

COUNTY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2024

PRESENT: Councillor H.L. Davies (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

K.V. Broom	J.M. Charles	P. Cooper	D.M. Cundy
B. Davies	G. Davies	L. Davies	M. Donoghue
A. Evans	H.A.L. Evans	L.D. Evans	N. Evans
R.E. Evans	T.M. Higgins	J.K. Howell	P.M. Hughes
P. Hughes-Griffiths	J.D. James	M. James	B.W. Jones
A.C. Jones	D. Jones	G.R. Jones	H. Jones
A. Lenny	N. Lewis	K. Madge	D. Nicholas
D. Owen	M. Palfreman	B.D.J. Phillips	D. Price
E. Rees	H.B. Shepardson	E. Skinner	G.B. Thomas
M. Thomas	J. Tremlett	A. Vaughan Owen	P.T. Warlow
J. Williams			

Councillors (Virtually):

S.M. Allen	L.R. Bowen	M.D. Cranham	S.A. Curry
A. Davies	W.R.A. Davies	T.A.J. Davies	C. Davies
K. Davies	LI.M. Davies	T. Davies	D.C. Evans
W.T. Evans	S. Godfrey-Coles	J.P. Hart	G.H. John
M.J.A. Lewis	A. Leyshon	A.G. Morgan	B.A.L. Roberts
E.M.J.G. Schiavone	J. Seward	R. Sparks	D. Thomas
E.G. Thomas	F. Walters	D.E. Williams	S. Williams

Also Present (In Person):

W. Walters, Chief Executive
C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services
G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance)
S. Murphy, Head of Law, Governance and Civil Services
J. Morgan, Head of Housing and Public Protection
R. Griffiths, Head of Place and Sustainability
D.W. John, Head of Environmental Infrastructure
G. Morgan, Head of Democratic Services
E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer
C. Higginson, Media Manager
L. Jenkins, Cabinet Support Officer
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator
A. Edwards, Electoral & Civil Registration Services Manager
R. Morris, Members Support Officer
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

D. Hall-Jones, Member Support Officer
M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 am - 12.50 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Davies, D. Harries, R. James and S. Rees

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS.

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
W.E. Skinner	10.1 – Parc – Y – Scarlets	Close personal friend is employed by Scarlets Regional Ltd.
W.E. Skinner, D. Thomas, D.C. Evans, P.T. Warlow, J. Williams, T. Davies, D. Cundy, M. Cranham, M. Charles, E.G. Thomas, G. John, M.J.A. Lewis, W.T. Evans, B.A.L. Roberts, E. Williams, M. Thomas, P. Cooper, H.A.L. Evans, J. Tremlett, W.R.A Davies, G. Davies, D. Phillips, P.H.Griffiths, A. Lenny, K. Howell, P.M. Hughes	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Personal and Prejudicial - Receives the Winter Fuel Allowance
G. John, F. Walters, Andrew Davies, S. Williams, R. Evans, D. Owen, B. Jones, N. Lewis, H. Jones	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Mother receives the Winter Fuel Allowance
L.M. Davies, L.D. Evans	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Father receives the Winter Fuel Allowance
K. Madge, A. Evans, A.V. Owen, D. Price	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Relatives receive the Winter Fuel Allowance

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

D. Jones	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Personal and Prejudicial
R. Sparks, J. Seward, K. Davies, E. Rees	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Personal and Prejudicial - Parents receive Winter Fuel Allowance
S. Curry	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Personal and Prejudicial – Partner receives the Winter Fuel Allowance (Declaration made electronically)
E.G. Thomas	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Personal and Prejudicial – Sister receives the winter Fuel Allowance
S.M. Allen, K. Madge, C.A. Jones	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Personal and Prejudicial – Soon to be eligible to receive the winter Fuel Allowance
S. Godfrey-Coles, N. Evans, T.A.J. Davies	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Personal and Prejudicial – Mother-in-Law receives the Winter Fuel Allowance
G. Davies	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Personal and Prejudicial – Wife receives the Winter Fuel Allowance
M. Palfreman	12.3 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Hefin Jones	Personal and Prejudicial – Parents-in-Law receive the Winter Fuel Allowance
W.E. Skinner	14 – Petition	Sister and her family live in Llansteffan
C.A. Jones	14 – Petition	Lives in Llansteffan opposite the Green. Has dispensation to speak and make written representations but not to vote
A Lenny	14 – Petition	Close family members live on the Green in Llansteffan

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

- The Chair referred to the array of events he, and his consort, had attended since the last meeting of the Council
- The Chair congratulated the athletes from Carmarthenshire who had recently represented Wales and Carmarthenshire at both the Olympics and Paralympics in Paris. He paid particular reference to:
 - Emma Finucane (cycling – 1 gold and 2 bronze medals),
 - Jess Roberts (Cycling team pursuit – Bronze medal)
 - Anna Hursey (TableTennis)
 - Matt Bush (Taekwondo – Gold medal)
 - Steffan Lloyd (pilot for fellow Welshman, James Ball, 1000m time trial – Gold Medal).

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

He also paid recognition to the all-important role of coaches, trainers, assistants and helpers from Carmarthenshire who had supported the athletes at the Games

- The Chair congratulated Sara Marie Nicholls who plays for Llandeilo Bowls and recently won the Welsh Ladies 2 Woods Singles and was part of the Welsh Team who won the Women's Triple competition in the European Championship
- Councillor H. Jones referred to the Council's previous meeting where the Chair had referenced the 'My Food Plate' event at Nantyci organised by the Carmarthenshire Young Farmers Club. He congratulated the YFC on reaching the short list of the Rural Youth Europe project award with the 'my food plate project' and second prize in the whole of Europe. This achievement further recognised the importance of a project like 'My Food Plate' and evidenced the excellent work of the YFC in Carmarthenshire. He extended his congratulations to the organisation

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER, CABINET MEMBERS AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (IF ANY)

The Cabinet Member for Resources informed the Council that as part of the preparations for the U.K. Government's Budget to be held on the 30th October, 2024, the Treasury had invited evidence and comments by the 10th September. Accordingly, he had submitted the following statement to the Treasury:

"Due to Conservative Government austerity measures, my council is £120m worse off in real terms than in 2010. Despite the most prudent financial management we need extra funding for essentials like social care, children's services, education and highways – the front line services that people depend on daily. Raising the Living Wage is welcomed, but that and other pay settlements must be fully-funded for the public sector, especially as the continued freeze of tax thresholds will raise an extra £30b by 2027-28 through fiscal drag, which will hit the lowest paid in particular.

Like all councils, we've made constant year on year efficiencies resulting in cuts to services. We're rapidly approaching an unsustainable position. Unless real extra funding is provided in the Autumn Budget, it's inevitable that many more councils will be issuing S114 notices.

While appreciating the UK Government's serious fiscal situation, seeking savings by squeezing public services would be devastating, and not an approach expected by a Labour Government. Further austerity would hit everyone, but especially the most vulnerable in society.

It's reported that the Chancellor is considering changing the Government's debt-to-GDP measure to exclude losses made by the Bank of England's bond-buying programme, resulting from quantitative easing to lower interest rates. It's calculated this would release up to £20b in fiscal headroom for the Government. If this action is taken, I urge the Chancellor to consider using a substantial part of that money (in our case via Welsh Government) to ease the unsustainable pressure on local authority budgets".

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

5. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 10TH JULY 2024

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 10th July, 2024 be signed as a correct record.

6. POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACE REVIEW 2023/24

Further to Minute 6 of the Council meeting held on the 24th January, 2024 the Council received the final proposals for the Polling District and Polling Place Review 2023/2024 which had been subject to public consultation and undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

References were made to the need to provide a polling station within the village of Cilycwm, access difficulties to the first-floor in the polling station within the Pwll Bowls Pavilion together with the location of C.C.T.V cameras within the Llannon Polling Station. The Council was assured those issues would be taken under review

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

6.1 To approve the scheme of polling districts and polling places as set out in Appendix A to the report

6.2 That power to designate polling places is delegated to the Electoral Services Manager and that such power is to be exercised where the decision is required at short notice, and it is not possible to await a decision of the Council.

7. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DEMOCRACY) (WALES) ACT 2013 ("THE ACT")-COMMUNITY REVIEW

The Council was reminded that at its meeting held on the 28th February 2024 it had resolved, having considered draft recommendations of a review undertaken under Section 25 of the Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013 to examine existing Town and Community Governance arrangements, to accept those recommendations and that they be published for consultation for a period of 6 weeks.

In accordance with that decision, the Council considered a report detailing the outcome of the consultations together with the final recommendations, as detailed within Appendix C to the report

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the proposals set out in Appendix C to the report be adopted by the Council as the final recommendations for the purposes of the reviews undertaken for:

- a) **Llangydeyrn Community Council and Llanelli Rural Council**
- b) **Llangydeyrn Community Council and Trimsaran Community**

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

- Council**
c) **Llangyndeyrn Community Council and Pontyberem Community Council**

8. APPOINTMENT OF A NEW CO-OPTED INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Council considered a report recommending the appointment of Mr David Morgan as a co-opted member of the Standards Committee, following one of the existing co-opted members having left the Committee earlier in 2024. It was noted that following a formal recruitment process, undertaken in accordance with the procedures prescribed by regulations, a recruitment panel comprising three County Councillors, one Town/Community Councillor and a lay member, was recommending to Council the appointment of Mr David Morgan, a former police officer, as a co-opted member of the Standards Committee for a full initial term of office

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Mr David Morgan be appointed as a co-opted member of the Standards Committee for a full initial term of office.

9. COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY, REGULATORY AND OTHER COMMITTEES AND THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO SERVE UPON THEM

In line with the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) regulations 1990, as amended, and the Local Government Wales (measure) 2011, the Council considered a report detailing the outcome of a review of the composition of the Council's Scrutiny, Regulatory and other Committees following notification received that Councillors R. James and A. Leyshon had moved from the Labour Group to sit as Independent Unaffiliated Members.

RESOLVED, as a result of the changes to the overall political composition of the Council that:

- 9.1 To adopt the changes to the number of seats held by the Labour and Unaffiliated Members as detailed within Tables 1, 2, and 3 of the report.**
- 9.2 In accordance with Corporate Procedure Rule CPR 2 (2) (o) to approve changes in Committee membership as a result of recommendation 11.1 above (as detailed within the report).**
- 9.3 In accordance with Part 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 to note that the existing arrangements for the allocation of the 5 Scrutiny Chairs remains unchanged.**
- 10. TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CABINET IN RESPECT OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS**

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

10.1. PARC -Y- SCARLETS AGREEMENT

(NOTE: 1

1. Councillor W.E. Skinner, having earlier declared an interest in this item, re-declared that interest and left the meeting during its consideration.
2. The Chair welcomed Messrs N. Short, S. Munderack, Daniels and P. Morgan from Scarlets Regional Ltd who had been invited to make a presentation to the Council in support of its request for a restructure of its loan agreement)

Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 29th July, 2024 (minute 14 refers), had considered a report on a request received from Scarlets Regional Ltd to extend and restructure its outstanding loan with the authority.

The Council was appraised of the terms of the loan as set out within the report. In considering the Council's current position, it was advised that the loan was due to mature on 31 March 2023, however Scarlets Regional Ltd had indicated that they were unable to repay the loan at that point in time in one lump sum due to the significant impact on the Club emanating from the coronavirus pandemic, both in terms of costs, which included high inflation and significant loss in income, as was noted within the report.

The Cabinet Member for Resources provided an assurance to the Cabinet that the present interest-only loan had not resulted in any financial loss to the council taxpayers of Carmarthenshire; rather, taxpayers had been better off as the interest paid by the Scarlets had been favourable for the authority. The actual annual repayments for 2022-23 and 2023-24 amounted to £152k and £188k respectively.

In view of the significant economic impact of the Club on the County area, its sustainability was considered to be essential. It was reported that a recovery plan had been implemented and the Council had liaised with the Club to identify a suitable way forward, to enable the repayment of the loan and ensure the sustainability of the Club.

The representatives of Scarlets Regional Ltd thereupon made a presentation to the Council on its financial position, resulting in its request for a loan restructure, its recovery plan together with its numerous community involvements

Members of the Council were afforded the opportunity of asking questions on the presentation following which it was:

RESOLVED that the following recommendations of the Cabinet be adopted:

“UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that a restructure of the loan be approved on the following basis:

“14.1 The term of the loan be extended for 15 years from 1 April 2023, on a repayment basis, with a 3 year deferral of payments. The value being £2.616m.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

- 14.2 Repayment of the Loan Principal commences on the 1 April 2026 on an equal instalments basis, with the value being £218,000 per annum.**
- 14.3 Interest continues to be chargeable and is charged at a rate of 2.2% above bank base rate”.**

10.2. DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE (SPG) LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Council was informed that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 29th July, 2024 (minute 8 refers), had considered a report on the council consulting on the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents for the Revised Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2018-2033 in respect of:

- Plastering, Rendering and Insulating Traditional Buildings: Guidance for Sustainability
- Carmarthenshire Shopfront Design Guide 2022
- Conservation Areas: An Essential Guide to their Enhancement

The draft SPG documents provided additional clarity on specific thematic policy areas to support implementation and provided guidance and elaborated upon the policies and provisions of the emerging Revised Local Development Plan at the point of its adoption. Each SPG for public consultation related to specific policy areas within the Adopted and Revised LDP but with a focus on Built Heritage and Conservation.

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

- “8.1 that the Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance, as set out in the report, be approved for publication for formal public consultation;**
- 8.2 that delegated authority be granted to officers to update or amend any factual, typographical or grammatical errors”.**
- 11. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE 29TH JULY 2024**
- UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 29th July, 2024 be received.**
- 12. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NOTICES OF MOTION:-**
- 12.1. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLORS KEVIN MADGE AND TINA HIGGINS**

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors K. Madge and T. Higgins:

““This motion is calling on the Cabinet to bring Garnant Workman's hall into public ownership and then demolishing the building using the land to extra care sheltered flats or housing for local people.

This building is the biggest eyesore in the Amman Valley and it is the biggest fire risk and a danger to local neighbours and residents.

Once again youngsters are risking their lives again and have broken into the building several times.

Over the last 10years trying to solve this problem has been like a game of ping pong it just keeps going back and forth between the Council and the owners and costing the ratepayers thousands of pounds”.

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 representations were made in support of / against the Motion.

RESOLVED that the Motion be not supported.

12.2. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLORS ALED VAUGHAN OWEN AND MEINIR JAMES

Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors A. Vaughan Owen and M. James:

“Fairtrade is a global movement that aims to ensure that producers in developing countries are paid a fair price for their goods, work under safe conditions, and engage in environmentally sustainable practices. By adhering to Fairtrade standards, farmers and workers can invest in their communities, improve their livelihoods, and build a more secure future. Fairtrade also empowers consumers to make ethical purchasing choices that support equitable trade relationships and contribute to the fight against global poverty and injustice.

This Council notes:

1. The longstanding commitment of Carmarthenshire County Council to the Fairtrade campaign, which has been instrumental in promoting fair and ethical trading practices within our community.
2. The importance and success of Fairtrade towns within Carmarthenshire, including a vast amount of schools and places of worship, which have

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

significantly contributed to raising awareness and support for Fairtrade principles among our residents.

This Council resolves to:

1. Reaffirm our commitment to supporting Fairtrade and the Fairtrade campaign within Carmarthenshire.
2. Recognise and celebrate the achievements of Fairtrade towns within our county, which have been pivotal in advocating for Fairtrade and ethical consumerism.
3. Support a Fairtrade Steering Committee, to oversee and coordinate Fairtrade activities and initiatives across Carmarthenshire.
4. Appoint a Cabinet Member as a Champion for Fairtrade, who will actively promote and advocate for Fairtrade principles and initiatives within the Council and the wider community.

By passing this motion, Carmarthenshire County Council will reinforce its commitment to ethical trade, support the well-being of communities both locally and globally, and continue to lead by example in promoting social and economic justice through the Fairtrade movement.

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.

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

12.3. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLORS HEFIN JONES AND LINDA DAVIES EVANS

As a consequence of the earlier declarations of interest made in respect of this item rendering the Council inquorate, the Proposer of the Notice of Motion, with the consent of his Secunder, withdrew the Notice of Motion.

13. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

13.1. MS TARA-JANE SUTCLIFFE TO COUNCILLOR EDWARD THOMAS - CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, WASTE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

“With just over six months remaining until the extended deadline of 31st March 2025 for drawdown of the full £17.6m of funding from UK Central Government, what progress against schedule has been made by the Council in construction of the Towy Valley Cycle Path, have all the compulsory purchases now been concluded and what updated estimate has been made of the outstanding cost to be borne locally for work extending past this deadline?”

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

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

“I can now confirm that the Compulsory purchase process has been successfully completed, with all lands necessary to deliver the scheme now vested, and in the control of the Local Authority.

In respect of construction progress; the scheme has been divided up in to 10 separate construction sections which can run concurrently in order to expedite the scheme delivery. Works have been completed on section 3 (Nantgaredig), construction is well underway on section 10 (Ffairfach) and construction commenced on the 27th August on section 2 (Whitemill to Nantgaredig). All remaining sites are programmed to commence on or shortly after the 23rd September.

Our delivery programme remains such that all works will complete or substantially complete, including the purchase of 2 significant bridge structures by the March 31st 2025. We therefore remain confident that any residual spend past March 2025 that may be incurred, will be well within the existing £1.8m capital allocation already set out by Carmarthenshire County Council for the project”

Supplementary Question by Mrs Tara-Jane Sutcliffe:

“We’ve heard a lot in this meeting about unsustainable pressures on this local authority’s budget and I understand the Cabinet’s been discussing the need to find something like £20m of savings and that’s even with a future 4% increase to council tax. So, I just want to clarify that you’re saying that the cycle path will not add to these pressures on local finances and that additional liability for completion of construction beyond that £1.8m will not fall to local taxpayers”

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

“We remain confident that we will complete it on the due date and with the additional funds we have set aside”

14. PETITION

(NOTE:

1. Councillors W.E. Skinner and A. Lenny having earlier declared interests in this matter re-declared that interest and left the Council Chamber during its consideration
2. Councillor A.C. Jones, having earlier declared an interest in this meeting re-declared that interest. However, having received dispensation to speak and make written representations on this item but, not to vote, she remained in the meeting but did not vote thereon)

The Chair referred to the following petition received by the Council and advised that whilst it was being presented for consideration, the petitioner was not in attendance at the meeting having elected, in accordance with CPR 10.16, to formally present the petition to a meeting of the Cabinet. Accordingly, the Council

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

will be able to debate the matter and, thereafter, refer both the petition and its deliberations to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

“We the undersigned petition Carmarthenshire County Council to Scrap plans to charge for parking at Llansteffan beach front (both at the existing car park and the new one planned at the Northern end of the Green).

Converting the car parks at Llansteffan beach front from free to payment car parks will have far reaching and unintended adverse consequences. Most people will park wherever they can to avoid payment. On high days and holidays this ill-conceived idea will destroy the strip of Green at the front, clog up nearby roads, make the high street almost impassable for emergency vehicles, block the coastguards access and adversely affect local businesses. As there are no strategies in place to mitigate these inevitable consequences the plans for payment should be dropped. A simple cost benefit analysis would prove that free parking at Llansteffan would be the better long-term option.”

RESOLVED that in accordance with Corporate Procedure Rule 10.16, the petition be referred to the Cabinet for consideration.

15. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS:-

15.1. QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR KEVIN MADGE TO COUNCILLOR ALUN LENNY, CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

“Could the cabinet member give a statement on the purchase of the former Wilko store at Friars Park in Carmarthen. With millions going to be spend on the Debenhams store in the next financial year and you have no money to invest in schools in Ammanford and Llanelli in addition to no funding for the Miner's theatre in Ammanford and other rundown buildings in other areas.

I challenge the cabinet member to say what is the cost of purchasing the old Wilkos for the ratepayers and who made the decision to purchase the store”.

Response by Councillor Alun Lenny – Cabinet Member for Resources

“I must thank Cllr Madge for his question Chair, as I'm delighted that he's given me the opportunity to set the record straight on a couple of misconceptions – beginning with the rather catch-all preamble in his question.

Quite frankly, to try and make a connection between the regeneration of the former Debenhams store and investment in schools is either an attempt to create political mischief, or demonstrates a shocking lack of understanding of basic capital investment. I'll be generous and say it's the former.

It's just not true Chair – to quote Cllr Madge – that we 'have no money to invest in schools in Ammanford and Llanelli.' There's a substantial pot of money in the MEP, as well you know. It's a question of spending it wisely in the face of rampant rising construction costs. But I won't be drawn into that debate further at this stage. That's something for another time.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Turning to the purchase of the former Wilko store, which is the subject of this question, since Cllr Madge was reported as being ‘very angry’ about it in one local paper. The Wilko store in Carmarthen was amongst the 400 stores that closed last autumn after the company, founded in 1930, became the latest of many leading high street chains to go into administration due to financial and supply issues.

When the building came on the market its purchase was discussed at length by the Cabinet and Regeneration Officers. Buying it had several things going for it, Chair. We already own the car park, which has room for 250 cars. The building is in a prime site in Carmarthen town centre and we were anxious not to see it being left empty.

I can’t divulge the purchase price at this stage for commercially confidential reasons. As former Leader of Council, surely Councillor Madge should know that. All I can tell him is that a new school would cost many, many times more than what we paid for the Wilko store – which was also substantially grant aided, by the way.

Unlike the other examples he gives in his question, this is an Invest to Save venture. The council will let it out to tenants, who’ll be paying us an annual rent, which will bring us an income. It also means that the council can choose what type of business we’d like there. We’re already in discussions with interested retail parties, and I’m confident that in due course we can announce who they are and how many jobs they’ll be creating, which will be to the benefit of all within commuting distance of our county town.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Kevin Madge

“The Poundstretcher store in Ammanford was offered to you at a six-figure sum. You will do this in Carmarthen but when it comes to the Aman Valley when you are offered a building where we want regeneration you refuse to buy it. So, the question is “Why do you treat one area different from another”?

Response by Councillor Alun Lenny – Cabinet Member for Resources

“As you know there is a masterplan for Ammanford. There are discussions going on now and feasibility studies being made. Two developments will be announced in due course. As you also know, levelling up money has been used on a substantial street scene improvement in the Town. It’s not a matter at all of treating one town differently to another.

15.2. QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR KEVIN MADGE TO COUNCILLOR EDWARD THOMAS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, WASTE AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

“Can the cabinet member set out the approach to grass verge cutting and spraying weed killer on highways in the Amman Valley this summer”?

Response by Councillor Edward Thomas – Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

“The County Council’s Highway Service manages an annual programme for highway verge mowing and weed spraying to ensure a cost-effective service that safeguards highway users. Rural verges receive a single swathe cut each year to prevent vegetation encroachment, maintain visibility and provide pedestrian space. Additional mowing is done at junctions and bends for better visibility.

Urban verges are also cut once a year with extra mowing at junctions and bends.

Both urban and rural mowing are carried out by contractors selected through a competitive tendering typically from June to September / October. The Council aims to enhance biodiversity in accordance with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 by maintaining green corridors and scheduling specific verge cuts to encourage certain species.

The Highways Team also conducts annual weed-spraying along urban roads and footways using approved chemicals starting around April / May with repeat applications as needed. They also treat invasive species like Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam over a 4-year period.

This year a resource issue with a verge mowing contractor affected the schedule in the Amman Valley and Llanelli area, but additional resources were brought in to bring it back on track.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Kevin Madge

“Can we look at not cutting the grass at the end of August, and the weedkiller needs to be done in May because of Global warming because Global warming is making the weeds grow from February on and we need to tackle the weeds more earlier but the grass verges need to be done earlier. That’s the question because of tourism. If we want to bring in tourists into the valley we need the valley to look tidy That’s the question, can we make some of these decisions much earlier.

Response by Councillor Edward Thomas – Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services

“Councillor Madge, I’m sure we can look at this and I’m sure the officers will be able to prepare it and obviously, it’s a matter we can discuss at the scrutiny committee”

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

16.1. THE PLAID CYMRU GROUP HAS NOMINATED COUNCILLOR EMLYN SCHIAVONE TO REPLACE COUNCILLOR CARYS JONES ON THE EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Councillor Emlyn Schiavone replace Councillor Carys Jones on the Education, Young People and Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

16.2. THE PLAID CYMRU GROUP HAS NOMINATED COUNCILLOR DENISE OWEN TO REPLACE COUNCILLOR CARYS JONES ON THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Councillor Denise Owen replace Councillor Carys Jones on the Planning Committee.

16.3. THE INDEPENDENT UNAFFILIATED MEMBERS HAS NOMINATED COUNCILLOR STEVE WILLIAMS TO REPLACE COUNCILLOR SEAN REES ON THE EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Councillor Steve Williams replace Councillor Sean Rees on the Education, Young People and Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee.

16.4. THE LABOUR GROUP HAS NOMINATED COUNCILLOR PHILIP WARLOW TO REPLACE COUNCILLOR PETER COOPER ON THE DYFED PENSION FUND COMMITTEE

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Councillor Philip Warlow replace Councillor Peter Cooper on the Dyfed Pension Fund Committee.

17. TO ELECT THE CHAIR OF THE EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOLLOWING A VACANCY MID-TERM

The Council, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4 (2), considered one nomination received for the election of Chair of the Education, Young People and Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee following a mid-term vacancy.

Following a vote, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Councillor E. Schiavone be elected Chair of the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee.

18. TO ELECT THE VICE- CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FOLLOWING A VACANCY MID-TERM

The Council, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4 (2) considered one nomination received for the election of Vice Chair of the Planning Committee following a mid-term vacancy.

Following a vote, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Councillor M. Charles be appointed Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee.

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

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

The Chair stated that the minutes outlined on the agenda under items 19.1 – 19.11 were available for information on the Council website.

CHAIR

DATE

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.