brought up.

It was therefore proposed to charge Second Homes a 50% premium to start, with a view to raising it to 100% in April 2025, and Empty Homes premium scales as noted earlier. The decision to charge a premium on Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Houses had to be made at least a full year in advance and if the recommendations were accepted the policy would come into force in April 2024.

By the year 2025/26 it was estimated that the premiums could potentially raise anything up to £3m depending on the response of owners which would greatly help the Council maintain essential services at a time of great financial pressure – although the primary aim was to encourage better use of housing. An impact assessment had also been conducted to assess the impact on the Welsh language, on the deterioration of rural living, on house prices and also on the zero carbon net agenda and other factors. Council was informed that prior to the measures being implemented any possible impact on the tourism industry would be discussed, including those who should be exempt from the premium and were not already within the current exemption classes specified.

It was moved and duly seconded that the report and recommendations be endorsed.

The following amendment to recommendation 3 in the report was proposed by Councillor R. James and duly seconded:

“The Council are requested to approve and recommend a council tax premium on long-term empty properties as follows:

- **100%** Premium for empty properties > 1 year < 2 years;
- **50%** Premium for empty properties > 2 years < 5 years;
- **200%** Premium for empty properties > 5 years”.

A number of statements were made both in support of and against the amendment and following a vote it was

RESOLVED that the amendment be not supported.

The following further amendment to recommendation 3 in the report was proposed by Councillor R. James and duly seconded:

“The following 2 additional classes of exemption from second home premiums be added to the 7 class of dwellings included in the report:

- All buildings and properties on agricultural land be exempt from the premium;
- Holiday lets and self accommodation businesses;

And that the Cross-Party Group assesses these 2 classes of exemptions ahead of their introduction in 2024.”

A number of statements were made both in support of and against the amendment and following a vote it was

RESOLVED that the amendment be not supported.

The Council then considered the original motion as moved and seconded and

FURTHER RESOLVED

6.1 that a Council Tax Premium be applied /charged on second homes and long-term empty properties as defined by Sections 12A and 12B of the local Government Finance Act 1992, as inserted by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;

6.2 that a council tax premium of 50% be levied in 2024/25 in respect of second homes with a view to increasing the premium to 100% from April 2025;

6.3 to approve a council tax premium on long-term empty properties as follows:

- 50% Premium for empty properties > 1 year < 2 years
- 100% Premium for empty properties > 2 years < 5 years
- 200% Premium for empty properties > 5 years;

6.4 that delegated authority be given to the Director of Corporate Services to implement the changes and to notify the owners of all affected properties;

6.5 that these premiums be kept under review by the Director of Corporate Services and Cabinet Member for Resources and any changes be brought to Cabinet and Council for approval as appropriate.

7. PROPOSED COMMUNITY REVIEW IN COUNTY OF CARMARTHENSHIRE

The Council received a report setting out details for the commencement of a Community Review for all Community Councils in Carmarthenshire. Under the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 each principal council had a duty, every 10 years, to monitor the communities in its area and, where appropriate, the electoral arrangements of such communities for the purposes of considering whether to make recommend changes.

RESOLVED

7.1 to approve the commencement of a Community Review for all Community Councils in Carmarthenshire;

7.2 to approve the Terms of Reference for the Community Review as set out in the report;

7.3 that the indicative timetable contained in the Terms of Reference Community Review be noted.

8. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE 20TH FEBRUARY 2023

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 20th February, 2023 be received.

9. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

10. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS:-

10.1. QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR HEFIN JONES TO COUNCILLOR EDWARD THOMAS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, WASTE AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

“It’s concerning to hear of the Welsh Government’s intention to remove the Emergency Bus Subsidy scheme. Despite a short extension to the scheme it’s worrying that the Welsh Government seems quite content to cut the essential travel lifeline for many. Though it’s not exclusively a rural problem, as we’ve heard by colleagues in the chamber, it’s likely that rural areas will suffer the brunt of this, and the consequences could be far reaching. Will the cabinet member responsible for transport please outline the potential impact here in Carmarthenshire please?”

Response by Councillor Edward Thomas – Cabinet Member For Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services:-

“The Bus Emergency Scheme has provided vital support for the public transport sector throughout the pandemic and during the process of recovery. However, patronage levels on public transport networks have not yet recovered to anywhere near the pre Covid levels. This, combined with uncertainty in the sector from ongoing bus reform, critical supply chain pressures around fuel and driver shortages is leading to unsustainable pressure on the sector particularly the Small and Medium Size Enterprises [SMEs].

Public Transport in rural counties cannot operate without subsidy. Circa 78% of our routes operated require a subsidy to provide the most basic of services. The Bus Emergency Support [BES] scheme is critical whilst the sector recovers. It is helpful that the Welsh Government has announced that BES has been extended for three months which I don’t think is enough. However, wider investment into the public transport system is also vital for rural areas if the Welsh Government is to achieve the objectives on modal shift as set out in Llwybr Newydd – the Wales Transport Strategy.

Initial modelling indicates that upwards of fifty percent of our existing bus routes will be lost if the sector does not recover when funding for the Bus Emergency

Scheme runs out. Rural areas and SMEs are likely to be the hardest hit. So not good news and I do wish the Minister would review the Llywbr Newydd.”

Supplementary Question by Councillor Hefin Jones:

“Can I ask if there is an ongoing dialogue with service providers, with bus companies, and will there be a communications plan so that should the axe fall on some services and some services lost that residents and wards are informed through a process as opposed to hearing on the grapevine?”

Response by Councillor Edward Thomas – Cabinet Member For Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services:-

“The simple answers are yes and yes.”

CHAIR

DATE

COUNCIL
19TH APRIL 2023

**APPOINTMENT OF LAY PERSON ON THE GOVERNANCE AND
AUDIT COMMITTEE.**

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:-

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL 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.

REASONS:

To satisfy the requirements of the Council’s Constitution, the Local Government Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Cabinet Decision Required	NO
Council Decision Required	YES

Cabinet Portfolio Holder – N/A

<p>Directorate</p> <p>Name of Head of Service: Linda Rees Jones</p> <p>Report Author Gaynor Morgan</p>	<p>Chief Executive’s</p> <p>Designations: Head of Administration & Law Head of Democratic Services</p>	<p>Tel Nos. 01267 224012 LRJ 01267 224026 GM</p> <p>E Mail Addresses: Lrjones@carmarthenshire.gov.uk GMorgan@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</p>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COUNCIL

APPOINTMENT OF LAY PERSONS TO THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE.

Council at its meeting held on the 19th January 2022 (Minute 6 refers) considered a report on the appointment of Lay Persons to sit on the Authority's Governance and Audit Committee, together with the appointments process.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act requires one third of the Committee's membership to be lay persons and for a lay person to be appointed as Committee Chair. Council resolved to approve that the Governance and Audit Committee comprise 12 members i.e. 8 elected members and 4 lay persons in order to accord with the new requirement arising from the Act.

Subsequent to that decision, advertisements were placed inviting interested applicants to apply for the position of lay person, and Council at its meeting held on the 25th May 2022 appointed to three of the four lay person positions.

The remaining lay person vacancy was subsequently advertised later in the year and a shortlisting process undertaken. Four candidates were put forward for interview by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting held on the 31st March 2023.

The Committee RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL 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.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED ?

NO

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: Linda Rees Jones, Head of Administration & Law

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
NONE	YES	YES	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

Legal

Chapter 2 of Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires one-third of the members of the Governance and Audit Committee to be lay persons and for the member appointed as the Committee Chair to be a lay person. These provisions within the Act came into force on the 5th May 2022 and forms the basis of this report.

Finance

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales determines the daily or half daily fee for the important role undertaken by co-opted members of authorities with voting rights. Fees for co-opted members (with voting rights) are:- - Lay Chair of audit committees £268 (4 hours and over) £134 (up to 4 hours) Ordinary co-opted members of audit committee £210 (4 hours and over) £105 (up to 4 hours)

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Linda Rees Jones, Head of Administration & Law

1. Scrutiny Committee request for pre-determination

NO

If yes include the following information: -

Scrutiny Committee

Date the report was considered:-

Scrutiny Committee Outcome/Recommendations:-

2. Local Member(s)

Not applicable

3. Community / Town Council

Not applicable

4. Relevant Partners

Not applicable

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

Not applicable

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011		https://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/contents
The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021		https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asc/2021/1/contents/enacted
Council meeting 19 th January 2022		https://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/documents/s57189/Summary.pdf
Governance & Audit Committee 31 st March 2023		https://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=163&MId=7525&Ver=4

Full Council 19 April 2023

Carmarthenshire Public Services Board's Well-being Plan: The Carmarthenshire We Want

Purpose:

To outline the Public Services Board's local Well-being Objectives and the steps it proposes to take to meet them, in order to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of our residents.

Recommendations / key decisions required:

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

Reasons:

Carmarthenshire County Council is a statutory member of Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (along with Hywel Dda University Health Board, Natural Resources Wales and Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service). Before the Plan can be published it has to be approved by the statutory members of the Board. The Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee is also the designated local government scrutiny committee appointed to scrutinise the work of the PSB.

Cabinet Decision Required	YES
Council Decision Required	YES – 19 April

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER: -
Cllr. Darren Price, Council Leader and Chair of the PSB

Directorate: Chief Executive Name of Head of Service: Noelwyn Daniel Report Author: Gwyneth Ayers	Designations: Head of ICT and Corporate Policy Corporate Policy, Partnership and Performance Manager	Tel: Email addresses: NDaniel@carmarthenshire.gov.uk GAyers@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Carmarthenshire Public Services Board's Well-being Plan: The Carmarthenshire We Want

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on each Public Services Board (PSB) to develop and publish its second county Well-being Plan by May 2023.

As part of the preparation of this 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 for this Plan and the actions to make progress against those objectives. The objectives and actions identified as part of this Plan focus on areas of collective action that the PSB can influence by working together and does not therefore replicate what is considered to be the core business of the individual member bodies of the PSB, unless there is added value to be gained by the PSB working together.

From 2 November 2022 to the 25 January 2023, the PSB held a 12-week consultation on a first draft of the Plan. At its meeting on the 28 February 2023 the PSB considered the feedback from the consultation and further development work undertaken during the consultation period and agreed amendments to the Plan accordingly. The key amendments to the Plan are included on page 20 and are based on the following:

- Feedback from PSB members at a workshop held on 20 December 2022
- Specific feedback sessions with PSB members
- Feedback from the online survey (107 responses)
- Feedback from the Involvement opportunities
- Feedback from the statutory partners
- Feedback from the Future Generations Commissioner's Office
- Feedback from Welsh Government
- Feedback from the Welsh Language Strategic Forum.

The PSB is therefore presenting its 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 Plan will then be adopted by the PSB at its meeting on the 25 April for delivery from May 2023 onwards.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES

Carmarthenshire Well-being Plan 2023-28

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: Noelwyn Daniel

Head of ICT & Policy

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) 2015 Act places a requirement on all Public Services Boards to prepare and publish a local well-being plan. Before the plan can be published it has to be approved by the statutory members of the board. The Act's statutory guidance notes 'If the local authority is operating executive arrangements the local well-being plan must be approved by the Full Council'.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below:

Signed: Noelwyn Daniel

Head of ICT and Corporate Policy

1. Scrutiny Committee request for pre-determination	NO
If yes include the following information: -	
Scrutiny Committee	
Date the report was considered:-	
Scrutiny Committee Outcome/Recommendations:-	
<p>Although the Plan has not been considered by scrutiny committee, Cabinet members have reviewed the plan and would make the following request to the PSB:</p> <p>The Council supports the PSBs Well-being Plan and the objectives and steps set out. We would ask that within the delivery plan that will be developed to make progress against these steps that on-going consideration is given to embedding circular economy opportunities as part of the development and implementation of action, especially within the 'Ensuring a sustainable economy and fair employment' objectives but also across the whole plan where appropriate.</p>	

2. Local Member(s)

All members were able to contribute to the 12-week public consultation which took place between 2 November 2022 to the 25 January 2023.

3. Community / Town Council

All councils were able to contribute to the 12-week public consultation which took place between 2 November 2022 to the 25 January 2023.

4. Relevant Partners

All partners were able to contribute to the 12-week public consultation which took place between 2 November 2022 to the 25 January 2023. PSB members approved the final draft at their 28 February 2023 meeting.

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

All staff from PSB members organisations, and any other interested stakeholders, were able to contribute to the 12-week public consultation which took place 2 November 2022 to the 25 January 2023.



CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED YES	Cllr. Darren Price chairs the PSB
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Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW:

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Carmarthenshire Well-being Assessment		Cymraeg 1-asesiad-lles-terfynol.pdf (ysirgaragarem.cymru) English 1-well-being-assessment.pdf (thecarmarthenshirewewant.wales)
Shared Purpose: Shared Future Statutory guidance on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 SPSF 3: Collective Role		Cymraeg SPSF3 Guidance Update (llyw.cymru) English SPSF3 Guidance Update (gov.wales)

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The Carmarthenshire We Want

Carmarthenshire
Public Services Board
Well-being Plan

2023-28



Contact Us:

PSB Support Team

Tîm Cefnogi BGC

By Telephone:

01267 234567

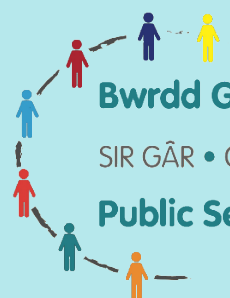
By Email:

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BGC@sirgar.gov.uk



**LLESIANT
CENEDLAETHAU'R DYFODOL
WELL-BEING OF
FUTURE GENERATIONS**



Bwrdd Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus

SIR GÂR • CARMARTHENSHIRE

Public Services Board

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Foreword

As Chair of the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (PSB), I am proud to present our Well-being Plan and to have been part of its development. I am excited about the opportunities this will bring for all of us who live and work in our county.

The PSB brings together a number of different organisations providing services to the public who are working together for the benefit of Carmarthenshire. We have a longstanding, successful track record of partnership working and continue to build on that. We promote a positive culture of working together, concentrating our collective energy, effort and resources on providing efficient and effective services to local communities. We will continue to do this by working collaboratively to add value to each other's services and will look at innovative approaches and new and different ways of working to achieve this.

Our Plan to do this is not about 'business as usual'. We are ambitious for our county. We want to see real improvements in the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of our residents.

This Plan, as required through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, has been developed following significant engagement with our communities and other key stakeholders. This engagement has identified our five key well-being objectives that we will focus our attention on delivering through collective action 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.

We are building stronger partnerships with our communities. We will be promoting co-production so that residents can come together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important to them. We will continue to develop these relationships so that this involvement flourishes which will help us to all deliver the objectives and action in our Plan.

We are continuing a journey that is long term and will shape our future over the next 20 years or more. We are dedicated to make positive changes to make a real difference. We will be radical in our thinking, efficient in the use of our resources and involve our communities in shaping and delivering the best possible future for all of us.

I hope that you will want to get involved with us and play your part.

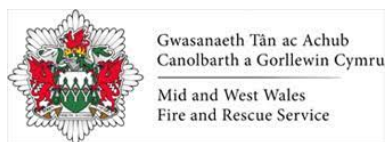


Cllr Darren Price

Chair of PSB and Leader of Carmarthenshire County Council

Carmarthenshire's PSB

The Well-being of Future Generations Act put a well-being duty on specified public bodies across Carmarthenshire to act jointly and establish a statutory PSB. The Carmarthenshire PSB was established in May 2016 and is tasked with improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Carmarthenshire. It must do so by undertaking an assessment of well-being in the County and then preparing a county Well-being Plan to outline its local objectives, the steps it proposes to take to meet them and how they contribute to the achievement of the well-being goals. Members of the Carmarthenshire PSB are senior representatives from the following organisations:



Our Partnerships in Carmarthenshire

The Partnership landscape in Carmarthenshire fully embraces multi-agency working, with representation from a wide range of partner organisations, including the third sector, who work collaboratively to improve the outcomes for our residents.

Our partnerships have been involved in developing the objectives and contributing their views on key issues that the PSB need to be aware of to inform their development of the Well-being Plan. Collaboration and partnership working will continue to form an important part of the delivery mechanism across the county and the partnerships will be integral to delivering the PSB objectives.

It is fundamental within Carmarthenshire that our multi-agency partnerships have a continued role in taking steps to address the key issues and opportunities highlighted in the well-being assessment, some of which may not involve direct delivery towards the PSB objectives but will still be addressed and may contribute as work progresses.

Community and Town Councils

There are eight Councils within Carmarthenshire which meet the criteria of the Act: Carmarthen Town Council, Cwmaman, Kidwelly, Llanedi, Llannon, Llanelli Town Council, Llanelli Rural Council and Pembrey and Burry Port. This means that they must take “reasonable steps” to meet the objectives of this Well-being Plan and report on progress annually. The PSB recognise the valuable contribution all Town and Community Councils fulfil within our communities and the PSB is exploring every opportunity to work together to deliver the Well-being objectives. All Town and Community Councils, including those covered by the Act have been consulted on the Well-being Assessment and Plan and are encouraged to consider how they can contribute to meeting the Plan’s objectives.

Swansea Bay City Deal

The Swansea Bay City Deal is a transformational approach to delivering the scale and nature of investment needed to support the region’s plans for growth, with a total investment of £1.3 billion from both the public and private sectors over a period of 15 years. The Deal provides a once in a generation opportunity to consolidate the region’s role in technological innovation and to become a lead innovator in developing and commercialising solutions to some of the most pressing challenges in the fields of life science and well-being, digital innovation, energy and smart manufacturing. Through the projects the City Deal will demonstrate the economic, social, environmental and cultural opportunities of using next generation digital innovations and technology to accelerate

the regional economy and attract international investor interest, whilst remaining citizen-focused and grounded in the geography and assets of the Swansea Bay City Region.

West Wales Care Partnership

The West Wales Care Partnership (WWCP) has been established to oversee the continued transformation and integration of health, social care and well-being services in the West Wales area. The Partnership brings together the three local authorities in West Wales (Carmarthenshire County Council, Ceredigion County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council), Hywel Dda University Health Board and representatives of the third and independent sector as well as service user/carer representation. The Partnership has published a [Population Needs Assessment](#) for the region and will deliver an Area Plan to address the issues highlighted in the assessment. We will ensure that the work of the Area Plan and Well-being Plan complement each other wherever possible.

Reflecting on our Well-being Plan 2018-2023

All PSB partners are fully committed to take a preventative approach in all they do. During **2018-19**, the PSBs in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire engaged in the development of the Hywel Dda University Health Board's '**Healthier Mid and West Wales Strategy**' and accompanying Health and Well-being Framework. We have also seen this commitment demonstrated in the work of the **Safer Communities Partnership** in the prevention of crime and in the Early Intervention and Prevention Delivery Group's work on the **First 1,000** days and on enhancing the health and well-being of our communities.

The County Council's '**Moving Rural Carmarthenshire Forward**' report was presented to the PSB in September 2019 with its recommendations on regenerating local rural communities and collaboration opportunities with partners to support rural communities. The report followed an extensive piece of work by a cross-party Task Force which had included contributions from many PSB partners and the involvement of **residents and stakeholders** to find out about the needs of rural communities. Collaboration opportunities for partners to support this agenda included economic development, education and skills, broadband and digital skills, tourism, transport and highways, agriculture and food, community resilience, access to services and third sector, renewable energy and the environment and waste. The **10 Rural Towns programme** was a key development from this report.

During 2020-21, the PSB secured £100k funding to develop the **Foundational Economy Challenge Fund** project looking at public sector food procurement. The project focused on public sector procurement arrangements and local food supply chains. Despite the challenging circumstances it was felt even more important to progress this work as part of the economic recovery planning and development work. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) were commissioned to work with the Council, Health Board, University and Coleg to review current procurement arrangements and food spend/supply.

Securing the dedicated funding has enabled the PSB to **integrate objectives** and to outline the possibilities for development, giving a practical way forward for partners to work together. Further work will be taken forward within the PSB partners on the procurement and economic recovery elements and discussions are on-going, with opportunities for further project development on the food supply chain.

Pentre Awel is an innovative £87m development which is being delivered by Carmarthenshire County Council. It is the largest regeneration scheme in South West Wales and will bring together life science and business innovation, community healthcare and modern leisure facilities at the 83-acre Delta Lakes site on the Llanelli coastline.











The truly collaborative scheme is being delivered for the local community by the County Council in partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board, Universities and colleges and is part-funded by the Swansea Bay City Deal (£40million). It aims to create around 1,800 jobs over 15 years and boost the local economy by more than £450m.

A continuum of education, skills and training is being developed for local people to provide training opportunities from schools to further and higher education and continuing professional development. Most of the training available is around health and care but also includes construction, support services and digital training. Key providers have been identified including PSB partners - University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Coleg Sir Gâr – with Swansea and Cardiff Universities.

The PSB has discussed the **wider determinants of well-being** which include health, job creation, access to services, skills, training, and community cohesion. Members have also highlighted the potential need over the next 20-30 years and ensuring the facilities provided can adapt to future needs.

Carmarthenshire PSB’s Well-being Objectives and Steps

Objective	Key steps	Phase 1 2023-24	Phase 2 2024-26	Phase 3 2026 – beyond
Ensuring a sustainable economy and fair employment	To plan for our future workforce by working collectively to promote work and career opportunities in the public sector.	→		
	To prepare and publish a Carmarthenshire Food Strategy.	→	→	
	To increase Real Living Wage Accreditation amongst PSB members and promote Real Living Wage locally.	→	→	
	To improve the provision and skills to support the growing low carbon industry, building on current work through the Regional Skills Partnership.	→	→	→
	To work towards developing an integrated local food system.	→	→	→
Improving well-being and reducing health inequalities	To create a resilient relationship between the Public Services Board and the Regional Partnership Board in order to improve collaboration and integration on areas of common interest including prevention.	→		
	To support the delivery of the Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales programme.	→	→	
	To embed the vision of the Health and Well-being Framework and move to a Social Model of Health and Well-being.	→	→	
	To develop a partnership approach to addressing multi-agency issues relating to Adverse Childhood Experiences.	→	→	→
	To support delivery and share learning from the Health Board’s 10,000 well-being conversations programme.	→	→	→
Responding to the climate and nature emergencies	To increase collaboration on Electric Vehicle EV Charging infrastructure at public sector venues.	→		
	To systematically review the risks identified in the Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) Evidence Report –	→		

Objective	Key steps	Phase 1 2023-24	Phase 2 2024-26	Phase 3 2026 – beyond
	summary for Wales and develop a partnership response.			
	To embed a partnership approach to developing Green and Blue infrastructure* in the county. *Green and blue infrastructure (GBI) is all the individual parcels of natural space and features within both our urban and rural spaces that when connected, deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities and the nature that thrives within them as a result.			
	To develop a demand analysis of PSB member estate and assets in order to reduce our future carbon footprint.			
	To identify opportunities for collaboration across public sector organisations to achieve the Net Zero Wales declaration.			
Tackling poverty and its impacts	To identify and action opportunities for PSB organisation staff to Make Every Contact Count (MECC) with improved signposting and referral to support services.			
	To build on current advice and support provision to residents through the Council's Hwb, by developing opportunities for collaboration across PSB organisations.			
	To further develop the 'Claim What's Yours' campaign on a multi-agency basis, with consistent messaging on support for residents.			
	To build live data in terms of fuel poverty and ensure promotion of home energy efficiency improvements.			
Helping to create bilingual, safe and diverse communities	To prepare a Carmarthenshire Volunteering Strategy.			
	To assess current arrangements and prepare a multi-agency plan for further developing community resilience.			
	To support the implementation, further development and monitoring of the Welsh language Promotion Strategy.			

The Well-being Plan and why we need it

The Act's requirements

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) is a ground-breaking law that provides a unique opportunity for all public services to work differently together, involving communities in shaping our long-term future and improving well-being for all. The Act places the citizens of Wales in the centre of everything public services do to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and that the sustainable development principle is integral to everything that we do.

National Well-being Goals

The Act sets out seven Well-being Goals which public services must work towards to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of all of our communities.



Together they give public services a common purpose and shared vision to work towards. The goals must be considered as an integrated set, with the relevant links being made between them to deliver well-being. The objectives and actions outlined in this well-being plan have all been formulated with a view to making a wider contribution to achieving the national well-being goals.

Sustainable Development principle

Public Services, in working towards delivering these goals, must follow the sustainable development principle, designed to support and deliver a public service that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. We need to ensure that when we make decision, we consider the impact this could have on people living in Carmarthenshire in the future.

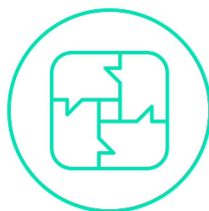
Five Ways of Working

There are five Ways of Working public services must follow, to show how we have applied the sustainable development principle. As a PSB, we must ensure that everything we do has taken these ways of working into consideration. We have to think more about the long-term, work better with local communities, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. This will ensure we also work together in a more robust and effective partnership approach.



Collaboration

Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.



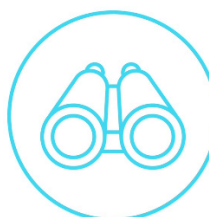
Integration

Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.



Involvement

The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.



Long-term

The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.



Prevention

How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

Credit: Five Ways of Working, Office of Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Later in the Plan we describe in more detail how we have used the five ways of working in relation to each objective to maximise our contribution to each of the national well-being goals.

Future Generations Commissioner

The general duty of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales is to promote the sustainable development principle (the five ways of working) and to act as a guardian of the ability of future generations to meet their needs, by encouraging public bodies to take greater account of the long-term impact of the things they do. The Commissioner gave detailed feedback on the Well-being Assessment which informed the development of the Well-being Plan.

Carmarthenshire PSB is working closely with the Commissioner whilst preparing our Well-being Plan and will reflect on the advice given on how to take steps to meet the local objectives set out in the plan in a manner which is consistent with the sustainable development principle.

Carmarthenshire at a Glance

The 2021 Census confirms that Carmarthenshire has a total population of 187,900 residents. Our population has grown by just over 4,000 (2.2%) since the last census in 2011, compared to 44,000 (1.4%) for the whole of Wales and by just over 3.5m in England and Wales (6.3%).

There is one person for every football pitch-sized piece of land in Wales. There were about 150 residents per square kilometre in Wales in 2021, up from 148 residents per square kilometre in 2011. As of 2021, Carmarthenshire is the fifth least densely populated of Wales, with an area equivalent to around two football pitches per resident.

There were 96,200 women (51.2% of the population) and 91,700 men (48.8%) in Carmarthenshire. This is a similar split to the previous Census and comparable to Wales and England & Wales.

Since the 2011 Census, there has been an increase of 18.9% in the number of people aged 65 years and over living in Carmarthenshire (45,400), a decrease of 2.5% in people aged 15 to 64 years (112,100), and a decrease of 0.8% in children aged under 15 years (30,400).

Carmarthenshire borders Pembrokeshire to the West, Ceredigion to the North, Powys to the East, and both Neath Port Talbot and Swansea to the South-East. The Brecon Beacons National Park covers approximately 9% of Carmarthenshire, with approximately 1% of Carmarthenshire's population estimated to reside within the National Park.

Our most recent data on the age profiles of domestic migrants presents a continuing trend of predominantly student populations migrating out of Carmarthenshire, with little evidence of return in the 20-29 young adult age groups. The net inflow is highest in the 30-65 age range and corresponds with an average higher net inflow of 0-14-year-olds. This is likely due to family age migration.

In terms of migration linkages between Carmarthenshire and surrounding areas, the largest positive net exchanges have been with Swansea, Ceredigion and Neath Port Talbot. For the outflow, the dominant net outflow has been to Cardiff, with smaller net outflows to Bristol; both influenced by the annual migration of students to higher education.

In the 2021 Census results, there was a continued significant decline in the number of Welsh speakers in our county, from 43.9% in 2011 to 39.9%. There are now 72,838 Welsh

speakers in Carmarthenshire. This is the first time in the county's history that the percentage has fallen below 40% of our population.

It should be noted that there is now only one ward in Carmarthenshire – Pontyberem - where over 60% of the population speak Welsh. Ten years ago, it was identified that there were no wards in the county where over 70% spoke Welsh so this further reduction is having a significant impact in our localities.

All local authorities saw a decrease in the percentage of children aged 3 to 15 reported as being able to speak Welsh between 2011 and 2021. At a national level it is thought that the decrease in both the number and percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh is mainly driven by a fall among children and young people who reported as being able to speak Welsh. In Carmarthenshire the numbers of those aged 3-15 able to speak Welsh has decreased by 510 people, this translates to a percentage point decrease of 2.6.

Decreases have also been visible within the 16-64 and 65+ age categories although at more significant levels than the younger age group. To expand, the decline in those aged over 65 able to speak to Welsh translates to a percentage point decrease of 8.7.

74,355 people living in the county reported that they have no skills in Welsh during the 2011 Census. This level has increased over the last ten years to 85,287 or 4.8 percentage points.

The number of people able to speak, read and write Welsh in the county has decreased by 1.9 percentage points or 1,828 people. This is a considerably lower decrease than the figures for those only able to speak Welsh.

The vast majority of people living in Carmarthenshire were born in Wales (73.8%) or England (20.2%). There has been a decrease in the proportion of Welsh-born people living in the county since the last census with a decrease of 2.2.%. Conversely, there has been an increase of 1.3% in the proportion of English-born people living in the county over the same time period.

Over the last ten years the county has become home to more people born in Romania and Poland, which account for some of the most significant proportionate rises. This is also true for people born in the Middle East and Asia. According to the Local Labour Force Survey / Annual Population Survey (2021), 4% of Carmarthenshire's population is from a Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic background. We do note caution when using this information, as the survey is based on a smaller sample of population and on demographic trends that pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic. To supplement our evidence however, a total of 4,730 EU residents living in our county applied to the EU Settlement

Scheme by the 30 June 2021 deadline; this is 2.5% of the current estimated population of Carmarthenshire.

The 2021 Census informs us that, of the 81,756 households in Carmarthenshire, 30.4% of households had one person with a long-term health problem or disability, compared with 32% in 2011. This reduction is now only 1% above the Wales average compared to being 2% higher ten years ago.

The percentage of residents that have a limiting disability has reduced slightly in Carmarthenshire and nationally. 11.3% of these are limited in achieving their day-to-day activities.

Carmarthenshire has the highest proportion of households that have 2 or more people disabled under the Equality Act with 9.4% compared to 8.4% in Wales and 6.7% in England and Wales.

Carmarthenshire has a diverse range of scenic and historic attractive landscapes, from open uplands to rolling lowland farmland. These local landscapes contribute to a sense of pride, culture, and local identity. People's experience and interaction with the environment can also positively affect health and well-being.

During 2021, 29,444 households in Carmarthenshire were classed as living in poverty, this is a 6.3% increase on the previous year of 27,691. Poverty is defined as when a "household income is less than 60% of the GB median income" (in 2021 less than £19,642).

According to the 2021 Census, 54.7% of households in Carmarthenshire (44,709) are deprived in at least one of the four dimensions of deprivation – employment, education, housing and health and disability. This is a decrease of 7.3% since the last Census.

The averages for Carmarthenshire compare negatively with the average for England and Wales in all measures apart from 'household is deprived in four dimensions' where the average for Carmarthenshire is 0.1% lower than that for Wales and England.

Poverty rates are rising in Carmarthenshire and at a national level, therefore it is interesting to see from this measure that less households are seemingly classed as deprived. This suggests that whilst households are improving their standard of living through education, employment, health or housing, the effects of those improvements are not necessarily translating to reducing the risk of those households falling into poverty or helping households to lift themselves out of poverty.

How we developed the Well-being Plan

Carmarthenshire's Well-being Assessment

Last year we published our Well-being Assessment (WBA) of the people and communities in Carmarthenshire. It looked at the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in our county. The assessment was based on local and national research and the views of hundreds of people who live, work and use public services across Carmarthenshire following a consultation and involvement exercise.

Findings from that assessment were used to focus on what can be done to improve the well-being of local people. The Assessment has shaped the objectives and actions identified in this Plan for our county. A copy of the Carmarthenshire Well-being Assessment can be found on the PSB's website - www.thecarmarthenshirewewant.wales

What the WBA told us

We assessed the key themes identified from the Well-being Assessment according to the level of priority and their certainty of happening. This then informed the discussion around areas to be focussed upon by PSB partners working collaboratively.

The agreed priorities were the high number of households continuing to live in poverty, the problem of in-work poverty, the increasing cost of living, the comparatively high suicide rate among adults, climate change and the nature emergency, the problem of water pollution from nitrates and phosphates and the projected significant increase of dementia.

A number of key themes were also identified which need further consideration and research including levels of childhood and adult obesity, the concerns of young people around bullying, cyberbullying and domestic violence, levels of drinking alcohol among adults, increasing referrals for domestic violence, levels of homelessness and those at risk of homelessness, higher rates of fly tipping, loss of public transport and high costs of residential and nursing care.

Based on the discussions that followed on these key themes, we agreed to focus on the delivery of the following well-being objectives:

- 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 and bilingual communities.

Involvement to develop our Well-being Plan

We continued our conversations with our communities, key stakeholders and others such as Welsh Government and the Future Generations Commissioner to get views on the Well-being Plan and our Well-being Objectives.

The feedback received from our involvement work has informed this plan and has helped the PSB to consider how it can maximise its contribution to the five ways of working and the well-being goals.

A detailed Consultation and Involvement Report will be published alongside our Well-being Plan. A summary of our work is noted below.

- During the 12-week consultation period, the PSB promoted an on-line survey, to which we received 107 responses. 79% of respondents agreed that the Well-being Objectives provide a good focus for the PSB to improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being for the county.
- General feedback suggests strengthening on community resilience, social inclusion and community-based food production.
- Our involvement work included Well-being conversations at a Carers Rights and Winter Pride LGBT+ event. We were also able to hold specific community-based workshops through People Speak Up and the Carmarthenshire Welsh Language Strategic Forum.
- We have had the opportunity work with Carmarthenshire People First and our Community Inclusion Team to prepare an Easy Read version of the plan, which will be published alongside this plan. Our Easy Read version will include the lived experience of our service users.

Our Well-being Objectives

Ensuring a sustainable economy and fair employment

Our vision as a Public Services Board

Carmarthenshire will be a prosperous county with a well-educated and skilled workforce where opportunities exist for all. Everyone will be able to reach their full potential, therefore reducing poverty and deprivation. Funding opportunities will be maximised, and our young people will be given the best possible opportunities to innovate and lead in our communities.

Five Ways of Working

The Well-being plan aims to focus on longer-term challenges whilst ensuring the ability of future generations to meet their own needs is not compromised.

The PSB will be working together and involving wider partners, businesses and communities to deliver this objective. There will also be opportunities to collaborate with other organisations and regional footprints to help us achieve our steps.

Evidence from our Well-being Assessment

Concerns were highlighted about the decline of the **Welsh Language** in the county. The highest percentage of Welsh speakers is now seen among the school-age population with the percentage of our older population falling significantly with each decade. The lowest percentage of Welsh speakers in Carmarthenshire is seen in the 25-44 age group. This is pertinent as it is the age group most likely to raise families and make use of the Welsh language within our workplaces.

It is notable that of **23,274 Carmarthenshire residents** who do not have access to a car or van, **50% are aged 50 or over** (2011 Census). Furthermore only 55% of those aged 80 or over have access to a car or van therefore public transport and community-based services are important support mechanisms to enable people to continue to live within their communities. Such services can mean the difference between a person staying independent at home or entering residential care. The availability of **public transport** was a challenge for older people before the pandemic and that has been exasperated by loss of more services and fear of catching COVID-19 on buses and trains.

The **cost of residential and nursing care** across the county is high, approximately £33,500 a year. This creates stress and uncertainty for those who require care.

Parents and carers have also identified that the **cost of childcare** can be prohibitive when looking to return to work or to access training. Also, our young people identified **Access to training and jobs** as a key local issue.

Housing Costs - There is a need for more affordable homes in the county. There has been a 27.1% increase in the average house price for a first-time buyer in Carmarthenshire between 2016 (£112,497) and 2021 (£142,919).

In Carmarthenshire, 1921 households presented as being **homeless or threatened with homelessness during 2020/2021**. The main reasons why people contacted us are families will not accommodate them, notices from landlords and relationship breakdowns. From the 380 cases where we were able to carry out prevention work, we were able to prevent 46% of households from becoming homeless. Whilst our prevention has increased this year (50%), preventing homelessness has become more difficult with there being more people with complex housing issues and people leaving it until a point of crisis to contact the Council for help when they are facing housing difficulties resulting in little opportunity to prevent homelessness.

To attract and retain our **future generations**, there needs to be a variety of **employment opportunities** and we must prepare our young people and older generation in terms of digital skills. In March 2022 Stats Wales showed that Carmarthenshire has the third lowest rate in respect of employment compared to the rest of Wales. Employment rates have reduced from 68.1% in March 2021 to 69.5% (year ending March 2022). This is amongst the lowest in Wales and below the national average of 73.6%.

The difference between the **employment rate of disabled and non-disabled residents** in Carmarthenshire continues to be a concern. The employment rate for those without a disability (77.1%) continues to be considerably higher than those with a disability (49.7%).

Population projections from **2018 to 2043** indicate a decline in the age groups under 15 and under 64 for Carmarthenshire. For the same period there it is indicated there will be an increase of over 32% for residents aged 65 and over in the County. The **ageing population** forecast for Carmarthenshire could result in less people available to work across all sectors.

Our proposed actions:

- To plan for our future workforce by working collectively to promote work and career opportunities in the public sector
- To prepare and publish a Carmarthenshire Food Strategy
- To increase Real Living Wage Accreditation amongst PSB members and promote Real Living Wage locally
- To improve the provision and skills to support the growing of low carbon industry, building on current work through the Regional Skills Partnership
- To work towards developing an Integrated local food system

National Indicators

- Average capped 9 points score of pupils, including the gap between those who are eligible and are not eligible for free school meals (NWBI 7)
- Percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework (NWBI 8)
- Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked (relative to UK average) (NWBI 9)
- Gross Disposable Household Income per head (NWBI 10)
- Percentage of businesses which are innovation-active (NWBI 11)
- Percentage of people in employment (NWBI 21)
- Percentage of people in education, employment or training, measured for different age groups (NWBI 22)

National Milestones

- 75% of working age adults in Wales will be qualified to level 3 or higher by 2050
- The percentage of working age adults with no qualifications will be 5% or below in every local authority in Wales by 2050
- Eradicate the gap between the employment rate in Wales and the UK by 2050, with a focus on fair work and raising labour market participation of under-represented groups
- At least 90% of 16–24-year-olds will be in education, employment, or training by 2050

Improving well-being and reducing health inequalities

Our vision as a Public Services Board

Building on the vision within the Director of Public Health Annual Report for 2018/19, our shared vision is a county where individuals, communities and the environment they live, play and work in are adaptive, connected and mutually supportive. This means people are resilient and resourceful and enabled to live joyful, healthy and purposeful lives with a strong sense of belonging.

Five Ways of Working

Planning for the long-term has been a challenge for PSB partners as they have had to respond immediately to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic during recent years. However, planning to address long term challenges remains our focus.

With those challenges came new opportunities to ensure integration and consideration of how our well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals and the well-being objectives of the individual member organisations. There are specific projects and opportunities that we aim to maintain and key lessons that have been learnt from the pandemic.

Acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives. We want to work together to understand and tackle some of the underlying issues that affect people's lives and reduce the chance of those things happening. Partners have explored and sought to understand the root causes of issues in each step, to aim to prevent them from occurring or to prevent escalation of the issues. It is vital that solutions are instigated at the right time, seeking early action rather than waiting for crisis trigger points to be reached.

Evidence from our Well-being Assessment

As we enter the next five years of this Well-being Plan we face major challenges. Whilst overall, people are living longer, too many are still dying years earlier than they should or living much of their lives in poor health with long-term conditions, in pain and with poor mental and emotional health.

The Well-being Assessment 2022 highlights the importance of the building blocks for a healthy Carmarthenshire such as income, employment, housing and social connections (often termed the wider determinants of health). When people do not have warm homes and healthy food and are constantly worrying about making ends meet it puts a significant strain on their health and wellbeing. In many of our communities some of these essential building blocks are missing or under threat.

The assessment also highlights significant inequalities across communities in Carmarthenshire, including health inequalities - a term used to describe the systematic, unfair and avoidable differences in health and care across the population and between different groups, which impact on peoples' opportunities to lead healthy lives. These were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic where we know life was harder for those living in poorer communities.

There are also a range of current and future challenges which could widen health inequalities further. These include the climate and nature emergencies, the on-going impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and Britain's exit from the European Union (increasingly referred to as the 'triple challenge'). As we recover from COVID-19 we need to take account of its impacts on physical health, particularly long COVID; worsening mental and emotional health; changes in patterns of eating, drinking and being active; impacts on employment and educational attainment as well as increased delays in access to treatment and care. Added to this, the current rising cost-of-living is a social crisis which will further impact on peoples' physical and mental health.

Our proposed actions:

- To create a resilient relationship between the Public Services Board and the Regional Partnership Board in order to improve collaboration and integration on areas of common interest including prevention
- To support the delivery of the Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales programme
- To embed the vision of the Health and Well-being Framework and move to a Social Model of Health and Well-being
- To develop a partnership approach to addressing multi-agency issues relating to Adverse Childhood Experiences
- To support delivery and share learning from the Health Board's 10,000 well-being conversations programme

Social Model for Health and Well-being

Our shared ambition is to move to a more Social Model of Health & Well-being, from one that is currently predominantly a medical model of health. This builds on established understanding that the treatment and management of conditions contributes to less than 20% of population health and well-being, with the social determinants together having the majority impact on the health & well-being of citizens and community.

In 2021, the Health Board set its Deputy CEO an objective to explore the term "Social Model of Health & Well-being" and consider what this could mean for communities in West Wales and for the Health Board and its partners. The insights and perspectives of a series of conversations with thought leaders have been themed by the local Public Health team and a report produced. The contributors unanimously supported the proposed focus, and many wanted to contribute personally.

Areas of initial suggested focus included targeting those most affected by inequality, with a view to prioritising the future generation through their families, and also the

needs of older people. Other important factors included working with communities on what is important to them, developing leadership capacity in communities, and identifying ways that promote community ownership including potential holding responsibility for resource. The findings of a commissioned systematic review of the literature are due shortly from Aberystwyth University that should support this work.

National Indicators

- Percentage of live single births with a birth weight of under 2,500g (NWBI 1)
- Healthy life expectancy at birth including the gap between the least and most deprived (NWBI 2)
- Percentage of adults with two or more healthy lifestyle behaviours (NWBI 3)
- Percentage of children with two or more healthy lifestyle behaviours (NWBI 5)
- Measurement of development of young children (NWBI 6)
- Mean mental well-being score for people (NWBI 29)
- Percentage of people participating in sporting activities three or more times a week (NWBI 38)
- Percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport (NWBI 48)

National Milestones

- To increase the percentage of children with 2 or more healthy behaviours to 94% by 2035 and more than 99% by 2050
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Responding to the climate and nature emergencies

Our vision as a Public Services Board

Carmarthenshire will be recognised as a county that protects and enhances its existing environment and biodiversity, harnessing its natural resources to best effect. We will lead on the Climate and Nature emergencies and ensure that our environmental wealth is considered and well connected to delivering economic and well-being benefits to our residents and visitors.

Five Ways of Working

We need to work together to reduce the carbon and pollution we emit by collaboratively tackling sustainable transport and our energy use and generation. Key to this objective is involving and working with children and young people to help them understand their role in looking after our environment, reducing our environmental impact and recognising the importance of “thinking globally and acting locally”.

There is a need to ensure that the transition to a net zero Wales is carefully managed to be both equitable and fair. The need to decarbonise our economy and communities will have impacts on industries, sectors of the workforce and socio-economic groups in different ways, depending on the pathways, policies, and actions we choose.

Evidence from our Well-being Assessment

The Future Generations Commissioners (FGC) report on ‘Inequality in a Future Wales’ examines key future trends in relation to the future of work, climate change and demographic change and considers how current and future policy associated with these trends can provide opportunities to reduce inequalities.

Areas of focus for our county from the South West Area Statement are ensuring sustainable land management, reversing the decline of and enhancing biodiversity, reducing health inequalities and adapting to changing climate. Areas of focus from the Marine Area Statement are building resilience of marine ecosystems, nature-based solutions and adaptations at the coast and making the most of marine planning.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) published the second State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR2020) last year, in this they assess to what extent Wales is achieving the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR). SoNaRR2020 concludes that the four long-term aims of the SMNR – stocks of natural resources are safeguarded and enhanced, resilient eco-systems, healthy places for people and a regenerative economy – are not yet being met across Wales.

If climate change continues along the path that we are currently experiencing, then we can expect significant changes in the next 30 years. Data presented in the Future

Trends Report detail that by 2050 we are forecasted to see average summer temperatures rise by 1.34°C. This could cause an increase in rain by 5% throughout the year, concentrated more in winter as summers experience longer periods of drought. Sea levels are forecasted to rise by up to 24cm in some areas of the country. Carmarthenshire will see the impact of these changes in all areas of life. If the trend continues to worsen, the Wales we know could be significantly different by 2080. Addressing these issues now will ensure the future of our future generations in Carmarthenshire and Wales.

Our proposed actions

- To increase collaboration on EV Charging infrastructure at public sector venues
- To systematically review the risks identified in the Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) Evidence Report – summary for Wales and develop a partnership response
- To embed a partnership approach to developing Green and Blue infrastructure in the county
- To develop a demand analysis of PSB member estate and assets in order to reduce our future carbon footprint
- To identify opportunities for collaboration across public sector organisations to achieve the Net Zero Wales declaration

National Indicator

- Concentration of carbon and organic matter in soil (NWBI 13)
- The global footprint of Wales (NWBI 14)
- Amount of waste generated that is not recycled, per person (NWBI 15)
- Number of properties (homes and businesses) at medium or high risk of flooding from rivers and the sea (NWBI 32)
- Percentage of dwellings with adequate energy performance (NWBI 33)
- Emissions of greenhouse gases within Wales (NWBI 41)
- Emissions of greenhouse gases attributed to the consumption of global goods and services in Wales (NWBI 42)
- Areas of healthy ecosystems in Wales (NWBI 43)
- Status of biological diversity in Wales (NWBI 44)

National Milestones

- Wales will use only its fair share of the world's resources by 2050
- Wales will achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050

Tackling poverty and its impacts

“Poverty is a long-term state of not having sufficient resources to afford food, reasonable living conditions or amenities or to participate in activities (such as access to attractive neighbourhoods and open spaces) which are taken for granted by others in their society.”

Welsh Government

Our vision as a Public Services Board

Our aim is to work together to tackle the symptoms of poverty in order to reduce its impact and create a fair, healthy, prosperous, thriving and sustainable Carmarthenshire, now and for our future generations.

Five Ways of Working

By their very nature, the steps set out in the Well-being Plan are often complex issues that cannot be solved in the short-term. Poverty is an intergenerational issue being exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

The Well-being Plan aims to focus on these longer-term challenges whilst ensuring the ability of future generations to meet their own needs is not compromised. As a PSB we must build evidence of the long-term interventions which support our communities and residents to tackle poverty.

Involvement is key to developing the steps in the Well-being Plan. Our steps require partners to involve communities, service users and organisations. The Socio-economic Duty requires specified public bodies, when making strategic decisions such as deciding priorities and setting objectives, to consider how their decisions might help reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. The duty also ensures that we understand the views and needs of those impacted by the decision, particularly those who suffer socio-economic disadvantage.

Evidence from our Well-being Assessment

Our assessment was presented at a time when considerations about the current and future well-being of Carmarthenshire has never been so important. The issues presented by **COVID-19, climate change, Brexit and changing demographics** have highlighted new challenges for individuals and communities and these challenges have not been felt equally. Those who were already experiencing inequalities because of poor health, poverty or because they live in marginalised communities have been hardest hit by the direct and indirect harms of the pandemic and are likely to experience additional disadvantage as we shift to ‘recovery.’

During our involvement work with our communities, **poverty** was a key focus in terms of improving the well-being of local people and communities and caused immediate

and long-term concerns. This included **child poverty, food poverty and in-work poverty.**

Carmarthenshire is now seeing its highest levels of **child poverty** in recent years which is a similar pattern across Wales. In 2020, 31.3% of our children aged up to 15 were living in households with less than 60% of the average income before housing costs. This was just above the Welsh average of 30.6%. An increasing trend has been seen over the last six years and our levels have remained higher than the Welsh average each year.

During 2021, 29,444 households in Carmarthenshire were classed as living in poverty which is an increase of over 6% on the previous year of 27,691. Poverty is defined as when a “household income is less than 60% of the GB median income” (in 2021 less than £19,642).

The 2021/22 National Survey for Wales showed that 11% of participating households in Carmarthenshire were classed as **living in material deprivation.**

It is also concerning to see **Future Trends Report** data to 2020 which shows that the rate of poverty in households, where all working age adults are in work, has increased. This shows a concerning trend that being in work does not necessarily pull households out of poverty.

Poverty and deprivation have serious detrimental effects, impacting across all aspects of well-being. It limits the opportunities and prospects for children and young people and damages the quality of life for all. Poverty is too often an **intergenerational experience** which poses a significant threat to experiencing positive well-being both now, and in the future.

Department for Work and Pensions data on the percentage of each age group in Wales living in relative income poverty shows that 22% of working-age adults in Wales (2017-2020) were living in relative income poverty. This percentage remains steady in Wales but is still above that seen for other UK countries. As food prices, energy bills and general costs continue to rise across the UK it is becoming harder for households to stay above the poverty line. This is compounded by the fact that wages are not rising to meet the extra costs. This means that more working households are experiencing poverty.

An estimated 196,000 households are estimated to be in fuel poverty in Wales, spending a large proportion of their household income on fuel costs. This is equivalent to 14% of households in Wales. ([WG Fuel Poverty modelled estimates October 2021](#))

Our proposed actions

- To identify and action opportunities for PSB organisation staff to Make Every Contact Count (MECC) with improved signposting and referral to support services

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- To build on current advice and support provision to residents through the Council’s Hwb, by developing opportunities for collaboration across PSB organisations
 - To further develop the ‘Claim What’s Yours’ campaign, with consistent messaging on support for residents
 - To build live data in terms of fuel poverty and ensure promotion of home energy efficiency improvements

National Indicators

- Percentage of people in employment, who are on permanent contracts (or on temporary contracts, and not seeking permanent employment) and who earn at least the real Living Wage (NWBI 16)
- Pay difference for gender, disability and ethnicity (NWBI 17)
- Percentage of people living in households in income poverty relative to the UK median: measured for children, working age and those of pension age (NWBI 18)
- Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation (NWBI 19)
- Percentage of people in employment (NWBI 21)
- Percentage of people in education, employment or training, measured for different age groups (NWBI 22)
- Number of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless per 10,000 households (NWBI 34)
- Percentage of households spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs (NWBI 49)

National Milestones

- An elimination of the pay gap for gender, disability and ethnicity by 2050

Helping to create safe, diverse and bilingual communities

Our vision as a Public Services Board

Carmarthenshire is a diverse county, which values togetherness, cohesion and tolerance. We will ensure that our residents and communities feel safe and are able to voice their concerns locally.

Our communities will celebrate the importance of the Welsh language alongside our rich cultural and demographic diversity.

Five Ways of Working

Critical to success in progressing these steps in the Well-being Plan is involvement. Our steps require partners to involve our citizens in helping them to feel safe and connected to their local communities. It is only by listening to our communities, hearing what their concerns are, what they need and what is important to them, that we can support them to make a real difference to their well-being and sense of belonging.

Collaborative working will be enhanced to strengthen links with our partners to support our local communities to participate in the development of engagement opportunities and new services.

Evidence from our Well-being Assessment

In Carmarthenshire there were 2,779 **victims of domestic abuse** between 1st November 2020 and 31st October 2021. The reported crime figures remain similar to the previous year, although there is a significant increase in the numbers of referrals to specialist services since the pandemic. This includes a high focus on community-based support and support for children and young people. Numbers have steadily increased throughout the pandemic and show no sign of decline.

In terms of the public perception of safety, the National Survey for Wales 2018/19 figures show that the percentage **feeling safe** was 76.1%, ranking 7th of the 22 Local Authorities.

Responses from the Well-being survey indicated that people feeling safe in their home and in their community were the highest things people valued about living in their communities.

Whilst the growth in **digital communications** has been a positive for many during the pandemic, this change left some **older people** feel more isolated. The WHO Age-friendly Cities Guide states that: "No matter how developed the city; word of mouth is the principal and preferred means of communication for older people". Many older people value personal communication which tends to be overlooked in the digital age.

Oral communication is particularly important for those with visual impairments or low levels of literacy.

Our **older generation** provide a wealth of knowledge, expertise and experience. Their skills and life experiences are significant attributes they can share with society. Sharing their knowledge and experience can provide opportunities for intergenerational connectivity therefore building community cohesion as well as improving the emotional and social well-being of older people who may otherwise be isolated and undervalued by society.

Carmarthenshire currently has 33.7% of adults that volunteer. During the pandemic some of the opportunities for volunteering became more challenging, leaving some older people without a valuable and social part of their lives. Older people who volunteer are less likely to experience loneliness and communities where there is good volunteer activity show good community cohesion.

Wildfires and outdoor fires continue to be a problem and the areas most affected in our county by deliberate wildfires are: Brynaman, Y Garnant and Glanamau, Llanelli South and Bynea & Llwynhendy. Incidents of wildfires in our county have been more or less steady over the past five years. The environmental harm caused by arson is significant, including affecting water and air quality and damaging or destroying habitats, vulnerable plants, wildlife and grazing.

The 2011 Census, which is the only source that gives a whole population figure, found that 43.9% (78,000) of our residents can **speak Welsh**. When analysing our survey responses, it was interesting to note that respondents who noted that their first language was English, also had various Welsh language skills. Of these, 21% could speak Welsh, 41% could understand Welsh, 18% could read Welsh and 13% could write Welsh. Over 53% of respondents would consider learning or improving their Welsh language skills and 24% would support their children through a Welsh medium education.

Our proposed actions:

- To prepare a Carmarthenshire Volunteering Strategy
- To assess current arrangements and prepare a multi-agency plan for further developing community resilience
- To support the implementation, further development and monitoring of the Welsh language Promotion Strategy

National Indicators

- Percentage who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area (NWBI 23)
- Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/ access the facilities and services they need (NWBI 24)
- Percentage of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when travelling (NWBI 25)
- Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live (NWBI 26)

-
- Percentage of people agreeing that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect (NWBI 27)
 - Percentage of people who volunteer (NWBI 28)
 - Percentage of people who are lonely (NWBI 30)
 - Percentage of dwelling which are free from hazards (NWBI 31)
 - Percentage of people attending or participating in arts, culture or heritage activities at least three times a year (NWBI 35)
 - Percentage of people who speak Welsh daily and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh (NWBI 36)
 - Number of people who can speak Welsh (NWBI 37)
 - Percentage of museums and archives holding archival/heritage collections meeting UK accreditation standards (NWBI 39)
 - Percentage of designated historic environment assets that are in stable or improved conditions (NWBI 40)
 - Active global citizenship in Wales (NWBI 46)
 - Percentage of people who have confidence in the justice system (NWBI 47)
 - Status of digital inclusion (NWBI 50)

National Milestones

- A million Welsh speakers by 2050
-

Next Steps

Establishing the delivery structure

Publishing a revised Well-being Assessment and Well-being Plan provides the PSB with a timely opportunity to revise our delivery structure to ensure that it supports our work and is fit for purpose.

It is considered that an improvement could be made to the existing Delivery Group structure by introducing more of a task and finish approach to deliver the steps identified on pages 11-13. The task and finish groups would develop detailed action plans focused on SMART actions and assess how the Ways of Working would be applied to partnership working going forward.

The Safer Communities Partnership (SCP) is a statutory, long-standing multi-agency group, which meets on a quarterly basis and is fully aligned with two other county-based groups linked to community safety – the CONTEST (counterterrorism) Board and Serious Violence and Organised Crime Board.

Development of the delivery plans

Developing our delivery plans is a timely opportunity to involve our residents and communities to co-produce and prioritise our areas of action. Through this work, we can ensure that we set realistic timescales for development and delivery. This will allow enough time to involve the right people and consider the right things to do to achieve what we want.

Continued involvement and Co-production

Continued involvement is a key area of work for us as a PSB in this next cycle. Our colleagues in the Regional Partnership Board have developed a 'Continuous Engagement Framework' and we aim to build on this work to ensure that we involve and collaborate throughout the life of this Plan and that evidence of involvement, lived experiences and the interventions we have put in place are available for our next Well-being Assessment.

As a cluster of PSBs (Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, and Pembrokeshire), we are fortunate to be working with the Co-Production Network for Wales to meaningfully engage citizens and bring together diverse groups of individuals to co-produce solutions to local problems.

In our Well-being Assessment, we have identified seldom heard voices that are currently not involved in our work and over the period of this Well-being Plan we will work in collaboration to build relationships and meaningful engagement opportunities.

Increasing awareness of the PSB and its work

As a PSB, we recognise the need to raise awareness of our work and our structures across all sectors. In publishing our Well-being Assessment and Well-being Plan we will ensure that feedback is given to everyone who has contributed to our work and that we regularly send updates on progress.

Alongside colleagues in the cluster, we will also develop a series of lived-experience videos to support the development and promotion of our Plan.

We will build the content on our PSB website, providing opportunities for our residents and communities to be involved and to collaborate with us on key issues. Accessibility will be a key feature and we will look to develop a series of tools to promote our work.

Monitoring and evaluation

We need to know if what we are doing is making the differences we want. The PSB will create a transparent way of assessing the effectiveness of our well-being steps in achieving our well-being objectives so that everyone can see the progress that is being made.

COUNTY COUNCIL

19TH APRIL 2023

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

Purpose

- To introduce the Empty Homes Policy that will set the vision and the work programme for the Council in tackling empty private residential homes within the County for the next 3 years; and
- To provide clear direction on the approach and where our efforts will be focussed to meet this and other policy goals.

Cabinet Recommendations:-

‘UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that:

- 8.1 the Empty Homes Policy- “Our Approach to Bringing Empty Homes Back in to Use” be approved.**
- 8.2 the vision to reduce the number of empty properties in the County to 1500 by 2026 be agreed.**
- 8.3 the type of properties and the rating matrix applied to empty properties meets the policy goals be confirmed.**
- 8.4 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.**
- 8.5 the performance measures were consistent and reflective of the efforts being made to bring empty homes back into use be agreed.’**

Reasons:

- To continue the work done in previous years to reduce the number of empty homes in the County;
- Effective intervention has shown to have a positive impact on the reduction of empty homes;
- To provide alternative options to meeting housing need across all tenures and contribute to the housing market in Carmarthenshire;
- To further sustain communities by increasing the supply of housing for local people, reducing the visual and public health affect they have on surrounding areas; and
- To contribute to the Council’s Economic Recovery and Delivery Plan.

Cabinet Decision Required

Yes – 27th March, 2023

Council Decision Required

Yes – 19th April, 2023

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:-

Cllr. Linda Evans (Deputy Leader and Homes Portfolio Holder)
Cllr Alun Lenny (Resources Portfolio Holder)

Directorate Communities Name of Head of Service: Jonathan Morgan Report Author: Gareth Williams Hayley O'Brian	Designations: Head of Housing and Public Protection Housing Services Manager Private Sector Housing Lead	E Mail Addresses & Tel Nos: JMorgan@cararthenshire.gov.uk 01267 228960 GaJWilliams@cararthenshire.gov.uk 07787402901 Hobrian@cararthenshire.gov.uk
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Introduction

Empty homes are a wasted resource when there is a shortage of housing across the County, including rural wards. These properties also blight our neighbourhoods and can be a focus for anti-social behaviour.

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

Bringing empty homes back into use can help address a number of housing and social issues by increasing supply in areas where there are housing shortages and pressures and where there is an opportunity to link to other regeneration projects.

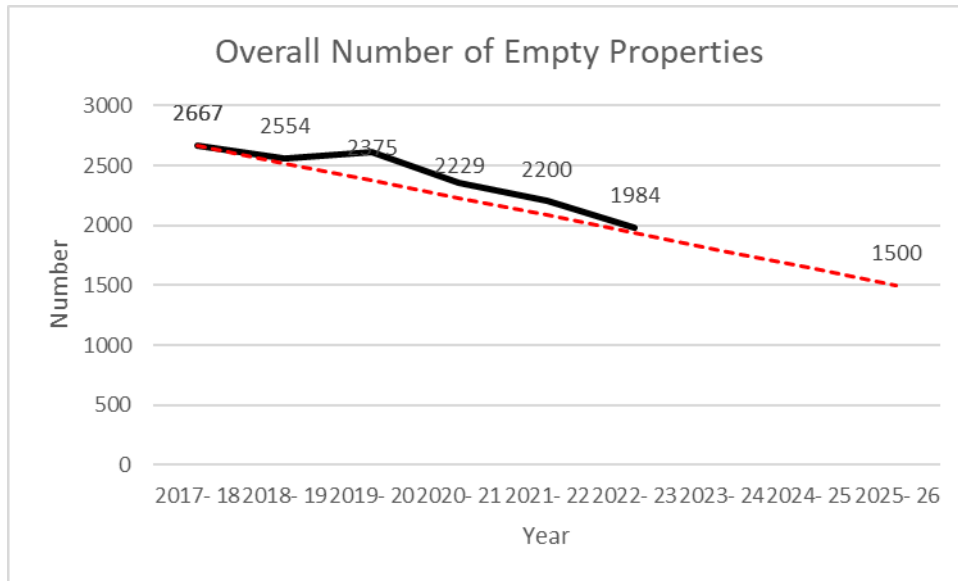
It is essential that the Council has effective measures in place to deal with these issues and a comprehensive Empty Homes Policy which contributes towards local strategic planning and the economic recovery efforts.

The Policy sets out our approach and aims to be ambitious/ forward thinking in the way that we will tackle the problem by moving at scale and pace to return as many empty homes into use during the year. The Policy will allow officers to target certain types of properties, in certain areas, and will give clarity and confidence in the actions that are taken.

Context

Good progress has 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 is 1,984 (Sep 2022). This represents approximately 2.1% of the overall housing stock within the County and our performance can be seen in Graph 1 below:

Graph 1



Innovative approaches have and continue to be developed such as being the first Council in Wales to apply for an Empty Dwelling Management Order, the expansion of our in-house Social Lettings Agency and various financial assistance packages to help owners bring their properties back into use.

In comparison, Carmarthenshire performs well against other Welsh Authorities in returning empty homes back into use and has consistently been in the top four Councils in Wales over the past 10 years (Table 1). This is because we have a dedicated resource towards bringing empty homes back into use and by working cross departmentally, we have been able to target specific properties or schemes that will have the greatest impact.

Table 1

County	Actual Number returned to use	% compared to overall number of empties
Rhondda Cynnon Taf	213	7.4
Carmarthenshire	189	7.4
The Vale of Glamorgan	111	14.1
Bridgend	104	8.4
Swansea	100	5.4

Approximately two thirds (62%) of all empty homes have been vacant for two years or more and 20% have been vacant between 6- 12 months. Of all the empty homes, over half (52%) are within the *Fourteen Towns Action Areas*. In addition, the current council tax debt associated with homes that have been empty for 6 months or more is £1.46m.

This information has allowed us to develop the policy to ensure that we are focusing in the right areas and targeting the right properties.

Approach to Tackling Empty Homes

Our vision is to reduce the overall number of empty homes within the County to 1500 by 2026. To achieve this, the number of empty homes that we return to use each year through this policy must be greater than those that become empty. Hopefully, this policy will discourage owners from allowing their properties to become empty in the first place by imposing financial penalties through Council Tax exemptions and premiums backed by a robust enforcement strategy, but also encourage others to take up financial assistance and other support offered by the Council to bring them back into use.

To ensure we have a balanced and transparent approach in meeting the overall aims of this policy we have developed a risk-based approach. Appendix 1 of the Policy document contains the risk assessment that we will use. Officers have tested this on several types of empty homes in different localities, of varying condition and are confident that it will help us prioritise action to:

- Target empty homes in areas of high housing demand;
- Target empty homes that will be brought back as affordable homes for people on the Housing Choice Register and focus on empty homes within our own council estates that had been previously sold off through the 'right to buy' scheme;
- Support bringing empty residential units above commercial business in our town centres back into use for people that will contribute to the town centre economy;
- Work with the families of empty homeowners that are in care, manage the properties on their behalf, allowing the income could cover part of their care cost;
- Respond to complaints where empty properties are a nuisance to neighbouring properties or attracting anti-social behaviour; and
- Identify empty properties that are in a poor state of repair, are detrimental to the surrounding area and take appropriate remedial action.

The enforcement options that are available to us are outlined in Appendix 3 and will depend on the owners willingness to engage with us. Where empty homeowners are willing to work with us we will provide them with:

- Advice, assistance and technical expertise;
- Financial assistance through grants and loans;
- An offer to lease their properties through the Council's Social Lettings Agency; and
- An offer to buy their properties in certain circumstances.

Council Tax Exemptions and Premiums

The Empty Homes Policy aligns with the Council's decision on the 8th March 2023 to impose Council Tax premiums for long term empty properties. This Policy aims to support the recovery of Council Tax Liability for empty homes or to force owners to do something with them.

Under the new provisions, a long-term empty home is defined as a dwelling which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year. The

Council Tax Premiums will be applied to all Empty Homes that have been vacant for 1 year or more. 62% of the current number of empty homes have been vacant for 2 years or more. It is used as a deterrent mainly, and when properties are returned to use will generate a revenue for the Council. Of the empty properties that have been empty for 2 years or more over 1,300 have an existing debt against them.

Table 2

Debt Banding	Number of properties	Total Debt
£2000 and above	121	£442,000
£1000 to £1999	324	£427,000
£500- £999	777	£559,000
£1- £499	113	£36,000
No debt	253	0

The Council Tax premiums have been set at 50% between 1-2 Years, 100% between 2-5 years and 200% for 5+ Years. Taking into consideration the parish precept for the Council Tax setting for each of the associated banding we have calculated what the average would be, the number of properties in each of those bandings and what the total liability would be if a no premium was added, 50%, 100% and 200% premium is added.

The Council, however, does have discretion to increase this in future to 300% and the increase is not restricted to the length of time the property has been empty, but does need to be proportionate. The table below demonstrates the additional revenues that would be applied though the Council Tax Premium based on the current empty properties data we hold.

Table 3

	BAND A	BAND B	BAND C	BAND D	BAND E	BAND F	BAND G	BAND H	Total
No Premium	16,271	61,015	48,037	34,865	34,091	10,072	2,905	0	207,256
50% Premium	71,474	142,368	120,867	125,516	124,644	45,325	39,224	5,230	674,647
100% Premium	183,624	309,141	334,708	303,330	362,214	156,120	58,109	0	1,707,245
200% Premium	387,006	597,944	641,523	596,200	479,400	128,421	104,596	0	2,935,091
Total									5,524,239

This approach could:

- Reduce the number of overall empties naturally with the owners returning them to use voluntarily;
- Result in empty home owners choosing to pay the general liability thus increasing the revenues to the Council; or
- Owners deciding on neither, thus generating a debt against the property.

Where the owners choose to do nothing and leave the debt accrue, officers will actively pursue a charging order and the enforced sale process (outlined in Appendix 2) to force the change of ownership of the property and recover the debt owed from the sale value of the house. Any

surplus sums from the sale will be held by the Council until claimed by the owner, estate, executors or any other person being able to demonstrate an interest in the property. The use of the enforced sale process is likely to become a more frequently used enforcement tool under this Policy.

To ensure that empty home owners don't pay their general liability and keep the property empty to avoid paying the premiums we will work with colleagues in electoral services and other departments to review the information and take the necessary action to deal with this.

To ensure that the new owner returns the property to use in a reasonable time period and that the condition is improved, we will serve suspended notices on the property under the Housing Act 2004 to carry out necessary repairs and will be active upon change of ownership. If the property is in a reasonable condition that does not merit the service of a statutory notice, the owner will be subject to further enforced sales, empty dwelling management orders or compulsory purchase.

The enforced sale procedure is complex and can also be used to recover other debt secured against the property and registered as a local land charge.

Economic, Social & Community Benefits

The Policy will also contribute to other wider actions around economic, social and community benefits. Over the term of this policy, we aim to bring back into use between 450- 550 homes through direct action and/or financial assistance or enforcement action. This will help with the economic recovery of the County, safeguard or create up to 90 jobs, support local businesses and town centres and promote the Welsh language and culture by providing homes in our main towns, market towns and other rural areas for local people.

Conclusion

High levels of empty properties are recognised as having a serious impact on the viability of communities in terms of blight on neighbourhoods and potential for anti-social behaviour to occur.

Empty homes are also a wasted resource and when brought back into use contribute to an increase in the supply of housing. Dealing with empty properties can therefore have social, economic and regeneration benefits.

The Policy aims to be flexible in its approach and have that balance between encouragement of owners to make better use of their empty homes and for officers to have the confidence to take decisive action to force empty homes back into occupation.

Recommendations

1. To approve the Empty Homes Policy- *“Our Approach to Bringing Empty Homes Back in to Use”*.
2. To agree the vision to reduce the number of empty homes in the County to 1500 by 2026.
3. To confirm that the type of properties that we will focus on and the rating matrix applied to empty properties meets the policy goals.
4. To confirm that the Empty Homes Policy aligns with the recent Council decision to impose Council Tax Premiums on long term empty properties and the way this is enforced through this policy
5. To agree the way that we measure performance going forward so that it is consistent and reflective of the efforts being made to bring empty homes back into use.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES – Empty Homes Policy 2023/26

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: **Jonathan Morgan** Head of Housing & Public Protection

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NONE	NONE	YES	NONE

1. Policy, Crime and Disorder

The Empty Homes Policy will provide the framework to bring empty properties back into use, meet the local housing need, enhance communities, reduce crime associated with empty homes by making them secure and will contribute to other wider agendas and programmes.

2. Legal

The Council has a responsibility to deal with housing standards and public health issues that arise from properties that are left empty. Statutory action requires legal support, particularly if enforced sale is seen as the most satisfactory action to recover debt and force the change of ownership of properties to return them to use. We'll need to ensure that any action taken is in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy. There will be other legal involvement in registering statutory and financial charges and developing agreements for loans/ grants. There will possibly be an increase in the number of leases or buy backs as a result of owners wishing to rid the responsibility of the property.

3. Finance

The recovery of council tax liability, debt from statutory action or council tax premiums will increase. Financial systems will need to be put in place to administer grants and loans. Where enforced sale procedures are applied there will need to be a mechanism for repaying the surplus sums of money to the rightful owner or the person(s) that would have had control of the property.

4. People Management & Performance

The inclusion of council tax premiums on empty homes may have implications on Revenue Services.

Recovery of debt will require significant enforcement activity through enforced sales.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Jonathan Morgan Head of Housing & Public Protection

1. Scrutiny Committee request for pre-determination

YES

Scrutiny Committee**Communities, Homes & Regeneration****Date the report was considered:-****23rd February, 2023****Scrutiny Committee Outcome/Recommendations:-**

- a. The report to clarify that the 6 priority bullet points were not in ranked any order of priority with each being afforded equal priority to enable the council to take tailored and targeted action to bring an empty property back into use- **Amended on Pg.8 of the policy to further clarify;**
- b. The timescales for undertaking enforcement action particularly in relation to Compulsory Purchase Order procedures and Empty Dwelling Management Orders, **Amended on Pg.10 to provide some explanation around timescales for enforcement action and keeping complainants, other residents and members informed;**
- c. Powers to deal with safety issues lay with the council's building control responsibilities in relation to ruinous, dilapidated and dangerous structures- **Amended on Pg.9 to include Councils response (Building Control and Housing Services) to deal with an immediate risk to public safety arising from structural issues with an empty house;**
- d. To link in with the Council's regeneration department with regard to empty land within town centres- **not included as part of this Policy but will be picked up outside this process by respective HoS;** and
- e. The policy timescales on the front cover of the report to be clarified- **Amended on cover page of main Policy.**

The Chair (Cllr. Deryk Cundy) has confirmed that the amendments reflect the recommendations and comments of members of the Communities, Homes & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

2.Local Member(s) – N/A**3.Relevant Partners**

Engagement with stakeholders and partners has taken place in order to develop this Policy through digital interaction.

4.Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

On-going engagement with Revenue Services is taking place

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED**Yes**

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Empty Homes Policy	Housing General Files	Council website- Democratic Services

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Our Approach in Bringing Empty Homes Back to Use

Empty Homes Policy

April 2023 - March 2026



carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Cyngor **Sir Gâr**
Carmarthenshire
County Council



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For further details on Empty Homes, please visit;

<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-services/housing/empty-properties/#.Y33c0hTP02x>

1. Overview

The overall aim of this policy is to;

- Reduce the number of long-term empty homes across the County
- Increase the supply of affordable housing to meet the demand, and
- Tackle issues relating to property nuisance, blight and the effect on communities

This policy intends to be bold in bringing about the improvement and occupation of empty houses, increasing the supply and use of housing to all.

The Council will work with homeowners to support and encourage voluntary action but commit to take appropriate enforcement action where reasonable negotiations fail.

Emphasis will be placed on developing appropriate, low-cost solutions which are both effective in bringing empty homes back into use and help meet our broader housing objectives to increase the availability of decent, affordable housing in Carmarthenshire.

The Policy also aims to complement other key Strategies and Policy areas like the Housing and Regeneration Delivery Plan, Rapid Rehousing Plan, Ten Towns and Developing the Private Rented Sector.

The implementation of this policy will be regularly monitored and will be subject to a full review in 2026.

2. The Local Context

Local Population Data

In Carmarthenshire, the population size has increased by 2.2%, from around 183,800 in 2011 to 187,900¹ in 2021. This is higher than the overall increase for Wales (1.4%), where the population grew by 44,000 to 3,107,500.

The population of Carmarthenshire makes up 6% of the total population in Wales and Carmarthenshire is ranked fourth for total population out of 22 Local Authority Areas in Wales, maintaining the same position held a decade ago.

The Carmarthenshire population is one of the sparsest in Wales at just 78 people per km² who live across a diverse County of both urban and rural communities. Llanelli, Carmarthen and Ammanford are home to 25% of the population and 60% of the population live in rural areas.

The total population is projected to grow by an average of 373 people a year between 2021 and 2040, and there will likely be an accompanying growth in the use of the health and social care services in Carmarthenshire. In addition, the proportion of people aged 80+ will increase by more than 50% in a similar timeframe and, will likely contribute to greater pressure being placed on health and social care services in the future.

Whilst the number of deaths has consistently exceeded the number of births year on year, there has been consistent growth in the population because of net inward migration.

¹ Census Data as of 21st March 2021

Carmarthenshire Housing Market

Local Authority No.	RSL (Housing Association) No.	Owner Occupied	Private Rented	Total of all Tenures
9,223 (10%)	3,197 (4%)	66,389 (75%)	9,664 (11%)	88,473

The figures above indicate that the largest proportion of housing is Owner Occupied, equating to 75% of all tenure types. This is in contrast to social housing stock, which equates to a total of 14% of all tenure types.

Housing need:

In the context of this policy, it is important to understand the local housing need and how bringing empty homes back into use will meet the additional demand by making them available to local people, with strong local connections that will help them live in the areas they were raised.

Generally, household sizes are getting smaller, meaning that in the future the population will be made up of more households, increasing the demand for homes.

Carmarthenshire has fewer areas amongst the most deprived in Wales and those areas are largely concentrated in the three main towns: Ammanford, Carmarthen and, to the greatest extent, Llanelli. However, Carmarthenshire has a higher proportion of areas that are less acutely deprived which are spread across the rural hinterland and smaller rural towns. The table below is based on the Local Housing Market Assessment done in 2018 and predicts the housing need in Carmarthenshire over a 15-year period (up until 2033). It also takes into consideration the additional need created as a result of the pandemic:

Households Requiring Housing					
Market Housing	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4+ bed	Total
Ammanford & the Amman Valley	+37	+403	+1,051	+342	+1,834
Carmarthen & the West	+80	+415	+928	+447	+1,870
Carmarthenshire Rural & Market Towns	+69	+240	+354	+105	+768
Llanelli & District	+83	+680	+1,793	+476	+3,031
Total Market Housing (77%)	+270	+1,738	+4,125	+1,370	+7,503
Affordable Housing	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4+ bed	Total
Ammanford & the Amman Valley	+385	+413	+173	+34	+1005
Carmarthen & the West	+563	+379	+190	+23	+1155
Carmarthenshire Rural & Market Towns	+449	+294	+25	0	+769
Llanelli & District	+974	+945	+492	+79	+2490
Total Affordable Housing (23%)	+2371	+2031	+836	+136	+5419

As can be seen from the table above, there is an overwhelming need for affordable 2-bedroom houses and single person accommodation in the County and significant demand for 2 and 3-bedroom houses across the general housing Market in the County.

This is also reflected in the pressure on our homelessness services and in particular the demand for temporary accommodation. COVID-19 had a significant impact on the use of temporary accommodation, with the total number of households in temporary accommodation doubling compared with pre-pandemic levels. Prior to the pandemic there were 75 households in temporary accommodation with 43 single person households accounting for 57% of the total.²

Household Type	No. Placed
Single People	43
Couples	2
Single Person Pregnant	0
Household + 1 child	14
Household + 2 children	10
Household + 3 children	4
Household + 4 children	1
Household + 5 children	1

The total number doubled to 150 households in temporary accommodation in late July and early August 2020, decreasing to 83 households in March 2021 before increasing to 121 households by the end of November 2021. In the context of this policy, returning empty homes to use will increase the supply of affordable accommodation that in turn will reduce the overall number of people placed into temporary accommodation or Bed & Breakfast.

Empty Homes in Carmarthenshire

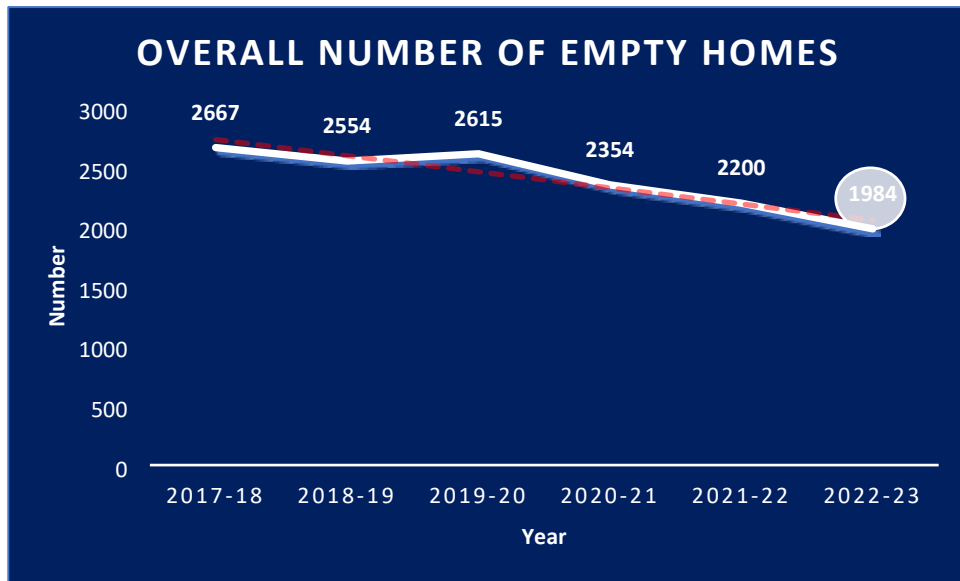
According to the most recent estimates, there were a reported 27,213³ empty private sector residential properties across Wales.

In Carmarthenshire, the overall number of properties within the private sector that have been empty for a period of 6 months or more from April 2022 is currently 1,984. This figure represents around 2.1% of all dwellings (88,473). We have made good progress in decreasing the overall number of empty homes across the County in the last 6 years following work with Owner Occupiers and Landlords.

The following Graph shows the decrease in number of Empty Homes since 2017 and the table shows the length of time they have been empty for;

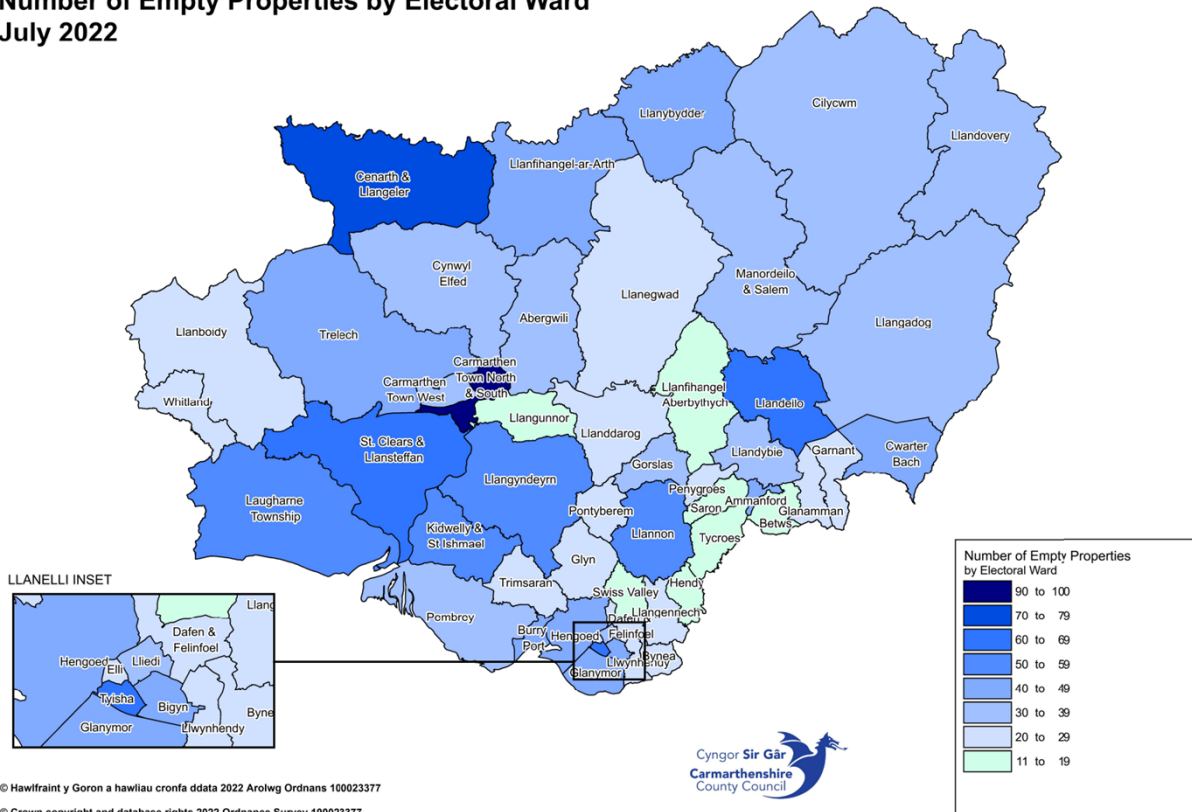
² Homeless Needs Mapping February 2021

³ Data Cymru 2018/19



The distribution of these properties can be seen on the map below, most properties are concentrated around the three main townships and run along the Gwendraeth and Amman Valley, which is characteristic of old mining and industrial areas.

**Number of Empty Properties by Electoral Ward
July 2022**



Further breakdown shows that 38% of empty homes have been empty for a period of between six months and two years. It is these properties that are likely to turn-over naturally and may be subject to sale or probate issues. On the other hand, 62% of empty homes in the County have been empty for longer than two years and these are the ones that require

intervention. In addition, a recent survey of empty property owners in Carmarthenshire told us the reasons why they were left empty.

Length of time houses have been empty		Common Reasons for houses being empty for longer than 6 months	
2 Years (or less)	38%	Under Renovation	30%
2 – 5 Years	29%	For Sale	26%
5 – 10 Years	17%	Require/ Planned Renovation	13%
10 Years (or more)	16%	Other	28%

3. Definition of an ‘Empty Property’

For the purpose of this policy and in terms of how the Council reports performance to the Welsh Government, an empty property is defined as follows;

‘An empty property is a property liable for Council Tax, which has been Unoccupied for a period of 6 months or more’

This definition excludes:

- A second or holiday home
- A property owned by any of the following:
 - Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)
 - Police and Armed forces
 - National Health Service
 - Universities and colleges
 - Local authorities and government
 - Crown estate
 - Churches and other religious bodies
- A property that is purpose built for use as student accommodation
- A property that is in use but for non-residential purposes
- Properties that have been un-banded by the Valuation Office Agency

However, this does not mean that we will exclude homeowners that wish to work with us where the property has been empty for 6 months or less particularly where the property is likely to meet local housing demand and provide affordable accommodation to households in need.

4. Tackling the Problem – The Council’s Approach

Our Vision:

To reduce the overall number of empty homes across the County to under 1,500 by 2026 and ensuring that everyone has a home that meets their needs, that people in all parts of the County always feel safe and secure and that a range of initiatives are available to help communities come together to enhance their neighbourhoods and environment.

It is important that we have effective methods in place to deal with the issues of Empty Homes and that interventions contribute towards local strategic planning. Carmarthenshire County Council is strongly committed to reducing the number of empty homes, facilitating and assisting the creation of good quality and affordable homes in the County and making the best use of existing housing stock.

It is also important to note that not all empty properties will be in a poor condition or need action. Some will be in good condition, but vacant and on the market for sale etc. Conversely, not all empty properties will be contained within the Empty Property denominator (National Performance Indicator), as they may be substantially furnished (therefore not within the council tax exemption banding), or removed from council tax listings completely, based on their poor condition, people in care or holiday/ second homes.

To ensure we have a balanced and transparent approach in meeting the overall aims of this policy which is to;

- Reduce the number of long-term empty homes across the County consistently over time
- Increase the supply of affordable housing to meet local housing demands, and
- Tackle issues relating to property nuisance, blight and the effect on communities

There are some things that we **will do** and others that we **won't do**, which are as follows:

What we will do

We will focus on empty homes in the following ways regardless of the time they have been empty for. They are not necessarily in priority order and each one will be given equal consideration to determine the most appropriate course of action or targeted action that will allow us to return them to use.

- 1) Target empty homes in areas of high housing demand or in the ten towns areas that will also act as a catalyst for wider regeneration**
- 2) Target empty homes that will be brought back as affordable homes for people on the Housing Choice Register and a key focus on empty homes within our own Council Estates that had been previously sold off through the 'right to buy' scheme**
- 3) Support bringing empty residential units above commercial business in our town centres back into use for people that will contribute to the town centre economy**
- 4) Work with the families of empty homeowners that are in care, manage the properties on their behalf and the income could cover part of their care cost**
- 5) Respond to complaints where empty houses are a nuisance to neighbouring properties or attracting anti-social behaviour**
- 6) Identify empty houses that are in a poor state of repair and are detrimental to the surrounding area and take appropriate remedial action**

Every empty property will be risk assessed on the above criteria and greater weighting will be given to those factors that are of higher priority. Action will be based on this and the co-

operation of the homeowner. Empty Property Risk Assessment Scoring Matrix can be found at **Appendix 1** of this document.

What we won't do

We will not focus our efforts on bringing empty properties back into use that do not meet any of the above priority criteria. In addition, we will not actively pursue properties:

- 1) Where the value of the property is considerably higher than the local or national average unless there is a significant advantage to the Council e.g., supported housing projects, conversion to flats, visible in the main town centres**
- 2) Houses that are far beyond a reasonable state of structural repair, that are located in areas where they don't affect anybody, and the most satisfactory course of action is likely to be demolition/ clearance**

This does not mean that the door is closed to owners, members of the public or elected members seeking help and assistance through us, however, they will depend on the resources available to us.

Financial Support for Owners

It is hugely important that we do all we can to try and support empty homeowners to bring houses back into use. That is why we have put a range of financial packages together to support the works needed to improve the standards of empty homes so that they can be lived in.

Schemes are subject to Eligibility Criteria, however, we have every intention to deliver these where and when possible. The schemes that are available are included in **Appendix 2**.

In addition to these schemes, we will take advantage of other funding such as Ecoflex, NEST and other energy saving schemes to improve the efficiency of homes, reduce our carbon emissions and lower energy bills particularly in the current economic climate.

Buying Back empty houses through the Housing and Regeneration Delivery Plan is also an option that is available to homeowners.

Enforcement Action

The Council and its partners seek to work cooperatively with owners of empty houses to bring their properties back into use. Therefore, regular and effective communication with the owner is paramount, to establish the most appropriate course of action to bring the empty property back into use.

However, where we fail to get co-operation from the owners or their estate executors, we will look to take enforcement action to reduce any risk and return the property to use within the shortest possible time. Likewise, where there is a serious and immediate risk to the public or neighbouring properties e.g. structural collapse, slippage or storm damage, officers from Building Control and Housing Services will act quickly to deal with the dangerous structure in

order to mitigate the risk. This may involve employing a contractor and carrying out the works ourselves.

Prior to taking any statutory action we will conduct all reasonable enquiries to ensure that our action is proportionate and transparent, in line with this Policy. Where a property has been empty for a long period of time and officers have spent time encouraging the owners to re occupy the property but no progress has been made, or the owner of the property has been untraceable or demonstrates an unwillingness to work with the Council, formal action will be undertaken. In some circumstances we will be required to utilise land registry records, electoral records, other council held information and/or local intelligence in order to establish ownership of property.

There are a number of enforcement options (legislative provision) available to the Council in order to deal with issues caused by empty properties and also to secure their return to use and these are outlined in **Appendix 3**.

Whilst there are no definitive timescales on when enforcement action will be taken or how long that will take, officers will provide complainants, immediate residents and local members with regular progress updates. Information will be made available to the above of the plan/ stages to return the property to use and deal with any associated problems. Where possible, we will try to provide anticipated timescales to ensure that there is some accountability with the decision making process and action taken.

Officers will make it clear at an early stage where enforcement action is not warranted based on the risk it presents or where there is no strategic purpose for our intervention. We will however continue to monitor these properties, communicate regularly with the owners and encourage them to return them to use and if circumstances change, review our course of action.

5. Council Tax Exemption and Premiums

Welsh Government changed its accounting methods in April 2020 and no longer accounts for the discount awarded to long term empty properties and as such, the financial burden of awarding any future discounts would have to be borne by the Council.

The Council's Cabinet unanimously agreed in November 2019 that the 50% discount awarded on long term empty houses be removed and the full council tax charge apply for houses empty for longer than 6 months.

To further encourage bringing long term empty homes back into use we will apply a Council Tax Premium to all homes that have been empty for 12 months and longer, in line with Council's decision to impose this on the 8th March 2023.

Length of time Empty	Premium
> 1 year < 2 years	50%
> 2 years < 5 years	100%
> 5 years	200%

Under Section 139 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, the Council could determine in future to charge a Council tax premium on empty houses of up to 300%. This may be incremental based on length of time a property has been empty.

We don't foresee that this will affect holiday homes that will subsequently affect the tourism, visitors to the County and the local economy, given that properties will be accommodated by holidaymakers during parts of the year.

6. Economic, Social & Community Benefits

This policy will ensure that there are strong links between returning empty houses to use and the positive impact they will have on the local economy, meeting housing demand and how that spreads out into the community. The Council's Economic Recovery and Delivery Plan sets clear goals and actions to support recovery following Brexit, the Pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis. Key action areas include:

Businesses	<p>Safeguarding existing businesses, supporting new start-ups and growing businesses in the foundational and growth sectors to become more productive and competitive, including the green economy.</p> <p><i>Focus given in the Policy to town centre residential premises for key workers that will spend and support independent business and night-time economy.</i></p>
People	<p>Protecting jobs, responding to the expected increases in unemployment, helping people gain the skills needed for the jobs that will become available, and creating new and better-skilled employment opportunities.</p> <p>We aim to return between 450-550 long-term empty homes during the term of this policy through direct action. Through our financial support packages and private sector investment this will create/safeguard almost 90 jobs, helping replace the jobs lost during the period above.</p>
Places	<p>Ensuring a fair distribution of opportunities through investing in the infrastructure and adaptation of our strategic growth areas, town centres, the rural economy and regenerating our most deprived communities.</p>

Through this policy we will provide affordable homes for young and working aged people in both rural and urban areas, helping them remain in the county, increasing footfall in our primary towns and protecting the Welsh language and culture in rural areas.

7. Measuring Performance

Monitoring the impact of the policy will be reported and updated quarterly. However, the Denominator will not be reported during the first quarter to take into account any new information that's made available through Council Tax.

The success in bringing empty private sector residential properties back into use will be measured using the following Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) and performance will be compared to other Councils in Wales:

- PAM/013 – Percentage of empty private sector houses brought back into use during the year through direct action by the local authority
- PAM045 – Number of new homes created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use

The work resulting from the Policy will also be measured and reported on in terms of the quantity of engagement and enforcement undertaken; the increase of supply of housing in Carmarthenshire to meet housing demand, as well as the number of council tax premiums applied (when the premium is in place) in order to demonstrate the efforts that are being made to bring empty houses back into use. A suite of sub-measures will be created to reflect the effectiveness of this policy in terms of outcomes and officer activity.

Appendix 1: Empty Property Risk Assessment Scoring Matrix



EICH CYNGOR arleinamdani
www.sirgar.llyw.cymru

YOUR COUNCIL doitonline
www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales

Empty Property Risk Assessment Sheet

Premises Address:

Service Request ID:

Service Request Date:

RISK ASSESSMENT DETAILS

Length of Time Vacant	
Less than 2 year	4
2 – 5 Years	8
5 – 10 Years	10
Over 10 Years	20

Area	
Rural	1
Village	5
Ten Towns	20
Key Towns	30

Housing Potential	
One Bed Flat	10
Multiple Flats (above Commercial)	10
2 Bed House	10
3+ Bed House	5

Ownership	
Contactable & responds	0
Contactable, does not respond	5
Uncontactable	10
Owner in Care Home	15

Condition	
Good condition, no defects	0
Minor defects, no safety issues	10
Multiple Cat 2 Hazards	20
Multiple Cat 1 Hazards	30
Dangerous - Loose / Falling elements	40

Property Type	
Detached	1
Semi-Detached	5
Terraced	10
Flat / HMO	15
Local Authority Site	20

Market/Habitability	
Saleable/Good	0
Renovate/Habitable	5
Substantial Disrepair	10

Property Appearance in the Area	
Good Appearance	0
Some Detriment	10
Major Detriment	20
Ruinous / Derelict	30

Social Impact	
No Incidents	0
Minor Incidents	10
Major Impact	20

Security	
Secure	0
Insecure	30

Enforcement	
Advisory	10
Major / No WID	20
Small Scale / WID	30
Major / WID	40
Urgent	50

Appendix 2: Financial Support for Empty Property Owners

<p>Houses into Homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a Welsh Government funded scheme, offering interest free loans to owners of empty properties, offering financial assistance to improve such properties for sale or let as residential properties, on completion. • This scheme will consider loans up to £25,000 per self-contained unit, up to a maximum £150,000 (6 units) per applicant. • The loan is subject to a maximum Loan to Value of 80% and has no monthly repayment terms. • This scheme is also available for commercial empty properties, where planning consent is in place for its conversion to residential units.
<p>Leasing Scheme Wales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This scheme is aimed at improving access to long term affordable and good quality housing, with tenancy support, in the Private Rented Sector. • Leasing Scheme Wales will support landlords and offer grants of up to £5,000 to bring their properties up to Housing, Health and Safety Rating System Standards • Up to £25,000 in grants is offered to landlords where properties have been empty for 6 months or more, in return for longer term leases of between 5 to 20 years • Leasing Scheme Wales will provide tenants with longer term security of accommodation (of between 5 to 20 years) in the Private Rented Sector at an affordable rent based on Local Housing Allowance levels. • Leasing Scheme Wales will support those who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless according to the definition in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
<p>National Empty Homes Grant Scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner Occupier grants are administered through One National Body (RCT Council) offering grant assistance to the value of £25,000, to improve empty properties which are occupied by owners, within the County. • Beneficiaries of the grant will need to occupy the property for a minimum of 5 years • Homes must have been empty for a minimum of 12 months • Supported by WG funding, with Carmarthenshire Council providing match funding 10% to the Programme.
<p>Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme is a regional plan which looks to support area-based regeneration projects that promote economic regeneration such as creating jobs, enhancing skills and employability and creating the right environment for businesses to grow and thrive; with a focus on

	<p>individuals and areas most in need to ensure prosperity is spread to all parts of Wales.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carmarthenshire’s priority areas are; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Llanelli town centre ○ Station Road, Llanelli ○ Ammanford town centre • The programme has two main thematic funding streams, a property enhancement development grant and sustainable living grant.
<p>Property Enhancement Development Grant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Property Enhancement Grant addresses the requirement for retail and commercial floor space that meets the needs of businesses by providing gap funding for vacant commercial building occupiers and owners to enhance building frontages and bring vacant commercial floor space back into beneficial business use. • In addition, where a local need has been identified, it would fund development projects that create new commercial floor space.
<p>Sustainable Living Grant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will support the conversion of vacant commercial floor space into new homes and can be used alongside the Property Enhancement Development Grant and other initiatives to ensure comprehensive mixed-use regeneration of properties. • The aim of the funding is to convert vacant floor space on upper floors into new residential accommodation. The minimum requirement from each scheme is 1 x 1 bedroom self-contained flat. Student accommodation and bedsits are not eligible for grant funding. • A maximum of £20,000 grant can be considered eligible per residential unit created

Appendix 3: Enforcement Options

<p>Enforced Sale</p>	<p>An Enforced Sale is a process by which the Council can force the sale of a privately owned property or piece of land where a ‘relevant debt’ is owed to the Local Authority. It is a means of transferring ownership to a new owner, in circumstances where the present owner is either unwilling or unable to deal with the site or property, and its associated problems and either refuses or is unable to repay the debt owed.</p> <p>Relevant debts will mainly be accrued where the Council carries out work to the property following the service of a statutory notice, where the recipient failed to carry out the work themselves.</p> <p>The debt is then registered as a local land charge. The enforced sale of a property has the effect of changing the ownership of the land/property, and with encouragement generating interest, investment and reoccupation. Prior to forcing the sale, the Council will take other statutory action below to force improvement or reoccupation through the new owners. Properties will be sold at Public Auction to guarantee the best price for the property, fees and charges will be recovered and any surplus repaid to the owners or treasury if unregistered and owners not known.</p>
<p>Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO)</p>	<p>Introduced by the Housing Act 2004, Empty Dwelling Management Orders (“EDMOs”) give the Local Authority the power to take management control of privately owned empty homes to secure occupation of them.</p> <p>The power resides in Sections 132 to 138 of the Housing Act 2004. Interim and Final EDMOs are made against the proprietor of the property, who may be either the owner, or a leaseholder where there are at least 7 years remaining on lease. The authority, having exhausted all other avenues of encouraging the proprietor to bring the property back into use, can apply to a Residential Property Tribunal for an order.</p>
<p>Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO)</p>	<p>Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 gives the council the power for the purposes of Part II of that Act to acquire: a. land to build houses; b. houses or buildings which may be made suitable as houses together with any occupied land; c. land proposed to be used for any purpose authorised by legislation (facilities to be provided in connection with housing accommodation); and d. land to carry out works on it for the purpose of or in connection with the alteration, enlarging, repair or improvement of an adjoining house.</p>

<p>Section 215 – Detrimental to the Public Amenity</p>	<p>If it appears to Planning Services that the amenity of a part of their area, or of an adjoining area, is adversely affected by the condition of the land in their area, they may serve on the owner and occupier of the land a notice under this section requiring steps to be taken under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The notice will specify the steps to be taken to remedy the condition of the land. If the owner or occupier does not comply with the terms of the notice within the specified period, the owner or occupier will be guilty of an offence and liable for prosecution in the Magistrates Court (liable to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale).</p>
<p>Housing Act 2004 Statutory Notices</p>	<p>Under the Housing Act 2004, the council must take the appropriate enforcement action where it considers that either a Category 1 or 2 Hazard exists on residential premises. Appropriate enforcement action can include the serving of an improvement notice. We will not be serving Prohibition Orders as this will preclude us from bringing the property back into use. We will consider Demolition Orders under the 1985 and 2004 Act as well as suspending the notices. Notices may be split by hazard to enforce and carry out works in default on specific defects/ elements. Any works in default and charges incurred will be considered as a Primary Charge and registered against the property.</p>
<p>Building Act 1984</p>	<p>If the Council considers a building or structure, or part of it, to be in a dangerous condition or ruinous/ dilapidated that subsequently detrimental to the amenity then, under the Building Act, the Council can apply to the Magistrates Court requesting an order be made requiring the owner to carry out works to remove the danger or to demolish the building. If the owner fails to comply with the order within the specified time period, the Council may execute the order and recover its reasonably incurred expenses of doing so from the owner. The owner will also be liable to prosecution.</p>
<p>Environmental Protection Act 1990</p>	<p>If the Council is satisfied that a statutory nuisance exists or is likely to occur or recur with an Empty Property, the Council can serve an abatement notice. The notice will require the abatement of the nuisance or prohibit or restrict its occurrence or recurrence. The Council may then execute works and take other steps necessary for any of those purposes.</p>

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CABINET**13 MARCH 2023****PRESENT:** Councillor D. Price (Chair)**Councillors (In Person):**

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

Also in attendance (Virtually):

Councillor D.M. Cundy

Also Present (In Person):

W. Walters, Chief Executive;
J. Morgan, Director of Community Services;
C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services;
G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services;
A. Williams, Director of Place and Infrastructure;
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;
C. Harrison, Head of Strategic Joint Commissioning;
S Charles, Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager;
C. Higginson, Media Manager ;
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;
M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer;
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present (Virtually):

S. Hendy, Member Support Officer.

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP and remotely: 10:00am - 10:20am**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor E. Thomas.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
A. Davies	Item 10 - Tywi Valley Shared Use Route - Land Acquisition and the use of Compulsory Purchase Order Powers to Support the Acquisition of Land and Rights	Councillor Davies owns land which crosses the path of the Tywi Valley route.

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE:-

3.1. 13TH FEBRUARY 2023

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13th February 2023 be signed as a correct record.

3.2. 20TH FEBRUARY 2023

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 20th February 2023 be signed as a correct record.

4. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BY MEMBERS

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

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

6. REGIONAL ADULT ADVOCACY STRATEGY

The Cabinet considered a report which included a new Regional Adult Advocacy Strategy for Cabinet endorsement. The strategy that had been developed with stakeholders through the Advocacy Working Group which comprised of the membership of three Local Authorities, Health board and third sector.

The draft Regional Adult Advocacy Strategy aimed to shape the commissioning arrangements to meet requirements to ensure good quality advocacy is readily and equitably available to those who want, or need it, in the West Wales region of Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire.

The strategy outlined five priority areas which all aimed to improve the outcomes for people who require advocacy. The priorities were defined in the light of co-productive activity to date, engagement, the Regional Population Assessment, and in response to legislative requirements.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the **Regional Adult Advocacy Strategy** which seeks to shape the commissioning arrangements of Hywel Dda University Health Board, Carmarthenshire County Council, Ceredigion County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council in order to meet their statutory duties, be endorsed.

7. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS

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

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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

9. CARMARTHENSHIRE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING (CSCFL) (FORMERLY THE MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME) YSGOL GWENLLIAN, KIDWELLY

Following the application of the public interest test it was **RESOLVED**, pursuant to the Act referred to in minute no. 8 above, not to publicise the content of the report as it contained exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act). The public interest test in respect of this report outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information contained therein as disclosure would significantly undermine the commercial interests of the Council in future property negotiations.

The Cabinet considered a report which set out a proposal in respect of the purchase of land and virement in the capital programme to proceed with a new replacement Welsh medium school for Ysgol Gwenllian, Kidwelly.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

- 9.1 to proceed with the purchase of land to support the development of a new replacement Welsh medium primary school for Ysgol Gwenllian, Kidwelly;**
- 9.2 That a virement in the capital programme, as detailed in the report, be approved in order to allow the purchase to be completed as soon as possible.**

10. TYWI VALLEY SHARED USE ROUTE - LAND ACQUISITION AND THE USE OF COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER POWERS TO SUPPORT THE ACQUISITION OF LAND AND RIGHTS

[Note: Councillor Ann Davies, having earlier declared a personal interest in this item, left the meeting prior to the consideration and voting thereof.]

Following the application of the public interest test it was **RESOLVED**, pursuant to the Act referred to in minute no. 8 above, not to publicise the content of the report as it contained exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act). The public interest test in respect of this report outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information contained therein as disclosure would undermine the Council's position in any continuing negotiations to purchase outstanding land pieces which will run alongside the CPO process.

The Cabinet considered a report which sought approval to continue land negotiations and to approve the use of Compulsory Purchase Powers (CPO) to acquire land and interests.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

- 10.1 To take all necessary action to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the Tywi Valley Shared Use Route Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) under section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 13 of the Local Government(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the Acquisition of land Act 1981 to acquire all or part of the land shown tinted pink on the Plans attached together with the acquisition of easement rights over the areas coloured blue thereon all of which are described generally in Appendix A for the purpose of delivering the shared use route.**
- 10.2 In tandem with 10.1 above, the Corporate Property department to continue negotiations to acquire the land required for the Shared Use Route by agreement, if possible, including, where relevant, those parcels of land which currently do not have the benefit of planning consent for the delivery of the Scheme.**
- 10.3 To confirm that the shared use route once constructed will be designated a 'highway maintainable at the public expense'.**
- 10.4 That the Director for Place and Infrastructure be authorised to:**
 - i. Settle the final form and content of the CPO and all associated documentation (including the Statement of Reasons) including minor amendments to the plans and schedules identifying the land.**

- ii. Take all action needed to pursue the making of a CPO and secure its confirmation including the publication and service of all notices and the presentation of the Council's case at any public inquiry;
- iii. To acquire interests in the land within the CPO either by agreements or compulsorily; and
- iv. Approve agreements with landowners setting out the terms for the withdrawal of objections to the CPO including where appropriate seeking exclusion of land or new rights from the CPO.
- v. Following confirmation of the CPO, implement the CPO powers and General Vesting Powers to acquire title to and / or take possession of the land.

CHAIR

DATE

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MONDAY, 27 MARCH 2023

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair) (In Person):

Councillors (In Person):

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

Also in attendance (Virtually):

Councillor D.M. Cundy

Also Present (In Person):

W. Walters, Chief Executive
 J. Morgan, Director of Community Services
 C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services
 L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law
 G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services
 A. Williams, Director of Place and Infrastructure
 J. Jones, Head of Regeneration
 C. Higginson, Media Manager
 A. Eynon, Principal Translator
 E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer
 E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

S. Hendy, Member Support Officer

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 - 10.50 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Lenny and J. Tremlett.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
C. A. Davies	9 - Business Rates - Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme 2023/24	She runs a holiday let.
P.M. Hughes	9 - Business Rates - Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme 2023/24	He owns a Bed and Breakfast Guest House in the County.
L.D. Evans	6 - Council's Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 9 - Business Rates - Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme 2023/24	A close member of her family has a business in the County.

A Vaughan Owen	6 - Council's Revenue Budget Monitoring Report	Wife is a primary school head teacher.
G. Davies	11. Appointment of LA Governor	He is the Chair of Governors at Brynamman School

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE 13TH MARCH 2023

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13 March, 2023 be signed as a correct record.

4. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BY MEMBERS

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

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chair advised that two public questions on notice had been received.

5.1. QUESTION BY MR HAVARD HUGHES TO CLLR. ANN DAVIES, CABINET MEMBER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS AND PLANNING POLICY

“When the review documents related to the reassessment of the current local plan’s Special Landscape Areas Policy EQ6, leading to the formulation of Policy BHE2, will be published?”

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

“Thank you for your question. The new Policy BHE2 in the LDP is currently at the start of its journey and will be supported by further evidence and supplementary guidance both will be completed and ready to be operational by the time the new LDP has completed its journey, hopefully but dependent on the Planning Inspectorate and various other issues that will be by December 2024.

As you know the 2nd Deposit LDP is currently out for consultation. The date for this consultation ends on the 14th April, and I would respectfully ask if you have concerns then I would suggest that you feed into this system. As you know, each and every response will be look at and analysed before it is independently assessed by the Planning Inspectorate. As we prepare the supplementary guidance on landscapes we will also be consulting with the Public on its content.

This guidance will identify landscapes across the County and their special characteristics allowing us to understand what is important about them as part of their future designation. As you know the current SLAs do not give any concrete protection to the 18 areas noted in the current LDP. Only Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks offer that protection. However the BHE2 policy will strengthen the Policy on Landscapes.”

Supplementary question by Mr Havard Hughes:-

"In the approved Local Development Plan Natural Resources Wales said we query the lack references to areas of special landscape areas in the original statement. Carmarthenshire's response was 'Special Landscape Areas are non-statutory designation and as such there is no requirement in designating it in the LDP'. So do you have the same view as council officers and their response that special landscape areas are not required and therefore have they been removed from the local plan?"

Response by Councillor. Ann Davies, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs and Planning Policy to the supplementary question:-

As I previously noted the SLAs do not give any concrete protection; as you know as I have written you emails so you are aware of that.

The BHE2 policy will strengthen the policy on landscapes and (can I just say really using the NRW's Landmap system the whole of Carmarthenshire will be afforded the protection under the new policy and I think it is important that we note that. We are aware that there is a petition within the County which asks us to review our thoughts on the SLAs, however, as the closing date for the consultation is the 14th April, I would kindly ask the organiser to ensure that this information is fed into the consultation before the closing date if possible.

5.2. QUESTION BY MS TARA-JANE SUTCLIFFE TO CLLR. ANN DAVIES, CABINET MEMBER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS AND PLANNING POLICY

"Can she confirm which Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is replacing the current Wind and Solar Energy SPG (adopted June2019); and can she give a guaranteed date of adoption of the replacement SPG."

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

"Thank you for your question. The current Wind and Solar Energy SPG has been reviewed and will continue to be operational for the next few years. So we are not planning to replace the policy for the next few years. The policy is still relevant and will therefore continue in its current format certainly until the end of 2025. That's when we envisage that it will be updated but at the moment it is current, relevant and fit for purpose.

Supplementary question by Ms Tara-Jane Sutcliffe:-

"It is really great to hear the commitment to that SPG. You mentioned that it would stay in place until 2025. Are you able to make longer term commitments because that SPG, as far as I'm aware, is the only place the Council have codified your commitment to undergrounding of cables and obviously with current events there's considerable concern around permission to developers to be able to put their cables overhead. Are you able to stick to that commitment of undergrounding which is contained within that policy any longer than 2025.

Response by Councillor. Ann Davies, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs and Planning Policy to the supplementary question:-

I can assure you that the policy will be reviewed and to be honest when I was writing this I thought, this is something we will be working with Aled's portfolio on the Decarbonisation Policy within the Council has been reviewed and along with the Wind and Solar policy and so much work has taken place over the last few years in conjunction with Aled's portfolio in moving Carmarthenshire forward to become a Net Zero County by 2030. That is our commitment. The progress which has been made within this field is incomprehensible and therefore I would foresee that the new policy would fully reflect the advances which have been made.

I should advise you that although I said the end of 2025 and that's when we see the new policy being drawn up, I would advise you when a review or an update in the SPG is made it will be open for consultation and everybody is free to forward your input when the policy is reviewed once again. But I don't see a shift if I am honest in undergrounding.

6. COUNCIL'S REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

[Note: Councillors L.D. Evans, and A. Vaughan Owen, having earlier declared an interest in this item, repeated their declarations but remained in the meeting.]

The Cabinet considered the revenue budget monitoring report which provided the latest budgetary position as at 31st December 2022 in respect of 2022/2023.

Overall, the monitoring report forecast an overspend for the year at departmental level of £6,259k with a forecast overspend on the Authority's net revenue budget of £270k. The Cabinet was advised that the largest variance remained the unfunded pay awards, which had now been included at a departmental level and had enhanced the overspend position in some departments. Figures had been updated to reflect the effect of the chancellor's reversal of the health and social care levy, which provided a saving of 1.25% on employer's national insurance contributions from November.

In addition, there remain:

- overspends in service areas driven by increased demand combined with reduced grant funding versus previous years, particularly Learning Disabilities and Children's Service.
- A sustained reduction in commercial income, covering car parks, leisure centres and school meals.
- Capital financing underspends due to scheme delays and a reduced need to borrow. The inherent underspend was £3m, against which £750k direct had been committed to cover the tendered price increase required to proceed with the Oriel Myrddin project, which attracts c. £1m national lottery match funding.

It was stated that significant negotiations by Welsh Government over the Teachers pay awards and the current position in respect of the September 2022

pay award was that the Minister initially offered an uplift of 5% to all statutory salary points, which was further negotiated by the unions and eventually the Minister agreed a revised offer for 2022/23 comprising of a further 1.5% consolidated increase and a 1.5% non-consolidated payment, with the non-consolidated element being only for this academic year. The understanding was that WG would be funding the additional 3% for this academic year and therefore schools would be presented with a shortfall of 1% in their Teachers Pay budget from September to March, due to the fact that at the start of the financial year only 4% had been validated into the budget.

The shortfall and the impact on both the school's budget and the Corporate Budget had been considered and it was proposed that the Authority provided the schools with the additional funding of approximately £600k. which would ensure schools would have no shortfall in the teachers pay budget for this year.

It was also proposed to provide the schools with the additional budgetary funding for the shortfall in the non-teaching staff budgets which would increase school budgets by another £900k. In total it was proposed to uplift school budgets for 2022/23 by £1.5m from County Council resources to fund the shortfall that school face due to the pay awards during 2022/23.

It was stated that whilst commercial income continued to recover, public use of car parks, as well as leisure centre usage remained well below pre-pandemic levels and was contributing to the overspend picture.

It was noted that as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process, the Authority had agreed a £3m in-year contingency budget which was currently held centrally and provided a partial offset to the current pressures. Furthermore, it was reported that £200k has been used to offset the increase in fuel prices impacting on School Transport.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

- 6.1 the Budget Monitoring report be received, and the budgetary position and appropriate corrective action taken be noted.**
- 6.2 in respect of significant overspends on specific budget areas Chief Officers and Heads of Service critically review options available to them to address the ongoing impact.**
- 6.3 the additional recommendation to provide a total uplift in the schools' budget of £1.5m to cover the shortfall in the Teachers pay be approved.**

7. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 UPDATE

The Cabinet received a report which provided the latest budgetary position for the 2022/23 capital programme, as at the 31st December 2022 and detailed new projects and virements for noting and Cabinet approval.

It was reported that departmentally, a net spend of £56,590k was forecast compared with a working net budget of £92,515k giving a -£35,925k variance.

The net budget included the original H.R.A. and General Fund capital programmes approved by Council on the 2nd March, 2022 and slippage from 2021/22. It was noted that some budgets had also been amended to account for differences in actual grant allocations compared with the anticipated allocations at the time the programme was approved, and new grant awards received during the year to date.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

7.1 the capital programme update report 2022/23 be received.

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

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

The Cabinet 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.

It was 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.

Cabinet Members noted 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.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that:

- 8.1 the Empty Homes Policy- “Our Approach to Bringing Empty Homes Back in to Use” be approved.**
- 8.2 the vision to reduce the number of empty properties in the County to 1500 by 2026 be agreed.**
- 8.3 the type of properties and the rating matrix applied to empty properties meets the policy goals be confirmed.**
- 8.4 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.**
- 8.5 the performance measures were consistent and reflective of the efforts being made to bring empty homes back into use be agreed.**

9. BUSINESS RATES - RETAIL, LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY RATES RELIEF SCHEME 2023/24

[Note: Councillors A. Davies, L.D. Evans, and P.M. Hughes, having earlier declared an interest in this item, repeated their declarations and left the meeting throughout the deliberation and voting of this item.]

The Cabinet considered a report which provided information on the adoption of a rate relief scheme being made available to billing Authorities by Welsh Government for 2023/24. The report recommended that the Cabinet adopt the 2023/24 Retail Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme as outlined in the report.

In response to the Coronavirus emergency in 2020/21, the Welsh Government announced that it would introduce the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme to increase the discount to 100%. This scheme also applied in 2021/22 and in addition to retail sector it was extended to include leisure and hospitality sectors for example shops, pubs and restaurants, gyms, performance venues and hotels.

It was reported that for 2023-24 the Welsh Government had confirmed it would provide grant funding to all 22 local authorities in Wales to provide the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme to eligible businesses.

However, for 2023/24 the scheme would provide a discount of 75% discount for eligible occupied properties. It was noted that the scheme would apply to all eligible businesses; however, the relief would be subject to a cap in the amount each business could claim across Wales. The total amount of relief available would be £110,000 across all properties occupied by the same business.

The Welsh Government had provided the types of business that they considered appropriate for this relief scheme, as well as those which were not. The non-exhaustive list of business types was appended to the report at Appendix A.

Cabinet Members noted that as this was a temporary measure and that the Welsh Government would be providing the relief by reimbursing Local Authorities

that use their discretionary powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, it was appropriate for the scheme to be formally adopted.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

- 9.1 the Retail Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme be adopted for 2023/24**
- 9.2 the Relief be granted in accordance with the Welsh Government guidelines**
- 9.3 the applications that are not specifically covered by the guidelines or otherwise require specific consideration, to be determined by the Cabinet Member for Resources.**

10. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER UPDATE

The Cabinet received a report which provided an update regarding the current position relating to the asset transfer of parks and playgrounds and also highlighted the additional expressions of interest received.

It was reported that the Council's Community Asset Transfer Procedures document had also recently been reviewed and had been updated to consider the challenges encountered to date and the lessons learnt from dealing with various asset transfers over the years. The new Procedures would replace the 2013-2016 version.

It was noted that a consultation process had been carried out with Town and Community Council at the beginning of the year with a questionnaire sent to all Councils requesting their feedback on their experiences to date. Their comments had been taken on board and incorporated within the new document.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

- 10.1 the present status of the asset transfer of parks and playground be noted;**
- 10.2 the updated Community Asset Transfer Procedures document be approved and adopted**

11. APPOINTMENT OF LA GOVERNOR

[NOTE: Councillor G. Davies, having earlier declared an interest in this item, left the meeting prior to the consideration and determination thereof.]

The Cabinet was advised that, in accordance with the Local Authority's appointment policy for LA Governors, where LA Governor vacancies exist or are due to arise, nominations are invited from the Governing Body Chairperson, the Headteacher and the local Elected Member. Subsequently, all nominations are considered by the Cabinet Member for Education & Welsh Language, who makes the appointments.

Councillor Glynog Davies is the local Elected Member and is also the current Chair of Governors at Brynamman Primary School. It would not, therefore, be appropriate for Councillor Davies to consider the nomination for a vacancy for a LA Governor at Brynamman Primary School, in his role as Cabinet Member for Education & Welsh Language.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Mr Morgans be re-appointed to the Governing Body of Brynamman Primary School.

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

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

CHAIR

DATE

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