

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON THURSDAY, 11 JULY 2019

PRESENT

County Councillor B Baynham (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, M Barnes, G Breeze, J Charlton, L V Corfield, K W Curry, A W Davies, B Davies, D E Davies, P Davies, M J Dorrance, D O Evans, J Evans, L Fitzpatrick, L George, J Gibson-Watt, M R Harris, S M Hayes, H Hulme, A Jenner, D R Jones, E Jones, G Jones, J R Jones, E M Jones, D Jones-Poston, F H Jump, K Laurie-Parry, H Lewis, K Lewis, S Lewis, MC Mackenzie, I McIntosh, S McNicholas, C Mills, G Morgan, JG Morris, R Powell, WD Powell, D R Price, GD Price, P C Pritchard, G Pugh, J Pugh, G W Ratcliffe, L Roberts, P Roberts, K M Roberts-Jones, E Roderick, D Selby, K S Silk, D A Thomas, T J Van-Rees, E Vaughan, M Weale, A Williams, G I S Williams, D H Williams, J Williams, J M Williams, R Williams and S L Williams

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors S C Davies, E Durrant, E A Jones, M J Jones, P E Lewis, DW Meredith, N Morrison, D Rowlands and J Wilkinson

2.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 21st February, 7th March, 3rd May and 16th May 2019 as correct records.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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All members present declared a personal but non prejudicial interest in relation to Allowances and Expenses pursuant to paragraph 12 (2) (b)(iv) of the Code of Conduct.

County Councillor S Williams declared a personal interest in the Chief Fire Officer's presentation as her husband was employed by the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

4.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
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Prior to the meeting the Chair made presentations to Dr Greg Thomas who had received an Alarm Risk Award for work on the Builth Wells Event Safety Group and to Ian Maddox (Professional Lead Building Control), Nigel Davies (Senior Building Control Surveyor), and Alastair Edwards (Principal Engineer) who had recently received a commendation from Dyfed Powys Police in recognition for their work supporting the police operation for the tragic house fire in Llangammarch Wells in 2017.

5. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised Council that Councillor Matthew Dorrance had been appointed as the WLGAs spokesperson on Community Safety and that she had been appointed the spokesperson for Rural Affairs and County Councillor Aled Davies as the deputy spokesperson. She gave details of meetings with Welsh Government Ministers and the Welsh Affairs Select Committee on the Mid Wales Growth Deal. The Leader congratulated Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe on being appointed Chair of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and all those Powys schools that had featured in the top 200 secondary schools in Wales, particularly Gwernyfed High School which had been ranked third.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection made a statement on the collapse of the contractors who had been developing the bowling green site in Newtown. He confirmed that the site had been secured and no payments made to the contractor. Welsh Government had confirmed that the Innovative Housing Grant awarded to this scheme was secure and not at risk. The Council's preferred route to market was a full retender of the scheme which was expected to delay to the project by approximately six months to appoint a principal contractor and a further three months for the contractor to commence on site.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING

There was no briefing from the Chief Executive on this occasion.

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

7.1. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Countryside and Transport from Mr Jeremy Thorp

What progress has been made, specifically with items 6 and 7 under this motion (repeated below) and in particular, what resource have you allocated to writing it and what date have you set for this strategy to be completed by?

Motion 13.2, items 6 and 7

6. That the authority should put in place an economically feasible strategy to reduce its carbon output and strive to develop best environmental practice in its buildings

7. That the authority should look into best practice from other authorities such as robinhoodenergy.co.uk with Nottinghamshire Council and theleccy.co.uk/about/ with Liverpool City Council, in order to consider developing local energy ownership and supply chains but also assisting tackling fuel poverty.

Response

i. Council Buildings

The Welsh Government's Low Carbon Delivery Plan launched in March 2019 requires the public sector in Wales to develop and implement a range of carbon savings to meet the ambitious target of the Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030. To meet this target property officers are currently working with the Welsh Government Energy Service to undertake an estate wide energy assessment to identify energy efficiency and renewable opportunities within the Councils land and building estate. Once complete, this assessment will be used to inform an economically feasible strategy.

The Council's housing service is reviewing its overall investment programme for council housing, to support investment over a thirty year Housing Revenue Account business plan to reach an energy efficiency rating of SAP81 for municipally owned housing. SAP is the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure for Energy Rating of Dwellings and uses a scale of 1 to 100, with a higher rating indicating a better level of energy efficiency. This target will be challenging, and will be dependent upon the development of new technologies. However it will make a substantial and positive difference to both the energy efficiency of homes – reducing the risk of fuel poverty – and contributing to the decarbonisation outcomes of an 80% reduction being considered by the Welsh Government for all Welsh housing by 2050. The actual measures will change over time as new ideas are tried, tested and implemented.

ii. Powys Public Service Board - Carbon Positive Strategy

Step 7 of Towards 2040 – the Powys Wellbeing Plan is to 'develop a carbon positive strategy that maximises green energy production'. A steering group of representatives from all PSB members including the Council has been set up by Welsh Government, who are the Lead organisation for Step 7, to oversee its development. The strategy is due to be completed by April 2020.

Areas of action within the scope of the strategy will include energy efficiency, renewable and low carbon energy deployment, behaviour change, emissions reductions, low carbon transport, and research and development of related infrastructure, for example smart grids. A sectorial approach will be taken across: power, transport, buildings, agriculture, land use and forestry, industry, public sector and waste

Mid Wales Regional Energy Planning

Through the Growing Mid Wales Partnership, the Council is engaged in the development of a Regional Energy Strategy and Delivery Plan for Mid Wales with the Welsh Government Energy Service.

The development of a Regional Energy Strategy and Delivery Plan aims to:

- Raise the level of ambition regionally on energy (heat, power, transport)
- Secure cross-sector stakeholder engagement (private, public & third sector) and support for a shared, place-based low carbon energy system vision for the Mid Wales region
- Provide an evidence base to inform prioritised investments in local and regional energy systems
- Develop a regional pipeline of deliverable projects and programmes that will achieve the vision

- Explore opportunities to integrate low carbon energy proposals into the Mid Wales Growth Deal

A Mid Wales Regional Energy Planning Workshop took place in April 2019. This was organised by Powys CC and the Welsh Government Energy Agency on behalf of the GMW Partnership. 50 delegates attended the event from across the private, public and third sector. The event was part of engagement to support the development of the Regional Energy Strategy and Delivery Plan and the Mid Wales Growth Deal.

It is envisaged that initial work on the preparation of the Mid Wales Energy Strategy and Delivery Plan will be completed by December 2019.

Best Practice from other Local Authorities

The Powys PSB Low Carbon Energy Strategy and Mid Wales Regional Energy Planning work streams outlined above will examine and draw on best practice from other areas in the UK and further afield to help inform their preparation and recommendations. This will include examining the potential of a local energy company such as those set up by Liverpool and Nottinghamshire City Councils and other opportunities including those outlined under part 7 of the motion.

b) Which portfolio holder is responsible for implementing this motion?

Cllr Aled Davies is the Portfolio Member for sustainability.

In response to Mr Thorp's supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the council would be willing have discussions with community groups about the possibility of developing community energy projects on its property estate.

7.2. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Planning from Dr Christine Hugh-Jones

The Planning Department is apparently operating new "paperless" procedures for handling incoming documents from applicants, statutory consultees, stakeholder groups and members of the public.

At the same time representations from the public and stakeholder organisations are not included on the planning portal as they are for many other local authorities.

The current procedures effectively conceal information, which is material to planning decisions, from the public view. This raises serious concerns about public accountability and public participation in the planning process

What urgent action does the Council intend to take to ensure that all relevant planning documents, including public responses to planning consultations, are available for public view on the planning portal and how will the Council engage with the public in achieving this?

Response

Following a data breach which was reported to and investigated by the Information Commissioner, the Council reviewed its procedures for managing personal data to prevent and avoid further breaches in relation to the processing of planning applications and the high volume of correspondence received from third parties. This review found that the authority faces significant continued risk of breaching the data protection regulations if it were to continue to publish third party representations on its website. In order to remove this significant risk, further staff resource would be required in order to read through and redact all personal data before publishing any third party correspondence. Unfortunately this staff resource is not available within the financial climate that the authority currently operates within. Whilst third party correspondence is not available on the Council's website, this information is available for inspection at either Powys County Hall or Neuadd Maldwyn by appointment only. An appointment is necessary because staff time has to be allowed to fully prepare the information by redacting all sensitive data.

In response to the supplementary question asking the council to improve procedures and educate staff in handling personal data, the Portfolio Holder said he stood by the decision to remove third party representations from the planning portal given the financial risk to the Council and a lack of resources in the planning section.

7.3. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Planning from Mr Nigel Dodman

Should the Powys Planning Department discharge pre-commencement Planning Conditions (for Hendy Wind Farm) when they have not seen full plans of what the developer intends to construct?

Response

A planning condition should only be discharged once appropriate information has been submitted that complies with the requirements of the relevant condition. Discharge of condition applications relate only to the development approved and do not relate to plans that the developer may intend to construct that are separate from the approved development.

Mr Dodman's supplementary question was to ask if the Council intended to refuse to discharge the conditions and standby while the developer constructs an unauthorised development. The Portfolio Holder said he would provide a written response.

8.	DRAFT VISION 2025 OUR CIP UPDATE AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019
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Council was advised that the group leaders considered that in light of the purdah period for the forthcoming parliamentary by-election, consideration of this report should be deferred.

9.	LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2018 - MAY 2019
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Council received the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2018/19.

10.	MEMBERS ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES 2018/19
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Council received details of the salaries and allowances paid to councillors and co-opted members in 2018/19.

11.	VIREMENTS TO CARRY FORWARD UNALLOCATED BUDGETS FROM 2018/19 TO 2019/20 FINANCIAL YEAR
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Council was asked to approve virements to roll forward to 2019/20 budgets for ongoing capital schemes that were not completed at the end of the financial year 2018/19. It was moved by County Councillor Kath Roberts-Jones and seconded by County Councillor Timothy Van-Rees and by 57 votes to 0 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED:	Reason for Decision:
To approve the virements detailed in section 1.2 of the report in respect of Schools Transformation and the 21 st Century School Project.	To ensure appropriate virements are carried out that reflect the forecasted capital spend.
To approve the virement detailed in section 1.3 of the report in respect of Corporate Activities.	To ensure appropriate virements are carried out that reflect the forecasted capital spend.
To approve the virement detailed in section 1.4 of the report in respect of Highways, Transport and Recycling.	To ensure appropriate virements are carried out that reflect the forecasted capital spend.
To approve the virement detailed in section 1.5 of the report in respect of Leisure and Recreation.	To ensure appropriate virements are carried out that reflect the forecasted capital spend.
To approve the virements detailed in section 1.6 of the report in respect of the Housing Revenue Account.	To ensure appropriate virements are carried out that reflect the forecasted capital spend.

12.	RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
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12.1. Public questions to the County Council

Council considered recommendations from the Democratic Services Committee proposing amendments to the scheme for asking public questions at Council. The recommendations were proposed by County Councillor Michael Williams and seconded by County Councillor Karl Lewis and by 59 votes to 0 it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p>1. That the Public Participation in Council meetings continues,</p> <p>2. that paragraph 1.7.1 (iii) is amended to: “is substantially the same as a question / issue which has been considered at two meetings of the Council in the past six months (including questions raised by Members and answered)”</p> <p>3. that officers review the information relating to the scheme and the process for involvement and</p> <p>4. that the Democratic Services Committee monitors the use of the scheme on an ongoing basis and undertake reviews, as required, with the possibility of extending public participation to Cabinet meetings.</p>	<p>To provide the public with an opportunity to put questions to Council.</p>

12.2. Personal Safety Guidance

Council was asked to consider the recommendation from the Democratic Services Committee on personal safety guidance for members. It was moved by County Councillor Joy Jones and seconded by County Councillor Timothy Van-Rees and by 59 votes to 0 it was

RESOLVED	Reason for decision
<p>That the Personal Safety Guidance for Councillors be approved and that a Member development session on personal safety be provided for Members.</p>	<p>To support Members in their role.</p>

13.	APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES BY POLITICAL GROUPS REQUIRING APPROVAL BY THE MONITORING OFFICER
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Council noted the following appointment made by political groups and approved by the Monitoring Officer under the general power of delegation granted by Council:

County Councillor Mark Barnes appointed to the Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Committee by the Conservative Group.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION - FOOD JUSTICE

Council debated the following motion proposed by County Councillor Matthew Dorrance and seconded by County Councillor David Meredith.

This Council notes that:

1. there are 8 million people in the UK who have trouble putting food on the table according to the UN;
2. over 500,000 people used food banks in the UK last year. The Trussell Trust alone distributed over 1.3m three-day emergency food supplies to people in crisis in the financial year 2017-2018;
3. 3 million children are at risk of hunger during the school holidays;
4. up to 1 million people live in food deserts in the UK; and
5. a significant amount of the NHS budget goes on treating diabetes.

This Council further notes the UK Government's commitment to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Global Goals) commits government to ending hunger by 2030.

This Council resolves to:

1. establish a lead member role with the responsibility of delivering food justice;
2. work with community groups and partners to set up a food partnership (a non-profit organisation helping people learn to cook, eat a healthy diet, grow their own food and waste less food); and
3. task scrutiny to investigate the extent of the issue in Powys and what can be done to tackle it.

Members spoke in support and the Leader of Council indicated that she considered the Anti-Poverty Champion, County Councillor Joy Jones, to be the best person to take the lead member role.

An amendment moved by County Councillor Timothy Van-Rees and seconded by County Councillor David Jones that the matter be referred to Cabinet and Scrutiny for research and appropriate action was defeated by 22 votes to 29 with 4 abstentions.

Council voted on the motion and by 56 votes to 0 with 2 abstentions it was

RESOLVED to

1. **establish a lead member role with the responsibility of delivering food justice;**
2. **work with community groups and partners to set up a food partnership (a non-profit organisation helping people learn to cook, eat a healthy diet, grow their own food and waste less food); and**
3. **task scrutiny to investigate the extent of the issue in Powys and what can be done to tackle it.**

15. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION

15.1. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Recycling and Assets from County Councillor Bryn Davies

In view of the recent publicity regarding plastic and other waste being shipped to Asia, can we have confirmation where such waste from Powys goes, and an assurance that none is 'dumped' on other countries?

Response

Following the various media coverage around plastics, notably David Attenborough's Blue Planet series and more recently Hugh and Anita's War On Plastic documentary, we have received many enquiries on this issue. Whilst this may have suddenly become a hot topic, it is nothing new for those of us familiar with the workings of the waste and recycling industry. Indeed we have already provided the information requested by Cllr Huw Williams in the same question to Council on October 18th 2018. We are of course happy to provide this information again with the document appended to the report giving some detail regarding what happens to the material collected at the kerbside.

We are required by law to account for all the material we collect including all end destinations and this information is publicly available on the NRW/Defra website www.wastedataflow.org. Whilst this does not in itself guarantee the most ethical or sustainable outcome for the material, the contracts for our recyclable materials have been procured through WRAP who work on behalf of the Welsh Government, which adds an additional layer of scrutiny.

When we collect plastics at the kerbside we only collect material that recycling processors actually want. This is why we stopped collecting plastic film several years back as it is very difficult to find a market for this material. We take our recycling responsibilities very seriously which includes developing our own infrastructure to ensure that we have a sustainable solution to bulk up and transport recyclable material generated by residents of Powys. We can assure residents of Powys that the material they put out at the kerbside is recycled and helps us to achieve a recycling rate in excess of 60%.

There was no supplementary question.

15.2. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Recycling and Assets from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe

With the growing concerns nationally on the way councils have been transferring and disposing of their recycling collections and some have been found not to be recycled but ending up in landfills 1000's of miles away in places such as China and India. Also this has been highlighted by Sir David Attenborough and the plastic within our world seas there is even more scrutiny put upon the way we dispose of our waste and recycling in Powys as well as other councils in the UK. On the doorstep I am being asked how Powys County Council are disposing of our recycling and waste we collect. One of the issues people are asking is are we recycling just for PCC to chase a figure set nationally or are we ensuring the future of our children. I believe its fundamental that if we are to get residents to buy in there has to be purpose to why we and what we recycle to build confidence in the process.

Please can the portfolio holder supply a briefing for council members on how the council recycle and where our recycling is processed to ensure recycling means recycling?

Response

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There was no supplementary question.

15.3. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Recycling and Assets from County Councillor Jackie Charlton

Llangattock and Crickhowell are just 4 miles from the Monmouthshire border and 6 miles from recycling and waste centre in Abergavenny. Residents of both our communities use Abergavenny for shopping, cultural activities, hospital visits and lots else besides. Residents of Llangattock and Crickhowell are constantly asking why they cannot use the waste recycling centre in Abergavenny, which would be much easier, more sustainable and makes perfect sense.

Brecon is 15 + miles (round trip 30 miles) away for most of our residents and for some up to 25 miles (round trip 50 miles) away but we have to take any waste which cannot be taken in weekly recycling to the waste station in Brecon.

I understand from asking about this issue that Powys and Monmouthshire are looking at an approach which would enable our residents to use the site in Abergavenny. A recent email sent to me from a resident after trying to negotiate with Monmouthshire to take their waste to Abergavenny resulted in this response:-

“Over time we have used {Abergavenny} less than we did when we first moved but because of some further house renovation recently we have accumulated some more unwanted items and yesterday loaded the car boot with them, only to discover, to our horror, that because we live just out of Monmouthshire we can no longer use the Llanfoist site. Naturally we checked this morning with the Powys office to find out where our nearest provision is in Powys and was told that Brecon, 15 miles away from us, is our nearest, but that it is closed today and tomorrow. The next nearest site is apparently 40 miles away in Llandrindod Wells and there are in any case only 5 (we understand) sites in the vast area covered by Powys authority.

It was suggested to us by the clerk in the Powys office that we should contact Monmouthshire to see if we might, as a close ‘neighbour’ be able to obtain a permit to use the Llanfoist site. To our amazement we were informed by a clerk in the Monmouthshire office that Monmouthshire have been actively involved with trying to negotiate arrangements for non Monmouthshire residents to use its sites but so far have only met with refusal (from Powys).”

Could you please reassure me that Powys are working actively with Monmouthshire to find a resolution here?

Response

All local authorities in Wales are facing significant reductions in funding and hence need to ensure that they provide the best possible service to their own residents. This is why Monmouthshire have taken these measures to restrict the use of their sites to those residents who pay for them, i.e. their own. In reality, Powys residents have been using this site for a number of years by the good grace of Monmouthshire, although we appreciate that this is not how residents see this and understandably they do not pay much attention to county borders.

For Monmouthshire to allow Powys residents to use the site at no cost to the resident would incur a significant cost to ourselves (potentially tens of thousands of pounds) which we simply do not have within our existing budget.

We were in a similar situation with our site at Lower Cwmtwrch near Ystradgynlais, with considerable cross border use from Neath Port Talbot. When we had previously approached NPT for a contribution to this site, they were similarly not in a position financially to be able to do so and hence we have restricted their residents from using this site. With NPT closing their nearest site at Pontardawe on the expiry of the contract, we are now sharing the use of the Lower Cwmtwrch site with NPT, which has resulted in a saving for both authorities.

With regard to the comment from the resident that all attempts at negotiation have met with refusal from Powys, this is simply not the case, and we are taking this up with colleagues in Monmouthshire. Discussions are underway to potentially allow Powys residents to use the site in Abergavenny on payment of a fee.

We appreciate that this is not an ideal situation but as stated previously, the significant budget cuts (exacerbated by reductions in Welsh Government waste grants) have resulted in Councils having to take drastic measures, as indeed we have had to previously with the closing of sites and restrictions on hours and vehicle types. We do still provide five facilities across Powys against a statutory requirement to provide one. In terms of number of sites per head of population, this is quite high, but unfortunately in a county such as Powys there will always be residents with some distance to travel.

We will continue our discussions with Monmouthshire, but any solution will almost certainly require a contribution from the resident.

In response to Councillor Charlton's supplementary question as to whether a way could be found of letting Crickhowell and Llangattock residents using the site in Abergavenny, the Portfolio Holder advised that whilst he was happy to have discussions with Monmouthshire he could not commit to anything that would involve additional costs.

15.4. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Recycling and Assets from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe

Now the council has been operating its garden waste collection for 3 months now and has a take up of nearly 7,000 collections I am pleased to see they are listening to residents' concerns over missed collections and reviewing the collection rounds. Can the portfolio holder provide the cost to the service including set up costs as well as ongoing costs and income for this service?

Response

Since the rollout of the garden waste collection scheme, we have supplied over 7,000 containers to residents, with a total income of £250k to date. We are continuing to promote the scheme and expect this figure to rise over the coming months. As with any new service, there will always be teething problems and these are being addressed through rationalising rounds now that we have a clearer picture of initial take up rates.

The set up costs for the service are £56k, with a forecast spend for the first year of operation being £262k. We anticipate further take up (and hence income) this year and would expect an increase again in the next financial year as more and more residents appreciate the convenience of having garden waste collected at the kerbside.

There was no supplementary question.

15.5. **Question to the Leader from County Councillor Lucy Roberts**

I believe that one of the most important issues that the council should currently be addressing is that of Climate Change. We should be leading the way and demonstrating our commitment to our residents, particularly our children and young people who are the ones likely to suffer most if our world doesn't change. We have committed to removing single use plastics where possible and that is a start, but there is so much more we can do. One obvious move in the right direction would be to ensure that all new council built buildings, including houses/flats and schools are built to carbon neutral standards. Another would be to ensure that all council buildings use energy from sustainable sources. Can the leader confirm that this is already happening, and if not, give some assurance that such measures will be taken in the future? Can she also give a commitment that the council will work towards becoming carbon neutral across all services, setting an example to other councils, well ahead of the UK Government's deadline of 2050?

Response

1. Housing

The Welsh Government's Low Carbon Delivery Plan launched in March 2019 requires the public sector in Wales to develop and implement a range of carbon savings to meet the ambitious target of the Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030. To meet this target our New Development Project Officers within the Housing Team are currently working with Welsh Government Energy Officers as part of the design process on all our projects, as we work towards confirming our 5 year new build housing programme. This will help ensure we identify and explore all energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities. We have also recently engaged the expertise of Cardiff Metropolitan University to consider opportunities for post occupancy monitoring of new homes built giving a commitment to continuous improvement and learning.

Our Home Grown Homes Partnership and associated corporate objective is exploring the use of sustainable local timber in construction. The Council's Wood Encouragement policy introduced in January 2017 is always recommended to all our Registered Social Landlords and is embedded in our tender documentation. Through this work, the Council has secured over £1.5M of funding from the Rural Development Programme to undertake a supply chain study that Wood Knowledge Wales and its consortium are carrying out. The study has had a significant impact on the Innovative Housing Grant Programme in Wales which has resulted in an increased use in timber and in particular home grown timber. This will make a substantial and positive difference to both the

energy efficiency of homes – reducing the risk of fuel poverty – and contributing to the decarbonisation outcomes of an 80% reduction being considered by the Welsh Government for all Welsh housing by 2050.

The Welsh Government Housing Division has confirmed that it accepts that wood is the preferred material to help address the carbon agenda and is very supportive of energy efficiency and renewable opportunities as part of its future grant funding. With vast areas off grid, Powys has a significant opportunity to explore a broad range of options and is in a strong position to apply for associated grant funding going forward.

The Council's housing service is reviewing its overall investment programme for council housing, to support investment over a thirty year Housing Revenue Account business plan to reach an energy efficiency rating of SAP81 for municipally owned housing. SAP is the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure for Energy Rating of Dwellings and uses a scale of 1 to 100, with a higher rating indicating a better level of energy efficiency. This target will be challenging, and will be dependent upon the development of new technologies.

2. Schools and Other Buildings

i. Sustainable Sources for New Buildings:

New-build Schools

Powys County Council's 21st Century Schools Programme, which is jointly funded by Powys CC and Welsh Government and will invest £200 million to improve the school infrastructure within the county strives to deliver new-builds with minimal impact on the environment. This is even more poignant now that WG have declared a 'climate emergency' and it is highly likely that there will be stronger emphasis on environmental impact, carbon neutral buildings and the use of sustainable heating methods as part of the funding criteria as the programme progresses.

The 5 new primary schools in the Gwernyfed catchment area have solar panels installed with a generating capacity of 10kW. Archdeacon Griffiths CIW School, which was the first school to open in January 2018, has seen a saving of 10% in carbon emissions. The schools are heated by gas, but all new builds have highly effective insulation strategies. Ysgol Carno which opened in March 2019 also has solar panels, with the new school being heated via the existing pellet biomass boiler at the Community Centre.

Using the local supply chain and sustainable local products is key to driving down environmental impact of new buildings and this is something that is targeted through continuous monitoring; the timber for the Welshpool CIW Primary School building was supplied from a local company based only 8 miles from the school site, for example.

A key and critical part of Powys CC 21st Century Schools Programme is to ensure that the pupils, staff, parents and wider communities learn about the environmental impact of their new building. Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School pupils and parents have been actively collecting newspapers to provide sustainable insulation (Warmcell insulation) for their new-build school and have

had numerous educational classes from local leaders in the field, and this will be a key driver as new projects are launched.

Moving forward, Powys CC 21st Century Schools Programme will be aiming to achieve a BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) 'Excellent' or 'Very Good' rating for every standalone newbuild school. The programme is also aiming to install electric car charging points at each new building and is currently exploring the possibility of opening the charging points for community use.

Powys County Council's 21st Century Schools Programme is leading the way in delivering Passivhaus schools with Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School, Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng and Ysgol Bro Hyddgen projects all aiming to achieve Passivhaus status. Ysgol Bro Hyddgen will be the first Passivhaus all-through school within the UK.

ii. Retrofit Renewables to buildings:

Renewables installed on existing buildings does occur where an economic business case is found. The latest example of a renewable retrofit is an 11kW Solar PV system installed at Ffrwdgrech Highways Depot in February 2019. The number of buildings that have had retrofit renewables installed is currently limited across the property portfolio.

3. Powys Public Service Board - Carbon Positive Strategy

Step 7 of Towards 2040 – the Powys Wellbeing Plan is to 'develop a carbon positive strategy that maximises green energy production'. A steering group of representatives from all PSB members including the Council has been set up by Welsh Government, who are the Lead organisation for Step 7, to oversee its development. The strategy is due to be completed by April 2020.

Areas of action within the scope of the strategy will include energy efficiency, renewable and low carbon energy deployment, behaviour change, emissions reductions, low carbon transport, and research and development of related infrastructure, for example smart grids. A sectorial approach will be taken across: power, transport, buildings, agriculture, land use and forestry, industry, public sector and waste.

There was no supplementary question.

15.6. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan

Can the portfolio holder for housing please confirm when were all the housing under his responsibility PAT tested and how often, as legally required as a landlord?

Response

PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) testing does not apply to any fixed installations, such as the wiring in a property or any hard wired equipment. It only applies to things such as washing machines, kettles, fridges etc. We do not supply these to our tenants. PAT testing is not compulsory. The law simply

requires an employer to ensure that their electrical equipment is maintained to prevent danger. Any portable equipment, for example a kettle at a community room, is however PAT tested.

In his supplementary question Councillor Vaughan asked if it was true that fire alarm systems in council properties hadn't been tested in years and how many lives had been put at risk. The Portfolio Holder replied that the Housing service was going through a compliance 100 project ensuring that all health and safety requirements including smoke alarm testing was up to date as soon as possible.

15.7. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor Joy Jones

With the launch of the new housing development in Newtown a few weeks ago and all the promises of lovely new flats on the site next to the bowling club, that has be left abandoned for a long time it has been extremely disappointing to hear that within weeks the contractors have gone into administration leaving an eyesore in the centre of the town.

Given that Dawnus went into administration earlier this year, will the Portfolio Holder explain what checks were carried out before appointing Jistcourt to do the work and why a bank bond guarantee was not in place before they began work onsite and what will be done to ensure more thorough checks in the future and that bank bound guarantees are in place before work begins?

Will the Portfolio Holder advise Council how much money has been lost due to this and how long the scheme will be delayed by?

Response

The procurement process for the Bowling Green site in Newtown involved an assessment of the contractors experience, and suitability. This assessment included a requirement to demonstrate Constructionline Level 2 Silver registration, which incorporates a contractors financial ability and established track record for successfully delivering contracts to the anticipated value of the contract being awarded. Constructionline are a national pre-qualification register who assess contractors to the PAS91 standard, which was developed by the British Standards Institute (BSI) and has been commissioned by Government. This is a recommended common minimum standard for construction procurement.

In addition to this, and prior to award of the contract, an assessment of Jistcourt's finances was undertaken by the Council as final due diligence.

Under the contract and Employer's Requirements a performance bond of 10% of the total contract value was required before any payments would be made to the principal contractor. Once it became apparent that Jistcourt could not provide the necessary bond, work was stopped. As a result of this no invoices were received from Jistcourt, and no payments were made. It has been confirmed by

Welsh Government that the Innovative Housing Grant awarded to this scheme is secure and not at risk.

The Council continually reviews its processes for financial and tender analysis, particularly since the collapse of Dawnus and Jistcourt. Updated financial analysis based on a Pass/Fail basis has now been used on the Salop Road PQQ, and on the affordable housing development at Heol Y Ffynnon Brecon. Due to the current situation that is affecting the entire UK construction industry, the Council will continue to monitor the situation and how it assesses the suitability of companies to bid for Council contracts.

Following a review of all available procurement options, the Council's preferred route to market is a full retender of the scheme, to include Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) and Invitation to Tender (ITT). Due to following this route to market the expected delay to the project is approximately six months to appoint a principal contractor and a further three months mobilisation for the contractor to commence on site.

There was no supplementary question.

15.8. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor David Selby

Could the Portfolio Holder confirm his commitment to building 250 new Council Homes within the next five years?

Response

Yes

Councillor Selby asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed with the target and that a well-funded council housing service was a vital part of the Council's activities and the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he did.

15.9. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor Roger Williams

How many social housing units have the County Council completed since the May 2017 Council elections?

Response

Since the 2017 May Elections the council has purchased 25 ex-right to buy/other properties that have been added to our housing stock. As stated within Vision 2025 there is a target of developing 250 new affordable homes by the end of 2023. The Housing Service are also developing a longer term programme and are currently in the process of securing land which will enable development beyond 2023.

The Housing Service has been assessing land potential around the county and engaging with communities to identify need, this work is ongoing. They are also developing policies and procedures, which will enable the provision of alternative Low Cost Homeownership products, such as shared equity.

The Council is working with its strategic partners, in particular Housing Associations, via the Strategic Housing Partnership to identify and develop complementary schemes across Powys. The Housing Strategy is due to be reviewed over the next 12 months and will be subject to consultation, providing an opportunity to comment on the longer term plans of the service.

In response to Councillor Williams' supplementary question asking for confirmation that no social housing units had been completed yet, the Portfolio Holder advised that developments would be starting soon.

15.10. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance

Will the Cabinet Member make a statement on service charges paid to Powys County Council by Council tenants?

Response

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is made up of income from rents and other housing related funds, including service charges. This income is used to fund all HRA landlord related services. It also underpins our ability to deliver a balanced and sustainable HRA Business Plan to allow the Council to be an effective, developing landlord.

An important part of the Business Plan is the ability to recover from tenants and leaseholders service charges to cover the cost of services provided to them by the Council. These charges must reflect the actual cost of providing the service and should not be higher or lower than that actual cost. Service charges are amended each year, at the same time as rents are also reviewed and amended. This last happened in April 2019. The service charges for 2019-2020 are shown below. It should be noted that service charges vary from year to year, dependent on the costs to the service of providing those services in the previous full year.

	Highest Weekly Charge for 2019/20	Lowest Weekly Charge for 2019/20	How Charge Is Calculated
Grounds maintenance	£1.58	£0.04	Calculated on a site by site basis, based on actual meterage and the cost of the contract.
Communal cleaning	1.38	£1.38	Based on the global cost of the contract divided by all recipients of the service.
Communal lighting	£0.56	£0.56	Based on the cost of the service globally divided by all recipients.
Fire safety work	£1.74	£0.12	Based on actual costs per block and divided by all residents of the block.
TV aerials	£0.16	£0.16	Based on the costs associated with each aerial and divided by all potential recipients.
Repairs to entrance doors	£1.04	£0.01	Based on actual costs per block and divided by all residents of the block.

Communal washing lines	£0.44	£0.26	Based on actual costs per block and divided by all residents of the block.
Sewerage treatment	£6.33	£6.33	Based on the cost of the service globally divided by all recipients
Lift maintenance	£1.50	£0.75	Costs split equally between all tenants (for repairs/servicing)
Repairs to communal areas in flats	£2.45	£0.01	Costs per block divided between all residents of the block
Admin	£0.43	£0.43	Based on cost of the service globally divided by all recipients
Window Cleaning	£1.25	£1.25	Based on the estimated cost of providing the service, divided equally between all residents

For the majority of service charges, the calculation of the charge is based on the previous whole year – therefore for example the charge for door entry repairs for 2019-20 is based on the cost of providing the service in 2018-19.

Service charges for 2018-2019 as per Business Plan £200,156 (total)

Service charges 2019-2020 as per Business Plan £205,257 (total)

Councillor Dorrance asked in his supplementary question if the Portfolio Holder would agree to reinstating the vermin control service. The Portfolio Holder said he could not give a commitment at the meeting but that he would consider it.

15.11. **Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor Huw Williams**

In a Wellbeing Assessment undertaken by Powys officers, it was found that 16% of Powys households are experiencing fuel poverty. This is defined as a household that spends at least 10% of its income on fuel. The Council passed a Labour party Notice of Motion in 2017 agreeing it 'must do as much as it can to help residents suffering fuel poverty, to mitigate the situation'. Also, the National Assembly recently published guidelines outlining the main sources of funding, and advice, available to constituents who are struggling to pay their bills, or, who, want to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

Considering the agreed Notice of Motion and Welsh Assembly guidelines can the Portfolio holder, provide an update on the Council's current work to tackle fuel poverty?

Response

The Housing service continues to seek to support householders in fuel poverty in the following ways:

Welsh Government's Warm Homes Nest Scheme

The Welsh Government Warm Homes programme, which includes the Nest schemes, provides funding for energy efficiency improvements to low income households and those living in deprived communities across Wales. The Nest

scheme provides householders living in Wales with access to free advice and support to help them reduce their energy bills. Those meeting Nest's eligibility criteria can access a free package of energy efficiency measures.

The end of year 2018/2019 Nest annual report has not yet been issued, but we understand it should be made available in July 2019. Based on quarterly reports, the number of enquiries from Powys residents for Nest decreased from 969 to 852 in 2017/2018 to 2018/2019, respectively. The number of Powys householders receiving measures, such as insulation, new boilers and new heating systems increased from 132 in 2017/2018 to 180 in 2018/2019.

In autumn 2019, we plan to continue to raise awareness of the Nest scheme in Powys by working with Income and Awards and Nest to carry out a direct mail campaign and having drop in sessions across Powys for residents.

Further information about the Nest scheme is available at <https://nest.gov.wales/en/> and information can be found on the Powys website <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/2742/Welsh-Government-Warm-Homes-Nest-scheme>

Welsh Governments Warm Homes Arbed Scheme

We have identified a potential gas infill scheme for Radnor Drive Knighton, where residents have reported high energy bills, damp and condensation in properties. We have been working with project partners, Affordable Warmth Solutions and Arbed Am Byth to progress the scheme.

Welsh Housing Quality Standard

The Housing Service continues to invest in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) stock by carrying out improvement works. In 2018/2019 the Housing Service installed 1462 energy saving measures in HRA properties, such as new heating systems, loft insulation, external wall insulation and new doors and windows.

The housing service is reviewing its overall investment programme for council housing, to support investment over the thirty year Housing Revenue Account business plan to reach an energy efficiency rating of SAP81 for municipally owned housing. This will be challenging, and is dependent upon the development of new technologies. However, it will make a substantial and positive difference to both the energy efficiency of homes – reducing the risk of fuel poverty – and contributing to the decarbonisation outcomes of an 80% reduction being considered by the Welsh Government for all Welsh housing by 2050. The actual measures used will change over time as new ideas are tried, tested and implemented.

In September 2019 we will be running three National Energy Action Tackling Fuel Poverty and Fuel Debt courses. The courses will be attended by housing staff to raise awareness of fuel poverty and improve how the Council can identify and help fuel poor householders reduce their energy costs.

The Housing Service are currently in the process of acquiring new software to model the energy efficiency of homes. The software will improve our data management and reporting capabilities to assist us to target and identify energy efficiency improvement works so that investment is targeted where the need is greatest.

ECO Flex

ECO Flex is a UK wide grant scheme allowing energy efficiency improvements for customers in fuel poverty (defined as using 10% of disposable income on heating). The scheme is **not** means tested, nor does it require people to be on benefits. It is not a council funded scheme (or available to municipal tenants). Funding for ECO Flex is provided by energy companies via the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and the works are provided by an organisation chosen by the household.

Provision of ECO Flex funding is dependent upon:

- fuel type and energy efficiency of individual properties - assessed by a qualified energy assessor
- client being in fuel poverty
- detailed property survey - undertaken by a qualified surveyor and/or heating engineer

To date, ECO Flex support has covered the following energy efficiency improvements:

- replacement of inefficient oil, LPG and gas boilers with more efficient models - higher levels of funding provided for off gas properties
- replacement of inefficient electric storage heaters with more efficient models
- provision of insulation to improve energy efficiency including measures such as cavity wall, external wall and loft insulation (where appropriate)

Since the scheme was launched in March 2018, households in Powys have been able to access new energy efficient heating appliances and insulation measures. This has primarily centred on the replacement of inefficient oil boilers (as funding for this measure was very highly subsidised) but ceased at the end of September 2018, with the introduction of ECO 3.

The scheme resulted in;

- delivery of 2,050 measures including boiler and insulation upgrades
- reduced average annual household fuel bills of successful applicants by approximately £200

ECO 3

At the end of September 2018, ECOFLEX funding concluded with the introduction of ECO3. Powys County Council intends to issue a revised 'Statement of Intent' to embrace and encourage installation of new 'greener' heating measures set to receive funding. A draft delivery model and revised 'Statement of Intent' is currently in the process of development following publication of the SWAP report investigation into ECO2.

A working group of senior officers is currently looking at development of ECO3 in Powys. Detailed delivery options will be developed and proposed by the group however, adoption of ECO3 will be subject to Cabinet decision following thorough analysis of delivery options by Scrutiny Committee. Any future scheme if adopted, will be fully compliant with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's local authority guidance.

ECO 3 will provide:

- funding for ground source heat pumps
- funding for air source heat pumps
- more attractive funding rates for gas properties
- more attractive funding rates for insulation measures

To complement this funding stream, we are working in partnership with the Robert Owen Community Banking Fund on an offer to provide supplementary measures such as solar PV and battery systems associated with air source heat pumps, to reduce client's energy bills. This will involve use of local solar installers who would otherwise not receive any subsidy under ECO 3. We are also looking to deliver greater levels of External Wall Insulation (EWI) in conjunction with interest free loans, making this potentially costly measure more affordable for Powys residents.

Referrals

Where appropriate, we work with and refer householders to partner organisations, such as Citizens Advice, Care and Repair or Nest.

Citizens Advice Powys offer Energy Appointments through their "Warmer Wales" scheme. Their Energy Advisers can provide a range of assistance with energy related issues, such as:

- Checking meters and bills to make sure they are the right amount
- Switching help - to help switch to a different tariff or supplier that's better value for money and make savings.
- Saving energy with energy saving ideas like turning appliances off and making sure walls and lofts are well insulated.
- Negotiating energy and water debts.

Citizens Advices Energy Advisors may also suggest further cost-cutting measures people can adopt, depending on their circumstances. This could include making sure their home is well insulated so it's energy efficient, or checking if they're entitled to benefits, grants such as NEST and Health Through Warmth or discounts such as the Warm Home Discount - a £140 rebate from their supplier. For energy advice, members of the public can contact Citizens Advice Powys on 01686 617 667.

There was no supplementary question.

15.12. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor Linda Corfield

Would the Portfolio Holder please advise Members what is happening with regard to progressing the new ECO3 scheme? It is a while now since the SWAP report into ECO2 was made available. The SWAP report detailed many of the failings of ECO2, which resulted in the scheme having such a detrimental impact on local plumbing businesses within Powys. Following publication of the SWAP report Members were advised that a working group was to be set up to look at how the new ECO3 scheme is to be drawn up and administered, in order that loop holes which were so easily exploited by Agents from outside of Powys in ECO2 cannot be repeated with the new ECO3 scheme

Response

A working group of senior officers has been established to review the development of ECO3 in Powys. This group met on 10th May to initially look at the nine recommendations contained within the SWAP report. Agreed actions to all recommendations were reported to Internal Audit Committee on 10th June. The working group met again on 5th July where a number of delivery options were discussed.

Detailed delivery options will be developed and proposed by the working group. Adoption of an ECO3 scheme in Powys will be subject to Cabinet decision following analysis of those delivery options by Scrutiny Committee. No decision has been made to date but various options are being pursued and any future scheme, if adopted, will be fully compliant with BEIS local authority guidance.

In response to Councillor Corfield's supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that members would have sight of the statement of intent and that external partners had been approached.

15.13. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan

Under the ECO2 scheme Powys approved around 3800 applications that were submitted to them by the ECO Flex agents. Of these they have confirmed that they know of 2048 installations that were actually undertaken. When the onus was on the ECO Flex agents to notify the council of completed installations, how likely is it that many of the alleged 'missing' 1800 approvals have in fact also been completed, just not declared as such to the council by the ECO Flex agents they employed to run the scheme?

Response

The 1,800 figure represents the number of measures approved by the authority but not completed, it includes cases where installations were not financially viable, and where the client cancelled and withdrew from the scheme. The figure also includes duplicate applications where clients/surveyors applied to multiple ECO agents, in an attempt to access diminishing funds. We believe there are approximately 1,200 outstanding applications, 400 of which were clients of one company in receipt of severe funding cuts towards the end of the scheme.

We acknowledge a slim possibility that some of these jobs may have been completed by agents who subsequently failed to inform the council. However, the council has pursued agents for payment on all completed schemes and has not received any complaints or enquires from recipients of installations where the council were unaware that measures had been installed.

It should be noted, ECO agents were never employed by the council, the scheme is a Government initiative administered by OFGEM and BEIS.

Looking forward to ECO3, any scheme proposal placed before Cabinet for adoption will include a mechanism to levy an upfront charge for declarations, independent of a successful installation.

In response to Councillor Vaughan's supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder conformed that the report would be shared with all members.

15.14. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor Gwilym Williams

If the council decide to continue with ECO3 LA Flex, I understand they would use Robert Owen Community Banking to manage ECO3 LA Flex in Powys. Is PCC going to hand over full responsibility of the running of this to Robert Owen? Including EVERY application, full vetting to both qualification criteria (fuel poverty & EPC) before being approved.

Response

A working group of senior officers is currently looking at the development of ECO3 in Powys. Detailed delivery options will be developed and proposed by the group. Adoption of ECO3 in Powys will be subject to Cabinet decision following analysis of delivery options by Scrutiny Committee. No decision has been made to date but various options are being discussed. One such option is investigating the viability of outsourcing the vetting of applicants to a third party. However, we need to ensure that any future scheme, if adopted, will be fully compliant with BEIS local authority guidance.

In response to Councillor Williams' supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder advised that one County Councillor had benefitted from the scheme.

15.15. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor Amanda Jenner

In light of the findings of the independent investigation report into ECO2, please can you comment on the following:

Please can you advise if there a lead officer who is keeping in touch with the Powys plumbing group and members to update them directly on matters and when did they last receive a formal communication with an update? If there is not a lead officer can this be addressed.

I understand that it was agreed at the scrutiny co-ordinating committee that a joint working group (selected from the economic and audit committees) be formed to review the report and carry out any further scrutiny required. I think it needs to be clear what their role is, for example lessons learned from ECO2, mitigation steps for the future scheme, future vetting of applicant statements and consideration of the scope and definition of fuel poverty. I would welcome seeing the scope/ terms of reference for the working group.

Will the working group committee's recommendations be made available to both the Powys plumbing group and all councillors in advance of a decision on ECO2 being made and who will make the final decision on

whether or not ECO3 will be going ahead and the changes to its implementation /operation following the concerns raised with ECO2?

Response

The Powys Plumbing Group were in regular communication with the Lead Officer for the scheme who organised face to face meetings with the group and provided regular updates by email and telephone. There has not been recent communication, however, once a proposal is put forward from the Officer Working Group, this will be discussed with the group before a decision is made by Cabinet.

Adoption of an ECO3 scheme in Powys will be subject to a Cabinet decision following analysis by Scrutiny Committee. No decision has been made to date but various options are being pursued and any future scheme, if adopted, would be fully compliant with latest BEIS local authority guidance. An Officer Working Group met on 10th May and 5th July to work through the recommendations of the SWAP Audit report and look at the requirements set out in the new Guidance. Details of how the applications would be processed as part of any future ECO3 scheme would be clearly outlined within the Business Case for Scrutiny and then Cabinet.

There are no formal terms of reference for the Officer Working Group, however, their remit is to learn lessons from ECO2, take into consideration the recommendations outlined in the SWAP report, and put forward robust proposals for any potential ECO3 scheme. There is no set timetable, however, I would anticipate proposals coming forward early autumn.

In her supplementary question Councillor Jenner asked if it would be appropriate for the timetable for when reports would be considered to be shared with the Powys Plumbing Group and the Portfolio Holder advised that dates would be published and that the Scrutiny group could invite representatives of the group to meetings when the issue was being considered.

15.16. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Recycling and Assets from County Councillor Jackie Charlton

I understand the issues over the last few years on Road Traffic Orders. There is now a backlog which is looking untenable and unmanageable. Could you as Cabinet Member provide some confidence to members and to residents that crucial RTO's in respect of reducing speed in areas which should be 30 mph rather than the 60 mph in place in a residential area?

Response

Councillor Charlton, as you will be aware the council's budgets are under significant strain and therefore works can only be considered in order of priority. Within HTR we are looking at a total savings target of £3.3M for 2019-20. There is therefore no additional funding that can be utilised to help reduce the backlog more quickly. Whilst you may consider it crucial to see a reduction from the national limit to a 30mph limit within your area, can I remind you that limits are indeed limits, not targets and drivers are still responsible for driving in accordance with the nature and condition of the road. However, I can assure

you that the backlog will be progressed in accordance with its ranking against other schemes.

In response to Councillor Charlton's supplementary question about the cost pressures facing the service, the Portfolio Holder explained that a large backlog of Traffic Regulation Orders had built up during the moratorium but that there were less staff to process them.

15.17. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Recycling and Assets from County Councillor Pete Roberts

Despite the success of the OVO women's tour the bike racks in county hall rarely have more than two or three bikes in them at any one time.

What facilities are available to staff in council offices to make active travel more attractive to council staff and how might this be expanded on in the future for officers and members of the public cycling to work in our designated active travel towns?

Response

Powys County Council supports and promotes active travel throughout the County. We are consistently successful in obtaining grant funding to develop physical infrastructure around our main towns each year, and have continued to increase the provision of facilities at many of our office sites; providing bike shelters and, where feasible the provision of showering and changing facilities.

All major operational depots now have showering and changing facilities. The office estate also provides such facilities; for example; County Hall will have a new shower facility constructed over the summer period and both the Gwalia and Neuadd Brycheiniog already have existing facilities.

We recognise that not all council buildings offer active travel facilities. However, the Property team continually review and will, where practicable design in such facilities when buildings are being refurbished. The Property team is also in the process of signing up to a national drinking water scheme to allow easy access to potable water for building users and the public.

Active travel in Powys has to date largely been viewed as more of a recreational benefit, but it is clear that there is now a pressing need from an environmental and health viewpoint, to develop real alternatives for commuting etc and to encourage a much broader take up by the public.

In his response to Councillor Roberts' supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the service would bid for funding to establish hubs in towns for anyone wishing to use active travel to get to work.

15.18. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection from County Councillor Jeremy Pugh

Can you please tell me over the past two years how many settlements, non-disclosures and compromise agreements the Council have reached?

Response

In the last 2 years (since January 2017), the Council has entered into 16 settlement agreements with former employees of the Council/Schools service.

Councillor Pugh asked who decided to proceed with these agreements and was advised by the Monitoring Officer that decisions were taken by senior officers, except in cases costing over £100,000 when decisions were taken by full Council.

15.19. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Countryside and Transport from County Councillor Gwilym Williams

The Acting Chief Executive stated in full council that there was to be a restructure of senior management saving approximately £1million. I understand that this amount has not been saved. Can the portfolio holder inform me what the figure is of savings in senior management?

Response

Of the £1m saving proposed for the 2019/20 financial year, £440k has been achieved to date. An update on the delivery of the remaining balance will be reviewed at the end of the first quarter.

In response to Councillor Williams' supplementary question about how the shortfall would be made up, the Portfolio Holder advised that the third element of savings would be a 20% reduction in all tiers of management which would take place in the current financial year.

15.20. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Finance Countryside and Transport from County Councillor Pete Roberts

At the recent Brexit contingencies meeting I suggested that the council should look to support the "light lamb" market in the event of a no deal Brexit by putting in place plans to increase its usage within our schools and care services. The leader agreed and said that this would be taken forward through procurement.

Can you please update me on the progress that has been made since this meeting and what plans and barriers to action are now in place or being dealt with?

Response

Officers have met the Council's food distributor to discuss this. The distributor does stock Welsh lamb, however not many local authorities buy this for the school meal provision due to the cost. The Council's Professional Lead Catering and Cleaning has asked for a list of products with prices to see what the cost would be and whether it would be affordable to put onto our menus.

As with all goods and services we are working hard to increase the amount that we can source or spend, locally making the maximum use of the Powys £ wherever practicable.

In response to Councillor Roberts' supplementary question as to whether the council would be working with suppliers could intervene in the market in the event of a fall in prices to underpin it, the Portfolio Holder advised that the Council could not underpin the market.

15.21. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Countryside and Transport from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance

Will the Cabinet Member detail any contributions made by Heart of Wales Property Services Ltd to the Council's budget?

Response

To date the Council has not received a contribution from Heart of Wales Property Services. The Joint Venture is projected to make a contribution for the 2018/19 financial year estimated at £99k.

Councillor Dorrance asked in his supplementary question if HOWPS would be pursued for the £350k loss absorbed by the Council, the Portfolio Holder advised that the Council's share of the loss was £290k and that any subsequent profit would be written off against the loss.

16. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The Director of Social Services presented her annual report for 2018/19. She reported that the service was on a journey from improvement to excellence and that with a stable leadership team in place she expected the pace of improvement to pick up in 2019/20. The key to delivering sustainable improvement was to have the right workforce in place with the right skills. Both Adult Services and Children's Services had produced workforce strategies and there had been a staff restructure in Children's Services and a reduced reliance on agency staff. The Director outlined her priorities for 2019/20 and she thanked colleagues in the Council, partner organisations and members for their support and acknowledged the challenge and support of the Improvement and Assurance Board.

In response to questions about a decline in client satisfaction, the Director explained that the service was actively engaging with partnership forums to gain a better understanding of clients' experiences of the service. On key performance indicators she noted that the service's performance was comparable with that of other local authorities and that the service remained committed to delivering the targets. In response to a question about the adoption service, the Head of Children's Services acknowledged that the service was under pressure and that there had been a reallocation of resources to the service.

Council was asked to pass the resolution to exclude the public to view video clips of service users.

RESOLVED to exclude the public for the following item of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under category 1 of The Local

Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007).

Jan Coles, the Head of Children's Services presented a number of video clips setting out the experiences of service users.

Council adjourned from 13.30 to 14.10 for lunch and resumed in open session.

County Councillor B Baynham (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, M Barnes, G Breeze, L V Corfield, K W Curry, A W Davies, B Davies, D E Davies, M J Dorrance, L George, J Gibson-Watt, S M Hayes, H Hulme, A Jenner, E Jones, G Jones, E M Jones, D Jones-Poston, F H Jump, K Laurie-Parry, H Lewis, K Lewis, S Lewis, MC Mackenzie, I McIntosh, S McNicholas, C Mills, G Morgan, R Powell, J Pugh, G W Ratcliffe, L Roberts, P Roberts, K M Roberts-Jones, E Roderick, D Selby, K S Silk, D A Thomas, T J Van-Rees, E Vaughan, M Weale, G I S Williams, D H Williams, J M Williams, R Williams and S L Williams

17. PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

The Chief Fire Officer, Chris Davies, and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Iwan Cray gave a presentation and answered questions from members.

County Councillor B Baynham (Chair)