

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT BY TEAMS ON  
THURSDAY, 30 JULY 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, P Davies, S C 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, 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, E Roderick, D Rowlands, K S Silk, D Selby, L Skilton, D A Thomas, R G Thomas, T J Van-Rees, E Vaughan, M Weale, A Williams, G I S Williams, D H Williams, J M Williams, R Williams and S L Williams

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
-----------	------------------

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors MC Mackenzie, J Wilkinson and J Williams.

<b>2.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
-----------	---------------------------------

All Members had personal, non-prejudicial interests in items 10 and 11 on Members Expenses.

<b>3.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>
-----------	----------------

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 28 February and 5 March 2020 as correct records.

<b>4.</b>	<b>CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>
-----------	------------------------------

Council paused to remember Sharon Scalon, a member of the Council's adult social care team based in Brecon, who had died of suspected Covid-19.

The Chair thanked all of the voluntary groups that had supported communities in Powys during the pandemic. She reported that she had received messages of appreciation for the welfare calls made to people who had been asked to shield. She also noted the success of the online briefings that had been arranged for members and hoped that this was something that could continue in future.

<b>5.</b>	<b>LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>
-----------	-------------------------------

The Leader noted that the Council had kept services running during lockdown and she asked the Chief Executive to pass on thanks to the staff. She expressed

thanks to the Members for the work they had been doing in their wards. During the pandemic the Cabinet had continued to meet regularly in formal meetings and with MPs MSs and Ministers. She had also held regular meetings with group leaders.

She was pleased to note that the Powys Pension Fund had been judged to be one of the best run in the country, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> out of 90. She advised that at the start of lockdown it had been agreed that work would continue on schools transformation and the proposition document for the Mid Wales Growth Deal had been agreed and endorsed by the UK and Welsh Governments and capital funding pledged. Work would now begin on developing projects for the Mid Wales Growth Deal.

<b>6.</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING</b>
-----------	-----------------------------------

The Chief Executive also acknowledged the work of staff during the pandemic. She paid tribute to the Reverend Ian Charlesworth, Chair of PAVO and member of the Powys Public Service Board who had passed away. She also acknowledged the close working relationship with Powys Teaching Health Board and Dyfed Powys Police during the pandemic. The Council continued to follow Welsh Government advice that staff should work from home if possible. Most of the main administrative offices remained closed or with limited opening. Risk assessments were being carried out in buildings to enable more staff to return. Services remained open to residents with many more available online.

The Chief Executive advised Council that Care Inspectorate Wales would be carrying out monitoring visits over the summer and an improvement conference in October. Estyn would be holding an improvement conference in November.

<b>7.</b>	<b>VISION 2025: OUR CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019-2020 AND STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2019-2020</b>
-----------	---

Council considered Vision 2025: Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP) Annual Performance Report 2020 and the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2019-2020. The report set out performance during 2019-20 against the Well-being objectives and activities set out in Vision 2025: Our Corporate Improvement Plan.

Based on performance against measures and activities each of the wellbeing objectives was rated using a scale of excellent to poor. Residents & Communities and Making it Happen were rated good, the Economy and Health & Care were rated adequate. Learning & Skills was rated poor due to the critical Estyn report of Schools services. The service was working hard to implement the post inspection action plan and it was expected to be rated higher in next year's report. The plan had been scrutinised with most of the recommendations made by Scrutiny taken on board. Members commended the user-friendly nature of the reports.

The Strategic Equality Plan was incorporated into the Corporate Improvement Plan as equalities needed to be a strong theme running throughout the plan.

The report was moved by the Leader and seconded by County Councillor Rachel Powell and by 63 votes to 1 with 1 abstention it was

**RESOLVED that the content of the Vision 2025: CIP Annual Performance Report 2020 and Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2019/2020 be noted and approved for publication in line with statutory reporting duties.**

<b>8.</b>	<b>WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020</b>
-----------	---

Council considered the Welsh Language Standards report for 2019-20. The report outlined work undertaken during 2019-20 to ensure compliance with the Welsh Language Standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and performance against the requirements of the Standards. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Welsh Language wanted the Council to move far beyond the minimum statutory obligations to develop and strengthen the Welsh language throughout Powys.

The report was moved by County Councillor Myfanwy Alexander and seconded by County Councillor Huw Williams and by 63 votes to 0 it was

**RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.**

<b>9.</b>	<b>VIREMENTS</b>
-----------	------------------

Council considered a number of capital schemes from leisure services that had been brought forward from future years to be completed early whilst the use of the sites was lower due to Covid 19 restrictions currently in place. In response to questions from members the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Countryside and Transport confirmed that local companies would have the opportunity to bid for this work.

It was moved by County Councillor Aled Davies and seconded by County Councillor Myfanwy Alexander and by 63 votes to 2 with 1 abstention it was

**RESOLVED to approve the release of the £1.59 million from the Schemes awaiting Approval line in the Corporate Budget and bring forward £1.07 million allocated to these schemes in the future years of the capital programme to ensure that these projects can be completed.**

<b>10.</b>	<b>MEMBER ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES 2019-20</b>
------------	---

The Monitoring Officer reminded members that they had a personal and non-prejudicial interest in this item and the following item and that they should complete a declaration of interests form.

Council received details of the allowances and expenses paid to Members and Co-opted Members during the tax year 2019-20, in accordance with the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) requirements.

It was moved by County Councillor Kath Roberts-Jones and seconded by County Councillor Michael Williams and by 59 votes to 0 with 2 abstentions it was

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

<b>11.</b>	<b>MEMBERS' SALARIES, ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES 2020-21</b>
------------	---

Council noted the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) in respect of the amounts to be paid as Basic Salary, Senior Salary and Civic Salaries. The IRPW had decided to award an uplift to the basic salary of £350 (2.52%) to be applied from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. Council was asked to consider the allocation of the 18 Senior Salaries.

It was moved by County Councillor Michael Williams and seconded by County Councillor Kath Roberts-Jones and by 58 votes to 1 with 5 abstentions it was

**RESOLVED**

- 1. To approve the recommendation for the allocation of up to 18 Senior Salaries as detailed in section 4.11 of the report.**
- 2. To approve the publication of the Members' Schedule of Remuneration based on this report.**

County Councillor Jeremy Pugh left the meeting at 16.07.

<b>12.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATION FROM THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>
------------	--

Council considered the recommendation of the Democratic Services Committee to adopt the system of "Formal Questions at Any Time".

It was moved by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Les George and by 62 votes to 0 it was

**RESOLVED**

- 1. That "Formal Questions at Any Time" to Portfolio Holders and Heads of Service be adopted, with Questions at Full Council remaining;**
- 2. the Constitution be amended as set out in Appendix 3 of the report;**
- 3. there should be a further review in 12 months' time.**

<b>13.</b>	<b>APPOINTMENTS MADE BY POLITICAL GROUPS AND APPROVED BY THE MONITORING OFFICER</b>
------------	---

Council noted the appointments made to outside bodies by political groups and approved by the Monitoring Officer under the general power of delegation granted by Council on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013:

County Councillor James Evans appointed to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority by the Conservative Group in place of County Councillor Iain McIntosh.  
County Councillor Gwynfor Thomas appointed to the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority by the Conservative Group in place of County Councillor Claire Mills.

<b>14.</b>	<b>POST IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE BOARD ARRANGEMENTS</b>
------------	--

The Leader and Chief Executive gave details of the arrangements being put in place as the role of the Improvement and Assurance Board was scaled down in the autumn to enable the Council to effectively manage its own improvement journey and provide assurance to Welsh Government. A Corporate Improvement Board, chaired by the Leader, would be established and there would be sub-groups covering Social Services, Education, Housing and Highways, Transport and Regeneration made up of the relevant Portfolio Holders and Senior Officers supported by independent experts working on a task and finish basis.

There would be an enhanced role for the Scrutiny Committees whose work would be aligned with the transformation programme and there would also be ongoing regular meetings with group leaders.

<b>15.</b>	<b>NOTICE OF MOTION: DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND CALL TO ACTION ON LOCAL ENERGY</b>
------------	--

Council debated the notice of motion proposed by County Councillor Jake Berriman and seconded by County Councillor Jackie Charlton:

“This Council notes the IPPC Panel report on Global warming predicts severe impacts to health, home and environment, with the severe floods of October 2019 and February 2020 endangering Powys communities, clearly demonstrating that we are ill prepared for the challenges we face as a Council.

This Council notes that by declaring a climate emergency, councils are demonstrating their collective leadership and signifying the urgency which, as a publicly accountable body, they place on tackling climate change and decarbonising the economy as required by The Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

This Council notes that by supporting the Local Electricity Bill the council will remove the barriers to local energy supply, and could lead by example in reducing its corporate carbon footprint by using our farm estate to become a local renewable electricity provider, whilst also supporting communities to find innovative ways to reduce their carbon footprint and invest in, and support, their community facilities.

This Council notes Fay Jones’ MP commitment to the cross-party effort to have the Local Electricity Bill passed into law, helping Councils kick-start a local energy revolution which has the potential to reduce Powys’ carbon footprint once and for all whilst distributing the benefits to local communities perpetually.

**This Council therefore resolves to:**

1. Join with other councils across Wales in declaring a Climate Emergency
2. Support the implementation of Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales (March 2019) to make Powys County Council a net zero carbon local authority by 2030.
3. Requests the Leader to consider assigning roles within the cabinet to lead on Climate Change mitigation and to actively engage with all members and stakeholders by: A. setting up a cross-party working group and, B. establishing a Powys-wide multi-stakeholder group, to develop a baseline picture @2020 and bring forward a strategy and action plan @2021 for a truly sustainable Powys.
4. Support our MPs to ensure the Local Electricity Bill succeeds in an Adjournment Debate to encourage and enable the local supply of electricity and facilitate more resilient Powys communities.
5. Ask Welsh and UK Governments to provide the necessary support and resources to enable effective carbon reductions and transition to a green Powys economy.”

Some Members argued that the cross-party working group should look at this whilst others argued that this would only lead to a delay. A motion to refer this to the cross-party working group for a report back within 6 months with specific proposals was proposed by County Councillor Amanda Jenner and seconded by County Councillor James Evans. The Chair declared that 28 members voted for Councillor Jenner’s motion and 28 against with 2 abstentions and it was lost on the Chair’s casting vote.

(NB: Since the meeting it has become clear that the correct record of the vote should have been 29 members voted for Councillor Jenner’s motion and 27 against with 2 abstentions.)

Council voted on Councillor Berriman and Councillor Charlton’s notice of motion and by 30 votes for to 20 votes against with 4 abstentions it was

**RESOLVED to**

- 1. Join with other councils across Wales in declaring a Climate Emergency**
- 2. Support the implementation of Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales (March 2019) to make Powys County Council a net zero carbon local authority by 2030.**
- 3. Requests the Leader to consider assigning roles within the cabinet to lead on Climate Change mitigation and to actively engage with all members and stakeholders by: A. setting up a cross-party working group and, B. establishing a Powys-wide multi-stakeholder group, to develop a baseline picture @2020 and bring forward a strategy and action plan @2021 for a truly sustainable Powys.**
- 4. Support our MPs to ensure the Local Electricity Bill succeeds in an Adjournment Debate to encourage and**

**enable the local supply of electricity and facilitate more resilient Powys communities.**

- 5. Ask Welsh and UK Governments to provide the necessary support and resources to enable effective carbon reductions and transition to a green Powys economy.**

County Councillor Stephen Hayes abstained having missed part of the debate due to his computer having lost connection during the debate.

<b>16. NOTICE OF MOTION: CAR PARKING CHARGES</b>
--

Council considered the notice of motion proposed by County Councillor James Gibson-Watt and seconded by County Councillor William Powell

“In order to support local businesses and help revive the economy in Powys this Council requests that Cabinet considers implementing an initial 1 hour free parking period for all vehicles using all Powys County Council Car Parks, to be reviewed on a 6 monthly basis.

Council also urges the Council's Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance to seek financial assistance from the Welsh Government (via the government-funded schemes emerging to support the economy following the outbreak of Covid 19 Coronavirus) for any loss of income resulting from this measure. Failing that Council to support the use of Reserves money from the underspend in the 2019/20 budget year to support any shortfall.”

In moving the motion Councillor Gibson-Watt argued that with the re-emergence of Covid-19 this measure would help people shop locally which would benefit local high streets. The Portfolio Holder for Environment argued that the proposal would hit the service's finances and that the cross-party parking working group should be allowed to carry out its review.

The motion was lost by 23 votes to 30 with 3 abstentions.

<b>17. NOTICE OF MOTION: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YSTRADGYNLAIS</b>
--

Council debated the notice of motion proposed by County Councillor Huw Williams and County Councillor Sue McNicholas:

In April 2020, The Centre for Towns published its report, ‘the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on our towns and cities’. The report focuses on ‘where’ the impact of COVID-19 is most likely to be felt.

This Council notes that Ystradgynlais is ranked as one of the twenty most deprived places in England and Wales according to the Centre for Towns measures.

This Council resolves to establish an urgent ‘Task and Finish’ group with Members, Officers and stakeholders to:

1. Consider the findings of the Centre for Towns report;
2. Develop an economic strategy for Ystradgynlais that focuses on the recovery, support for businesses and skills; and
3. Put in place clearly defined and measurable plans to tackle deprivation and health inequalities.

Councillor Williams called for the establishment of a task and finish group to urgently address the issues of post-industrial deprivation and health inequality highlighted in the Centre for Towns report.

By 35 votes to 7 with 5 abstentions it was

**RESOLVED to establish an urgent 'Task and Finish' group with Members, Officers and stakeholders to:**

1. Consider the findings of the Centre for Towns report;
2. Develop an economic strategy for Ystradgynlais that focuses on the recovery, support for businesses and skills; and
3. Put in place clearly defined and measurable plans to tackle deprivation and health inequalities.

<b>18. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION</b>
--

**18.1. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance & Engagement and the Portfolio Holder for Young People & Culture from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe**

**What is Powys County Council doing to acknowledge the Black Lives Matter campaign?**

**Response from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance and Engagement**

The Council has supported employees in a number of ways in relation to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) campaign, as follows:

Communicating an opportunity for employees to join a BLM protest

The Council on 12<sup>th</sup> June promoted an invitation from the Race Council Cymru, BAWSO (an organisation that provides specialist services to BME (Black Minority Ethnic) communities ) and Wales TUC, to all employees, which invited them to take part in a BLM protest which was hosted online on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

COVID risk assessment

Recognising that people from a BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) background are at greater risk of catching COVID-19 and experience a higher risk of death, the Council during June asked the managers of all employees who had self-identified as being from a BAME background to undertake a COVID risk assessment with the employee.

The on-line risk assessment tool used for this was developed by Welsh Government and helps to identify which employees are at more risk from the



impact of COVID. The risk assessment tool is useful for all employees to determine their risk of developing more serious symptoms if they come into contact with the COVID-19 virus. The tool looks at many relevant factors, such as sex, age, health conditions and ethnicity and provides an overall risk rating. Where an employee scores a rating of 4 or above, the manager will support them by exploring and making any necessary adjustments to their work.

Whilst all employees were invited to complete this, managers of staff from a BAME background were asked to support the employee in completing it and to identify any adjustments required in relation to their ongoing health and safety.

Given that not all of the Council's workforce had provided their equalities data when they started with the Council and had not done so since, we also asked all staff during June if they could voluntarily provide their data where missing. Our intention in doing this was to ensure that we could support any further staff who had not previously identified that they are from a BAME background.

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Young People and Culture**

Powys County Council is currently reviewing its historical artefacts, monuments and archive collections in light of the Black Lives Matters Campaign, and advice regarding this has been sought from the Culture and Sport Division of Welsh Government, the National Archives, the Federation of Museums & Art Galleries of Wales, and the National Library of Wales.

Officers of the Council are also engaged in debate with museum, archives and arts colleagues across Wales to advance the conversation on structural racism by joining together to explore how we can follow up on recent statements of support with tangible actions to address racial diversity, equity, and inclusive environments.

At Brecknock Museum at y Gaer for example, we will survey the collection for any relevant material; Continue to liaise with the Town Council regarding the Captains Walk plaque and the Picton Plaques, and depending on those discussions create a display case looking at the Black Lives Matters movement and protest in the context of Brecon and the surrounding area. In the long term we want to encourage a BAME audience and educate a white audience about Black History. We need to continue to train staff across the County about diversity and in particular the ability to recognise everyday racism.

Powys Arts Service commissions and works in partnership with a range of arts organisations and providers who commit to the Arts Council of Wales Equality Strategy 'For the Benefit of All'. Furthermore, a commitment to supporting the Arts Council's recently published 10 bold actions will inform current and future collaborative arrangements for delivering arts and cultural activities for communities in Powys. Diversity has long been acknowledged as essential to creative practice and arts production, as has the principle of inclusion, equality and accessibility.

Please be assured that Powys County Council is fully committed to reviewing our historical artefacts and records to ensure they embrace the values of equality, diversity and inclusion. We acknowledge we have much work to do, but as a custodian of the county's history our aim is to promote and share the diverse stories within our collections to raise awareness of racial injustice. The Black Lives Matter protests across the world have reinforced the need for us to undertake this work to ensure we respect history without omitting vital context.

As Councillor Ratcliffe had left the meeting his supplementary question would be submitted under the questions at any time scheme.

**18.2. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property from County Councillor Sandra Davies**

**The Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams gave Local Authorities the choice of school staff working an extra, fourth week ‘voluntarily’ at the end of July (normal school holiday) and have two weeks holiday in October - or not.**

**Powys County Council is one three LA’s that have agreed to adopt this. Has this Authority considered the impact this will have on young people’s education?**

**The current “Catch Up” system, incorporating social distancing, equates to young people attending school one day a week for face to face teaching for three or four weeks.**

**Other LA’s who have not accepted this system will not have schools open for the fourth week, at the end of July but their schools will be open for a full week in October for all their young people: four extra days of attending school.**

**Response**

Thank you for your questions relating to the four-week end of term that we decided to adopt, following the request from the Minister for Education. You are correct to state that only a few authorities have adopted the approach, but our decision was taken after very serious deliberation.

We engaged heavily with both headteachers and trade unions, along with meetings with chairs of governors, to seek a way forward that would be best for our learners and staff. It is only after these discussions that we came to the view that we should support the Minister’s request, and proceed with making the change to our term dates.

The reasons for our decision were various, but at that time included

- a) Seeking to make good use of school days during a time when the R rate and infections across Wales (outside Anglesey’s hotspot) was at a low point, giving us more certainty than we may have later in the year.
- b) Bringing learners back into carefully-managed school environments after an unprecedented length of detachment from schools, with growing concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of many of our children and young people, and in some cases, concern for colleagues.
- c) Seeking to use this time to help support learners with their wellbeing, but also to build up their skills for what might be a further extended period of distance and blended learning in the next academic year. Many colleagues have expressed concerns particularly about the wellbeing of and support for learners in the current year 10 and year 12. The unpredictability that faces that group for the next year is a serious concern, given the significance of that year in their lives. Our secondary schools are fully committed to supporting them, and could use the additional time in July to help equip them to be the best they can be in

facing the coming months, helping them with planning their work and embedding their skills for further blended learning. During our discussions, headteachers were keen to stress that their examination classes could benefit from maximum time during July so that they could be well-set up for summer working and beyond.

- d) Allocating a two-week half-term holiday in October. In June, when the matter was a very 'live' issue, the statistical modelling suggested that October might be a particularly difficult time in terms of pandemic spread. Our schools could therefore be closed for two weeks in that month, but with pupils better equipped for the next phase of blended learning than they could have imagined back in March, and hopefully our staff having a significant break in what is always a gruelling term.
- e) We also sought the agreement from the Church in Wales directors of education in both diocese covering Powys, the Catholic church director of education and the governing bodies of all voluntary aided and foundation school in line with Section 32A (7) of the Education Act 2002, and they were fully supportive of our decision.

The decision was taken entirely for educational reasons, and given the uncertainty at the time of the decision it was better to use the days that had on offer, and ensure that our learners could be supported to the best of our ability prior to their summer break.

There was no supplementary question.

### **18.3. Question to the Leader from County Councillor Sandra Davies**

**A lot of planning and preparation is currently underway to enable schools to open in September, for young people to return to schools.**

**What date will this Authority resume its routine business and when will the Council office be open to members of the public?**

#### **Response**

The Coronavirus Act 2020 came into effect on 25 March 2020, giving Government emergency powers to deal with the pandemic; this is supplemented by the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020. Powys County Council's Corporate Business Continuity Plan was invoked on the 18<sup>th</sup> March, enabling Council Services to focus on key activities to respond to Covid-19. The Performance Report for Quarter 1, considered by Cabinet on the 28<sup>th</sup> July, provides a summary of the Council's activities in response to Covid-19 over recent months.

As the Welsh Government has undertaken its 21-day reviews, we have gradually re-opened many of our services, in line with Welsh Government Guidelines. At this time, emergency legislation remains in place. Covid continues to circulate locally, nationally and globally. Whilst schools are reopening, this is being undertaken in accordance with Government guidelines, based on scientific advice from the Welsh Government's Technical Advisory Cell. At this time, Welsh Government advice remains that,

"Workers are only allowed to return to the work place if it is **not** reasonably practicable for them to work from home. For those that

cannot work from home, it is important for employers to establish an initial assessment on whether it is safe for staff to work and where relevant, signpost them to appropriate support organisations”(1)(2).

Whilst we are preparing our buildings to enable staff to return to our offices, this must be planned carefully in accordance to Guidance prepared by Welsh Government and the Health and Safety Executive; this currently requires strict social distancing, hygiene, a risk assessment for each work-space, as well as arrangements to record attendance, in case Contact Tracing may be necessary. We are not therefore currently in a position to publish a date when Council offices will be open to members of the public.

Over 2,000 staff are currently working from home, utilising our investment in digital technology. They are providing a wide range of services, which are available to members of the public through our web-site and via the telephone. Over 3,350 of our staff are front-line workers, and as far as possible they continue to provide services in our schools, care settings, and provide a range of services from our depots; a risk assessment has been made at each of these settings, and appropriate measures put in place to ensure the safety of our staff and customers.

The Council's routine business has gradually been re-established remotely via the use of Teams, and further developments will take place from September. However, this will remain subject to the progress of Covid as officers from across the Council continue to respond to the virus, which remains active within the County. Officers have maintained the arrangements that have been put in place since March, and are able to respond to any localised or wider outbreaks of Covid within the County; at this stage, and in the absence of a vaccine or widespread immunity, it is not known how long these arrangements will need to be maintained.

- (1) Welsh Government Guidance Keep Wales Safe at Work, published 2 June 2020 <https://gov.wales/keep-wales-safe-work>
- (2) HSE Guidance Working Safely During the Coronavirus Outbreak <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/assets/docs/working-safely-guide.pdf>

In response to Councillor Davies' supplementary question about what the Council could do to make its services more accessible to the public by telephone, the Chief Executive advised that phone calls were not directed to buildings but to officers' laptops but that she would ask colleagues to look into this and if there were any issues to address them.

**18.4. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environment from County Councillor William Powell**

**What steps does Powys County Council Highways Department take to ensure effective communications between its own workforce, contracted staff and employees of the North & Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency (N&MWTRA) when it comes to road maintenance, road closure etc so as to minimise unintended consequences upon local communities and the travelling public?**

**Response**

There are Routine Maintenance Principal Contractor meetings held weekly between PCC and NMWTRA staff, where all works associated with the Trunk Road Network are discussed and recorded.

With regards any closures for Cyclic maintenance there is pre meeting with PCC, NMWTRA and Contractors (if applicable), to ensure all works are co-ordinated in an efficient manner and this is followed by a de-brief meeting following the works to see if any changes are required for future occasions.

All major works on Trunk roads are scheduled via Streetworks co-ordinators, this ensures all road maintenance & Utility works etc. are co-ordinated and road space is booked and allocated efficiently.

In response to Councillor Powell's request for the council to engage with NMWTRA to address residents' concerns over the closure of the A479 the Portfolio Holder for Environment advised that the appointment of a new Head of Service would give an opportunity for fresh thinking.

**18.5. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environment from County Councillor William Powell**

**In the light of positive comments made recently by Lee Waters MS, Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Economy & Transport on the campaign for a '20's Plenty' speed limit in all urban areas, what consideration has Powys County Council given to imposing a voluntary 20mph limit upon all vehicles in its ownership, or delivering its services, in our towns & villages?**

**As this measure would pay dividends both in terms of public and pedestrian safety, retail vibrancy and the hospitality sector and environmental protection, will the Portfolio Holder commit to commissioning a feasibility survey, to be peer reviewed by the Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth?**

**Response**

The Welsh 20mph Task Force Group completed its report which was supported by a Plenary vote in July 2020; to progress a default 20mph speed limit for restricted roads in Wales as quickly as possible, with a target date of April 2023 for the change in the law coming into effect. The report highlights the many considerations and complexities behind such behavioural change and also makes reference that it will not be appropriate to place a speed limit of 20mph on all existing 30mph roads such as principal corridors or where there is little frontage development and that there will be a need for exceptions (circa 17% of the network).

Powys is an extensive county and its staff (and members) are required to travel around the county undertaking many diverse functions from waste and recycling to social care, with employees using a mixture of their own vehicles and those supplied by a service or leased. It also employs many local contractors and suppliers who undertake significant travel such as bus operators. On the whole Powys has a good road safety record and a low accident rate within its urban areas, with the majority of serious accidents occurring on the rural network. As part of the Covid 19 response and building back better, we will plan to reduce our travel where appropriate utilising technology but we currently have no plans

at this time in terms of implementing a voluntary 20mph and it is difficult to foresee how this could be implemented and 'monitored/enforced' pragmatically.

Councillor Powell asked that the Portfolio Holder revisit this in light of the climate emergency motion passed by Council. Councillor Hulme said that this would be on the agenda going forward.

**County Councillor B Baynham (Chair)**