

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
13 October 2022**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor David Thomas
Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation**

SUBJECT: Question from Patrick Edwards

Is the council going to refund council tax to council tax payers for the greatly diminished services it provided during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially as the Government paid 80% of many council workers' wages through the furlough scheme?

Response

The amount of Council Tax charged for a financial year is calculated in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The annual charge is a contribution to the overall running costs of the Council to delivery both its statutory and non-statutory services. The charge is not linked specifically to the services received or used by an individual taxpayer.

The Council faced significant pressure through the covid period and although some services ceased or were limited for a time, most continued to be delivered, many had to adapt to different ways of working in order to keep employees and service users safe. Schools delivered hubs to support the children of key workers, and delivered online teaching for pupils, Care staff continued to deliver care services to residents in need, social workers continued to support older people and children and Waste collection services were maintained.

Where services did stop, staff were redeployed to undertake other duties such things as welfare calls to our vulnerable residents, track and trace support, enforcement work and other areas where pressure on the council's services increased.

All Councils in Wales were required to assist Welsh Government taking on additional responsibilities through Covid to support the public and businesses. We distributed £114m of business grants making 17,961 payments and rate relief schemes, 7,952 carers payments were issued, self-isolation and free school meal payments were administered, alongside several other in schemes.

Services like Waste collection, Homelessness and Social Care had to address front line staff absences through Covid as well as respond to significantly increased demands. For many months the council operated at "business critical" level

because the demands to support the public and the Welsh Governments response were so great.

The pandemic impacted significantly on the Councils finances, additional costs and loss of income was set to push the council into a significant deficit even after fully utilising the funding we receive annually from Welsh government and collect through Council Tax. We did draw support from the government furlough scheme for the limited number of staff we were unable to redeploy, but we also drew down £29,743 million from the Welsh Government Covid hardship fund which enabled us to balance the budget.