

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON FRIDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2020

PRESENT

County Councillor B Baynham (Chair)

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

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P Davies, S C Davies, L Skilton and R Williams

2.	COUNTY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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County Councillor T Van-Rees declared a personal and prejudicial interest when the County Farms Estate was discussed during the budget debate.

3.	CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
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The Chief Executive reminded Members of their duty to set a balanced budget and the rate of Council Tax by 11th March.

The Chair advised that she was changing the running order of the agenda to take the item on the budget next.

4.	MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020-2025 AND 2020-21 BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2020-2030
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Council considered the Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2020-25, which included a Financial Resource Model for 2020-25, the revenue budget for 2020-21 and capital programme for 2020-21 to 2029-30. (Copy filed with the signed minutes).

More than 10 Members stood to request a recorded vote on the budget.

Just prior to the start of the meeting an addendum to the budget proposing a Council Tax increase of 4.8% had been circulated by email to Councillors. The

Chair advised she was prepared to accept the report as it was a minor amendment to the budget. County Councillor Pete Roberts raised a point of order noting that the Constitution only allowed minor amendments to be accepted if they had arisen out of debate and that there had not been a debate. Council was adjourned at 11.40 and reconvened at 12.00. The Chair advised that she accepted Councillor Roberts' point of order and the Portfolio Holder for Finance withdrew the addendum.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the budget report. The budget was supported by the Medium Term Financial Strategy which set out how revenue and capital resources would be used to deliver the priorities set out in Vision 2025. The MTFS provided a set of clear principles which would drive the Council's budget and spending decisions over 2020-25 which Members and others could examine and judge the Council's financial performance against. The Portfolio Holder for Finance noted that services continued to perform well with Powys ranking 5th in Wales in terms of overall performance using Public Accountability Measures. Work on school transformation was continuing at pace and there had been sustained improvement in Children's Services performance.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that the settlement gave the Council a cash increase of £9.5 million which, when adjusted for transfers into the formula of specific grants, was a 4.2% increase on the previous year. This represented the largest increase in funding for a decade and followed the Cabinet's lobbying of Welsh Government to raise the issues facing rural authorities supported with the evidence provided through the Rural Cost Analysis. The budget included an additional £6 million each for schools and Children's Services to meet cost pressures. The budget also included an additional £0.5 million a year for roads' maintenance, an area highlighted for concern during the public budget consultation exercise in the autumn.

Welsh Government had given no indication of the future allocations for 2021-22 onwards, but in view of current economic and fiscal projections and in the absence of other information the MTFS set out a worst likely scenario predicated on an assumption that Aggregated External Finance would reduce by -2% for 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25. Based on these assumptions the total recurrent reductions required from 2021-22 to 2024-25 amounted to around £49 million. £10.79 million of cost reduction proposals were proposed in the 2020-21 budget.

Members of the opposition groups spoke against the budget arguing that the proposed Council Tax increase was unaffordable for residents and that some of the savings were high risk and undeliverable. The Chair of the Finance Panel also raised points about the affordability of the rise, noting that 40% of properties in Powys were in Bands E to G and that Powys had a higher proportion of pensioners on fixed incomes than the Welsh average. He also had concerns that capital receipts were not being fully utilised for transformation projects and at the proportion of the budget spent on Education and Social Services. Some Members criticised the quality of the impact assessments saying that they lacked confidence in them in the absence of a report analysing why some of last year's savings had not been met.

Council adjourned at 13.22 and reconvened at 14.06 and continued the debate on the budget.

Present County Councillor B Baynham

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

The Chair of the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee acknowledged the progress being made in Children's Services. He noted the introduction of the Flying Start scheme would help reduce the number of children going into care and which would hopefully lead to savings later in the year.

The Chair of the Economy, Residents, Community and Governance Scrutiny Committee talked about the impact of cuts to preventative and youth services and called for a review into the provision of youth services to be undertaken in line with the resolution previously passed by Council. He criticised the decision to reduce opening hours at Y Gaer and to end funding for public conveniences in Brecon and Ystradgynlais. In response to a question about an unidentified £110k cut to the Education budget, the Chief Executive advised that this was funding for Erw which was no longer required.

Having heard the debate the Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that he was moving an amendment to the proposed increase in Council Tax from 5% to 4.8%. This was seconded by County Councillor Van-Rees. The Chair accepted this as a minor amendment.

County Councillor James Gibson-Watt moved his amendment to recommendation 2 which had been submitted in accordance with the Constitution.

"This Council rejects a Council Tax rise of 5% as harmful and unaffordable to many. It notes the greatly improved 2020/21 grant settlement from Welsh Government, which was received after the initial decision to increase Council Tax by 5% was made, and that most Councils in Wales are proposing Council Tax increases of below 5%.

In addition Council is concerned about some of the proposed service cuts that will be detrimental to the Council's ability to provide key services to our communities and will adversely impact on Vision 2025 objectives

Council therefore requests the Cabinet and Section 151 Officer to amend the proposed budget for decision at the next County Council meeting, prioritising in particular the restoration of funding to Library services, Cultural & Arts facilities and the Regulatory and Countryside Services the council delivers; and makes adjustments to enable the Council Tax increase to be reduced to 3.75%, and make such other proposals that are appropriate to achieve a balanced budget for 2020/21."

In moving the amendment Councillor Gibson-Watt noted that the proposed level of Council Tax was above inflation and if accepted would mean above average increases for the next 5 years. He also referred to projected savings in the Libraries service which he said would put the future of the service at risk. County Councillor Davis Selby seconded the motion and expressed concern at proposed cuts to the Planning service. He argued that as the Cabinet had found an additional £152k just before the meeting it should be able find an additional £1.5m and come back to Council the next week with revised proposals.

The amendment was put to the vote and lost by 29 votes to 33.

The amendment to change the increase in Council Tax from 5% to 4.8% was put to the vote.

By 45 votes to 15 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED that the Revenue Budget for 2020-2021 with the inclusion of a 4.8% increase in Council Tax shown in the Financial Resource Model in Appendix B is approved.

This became the substantive motion for recommendation 2 and Council then voted on recommendations 1 to 8 in the addendum proposed by County Councillor Aled Davies and seconded by County Councillor Rosemarie Harris.

Recommendation 1: by 36 votes to 27 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision
1. That the MTFS for 2020-2025 as set out in Appendix A to the report be agreed in principle.	To aid business planning and development of the budget over a three-year period.

Recommendation 2: Recorded Vote

Myfanwy Alexander	For
Mark Barnes	For
Jake Berriman	Against
Graham Breeze	For
Jackie Charlton	Against
Linda Corfield	For
Kelvyn Curry	Against
Aled Davies	For
Bryn Davies	Against
Dai Davies	For
Phyl Davies	Absent

Sandra Davies	Absent
Matthew Dorrance	Against
Emily Durrant	Against
David Evans	For
James Evans	For
Liam Fitzpatrick	Against
Les George	For
James Gibson-Watt	Against
Rosemarie Harris	For
Stephen Hayes	For
Heulwen Hulme	For
Amanda Jenner	For
Arwel Jones	For
David Jones	For
Emyr Jones	For
E Michael Jones	For
Gareth Jones	For
Joy Jones	Absent
Michael J Jones	For
Diane Jones-Poston	For
Francesca Jump	Against
Karen Laurie-Parry	Against
Hywel Lewis	For
Karl Lewis	For
Peter Lewis	Absent
Maureen Mackenzie	Against
Iain McIntosh	Abstain
Sue McNicholas	Against
David Meredith	Against

Claire Mills	Absent
Gareth Morgan	Against
John Morris	Against
Rachel Powell	For
William Powell	Against
David Price	Absent
Phil Pritchard	For
Gareth Pugh	For
Jeremy Pugh	Against
Gareth Ratcliffe	Against
Liz Rijnenberg	Against
Lucy Roberts	For
Pete Roberts	Against
Kath Roberts-Jones	For
Dan Rowlands	For
David Selby	Against
Kathryn Silk	Against
Les Skilton	Absent
David Thomas	Against
Gwynfor Thomas	For
Tim Van-Rees	For
Elwyn Vaughan	Against
Martin Weale	Against
Jonathan Wilkinson	For
Ange Williams	Against
Gwilym Williams	For
Huw Williams	Against
Jon Williams	Against
Michael Williams	For
Roger Williams	Absent

Sarah Williams	Against
Beverley Baynham	For

Recommendation 2: by 34 votes to 29 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision
2. That the Revenue Budget for 2020-2021 with the inclusion of a 4.8% increase in Council Tax shown in the Financial Resource Model in Appendix B is approved.	Statutory Requirement

Recommendation 3: by 33 votes to 25 with 2 abstentions it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision
3. That the Fees and Charges proposed within the Fees and Charges Register are approved (Appendices D and E)	To comply with Powys County Council Income Policy

Recommendation 4: by 47 votes to 9 with 3 abstentions it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision
4. The proposed Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2020-30 shown in Appendix F is approved.	Statutory Requirement

Recommendation 5: by 43 votes to 16 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision
5. The Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out on Appendix F is approved.	Statutory Requirement

Recommendation 6: by 42 votes to 13 it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision
6. The Treasury Management Strategy and the Annual Investment Strategy in Appendix F is approved.	Statutory Requirement

Recommendation 7: by 47 votes to 10 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision
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7. The Authorised borrowing limit for 2020-21 as required under section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 be approved at £434 million as set out in section 3.60 of this report.	Statutory Requirement
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Recommendation 8: by 50 votes to 6 with 2 abstentions its was

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision
8. The Prudential Indicators for 2020-21 are approved as set out in section 3.56 to 3.58 of the report and Appendix F.	Statutory Requirement

5.	2020/2021 ANNUAL REVIEW OF VISION 2025 OUR CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN, INCLUDING OUR STRATEGIC EQUALITY OBJECTIVES 2020-2024
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This item was deferred to the meeting on 5th March.

6.	STATEMENT ON STORM DENNIS
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The Leader made a statement on the Council's response to Storm Dennis. The whole of the county had been affected and there had been flooding in Brecon, Crickhowell, Llanelwedd, Llangorse, Knighton, Welshpool and Ystradgynlais. 129 residential and 33 commercial properties had been affected by flooding and the number was still rising. There had been 20 school closures, 50 road closures and bridges had been damaged. Costs were not yet known but were likely to run into many millions. The Leader paid tribute to staff and partner agencies. She outlined the financial assistance available to householders and businesses.

County Councillor John Morris spoke about the flooding in Crickhowell and he argued that the Council's response was not appropriate to the scale of the disaster.

County Councillor B Baynham (Chair)