

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 20 JUNE 2023

PRESENT

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)

County Councillors J Berriman, J Charlton, R Church, S Cox, S C Davies,
M J Dorrance, P Roberts, D Selby and D A Thomas

In attendance: County Councillors Aled Davies and Elwyn Vaughan

1.	APOLOGIES
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There were no apologies for absence.

2.	MINUTES
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The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting held on 23 May 2023 as a correct record.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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There were no declarations of interest.

4.	ESTABLISHING A WELSH-MEDIUM STREAM AT YSGOL Y CRIBARTH
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Cabinet was advised that one objection had been received during the statutory objection period. The report set out details of the objection and the local authority's response and recommended that the Council proceeded with implementation of the proposal to establish a Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol y Cribarth, as outlined in the Statutory Notice for the reasons set out in the report.

County Councillor Aled Davies was disappointed by the proposal for a dual stream school and his opinion this would not provide better outcomes and would be at a higher cost and not result in truly bi-lingual children. The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys advised that this issue was dealt with at the Statutory Consultation Stage and it was demonstrated at that stage there is strong support in the community for this proposal rather than for a fully Welsh medium school. This initiative could be a potential role model school and shows how WESP is achieved. The Cabinet noted that there were no objections from local residents, pupils or staff to this proposal.

County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan advised that WESP welcomes this step forward. However, this should be seen as a transitional process as 60% in the reception class are already in the Welsh stream. WESP hoped that the situation can be reviewed in 3 or 4 years, to continue to develop the school and others schools in Ystradgynlais along the language continuum, so ensuring that all the young people in future are fully bilingual.

RESOLVED

- 1. To receive the Objection Report in respect of formally establishing a Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol y Cribarth.**

- 2. To approve the proposal to make a regulated alteration to formally establish a Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol y Cribarth from September 2023.**

5. DRAFT WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Cabinet considered the Draft Welsh Language Standards Annual Report which outlined work undertaken during 2022-23 to ensure compliance with the Welsh Language Standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and performance against the requirements of the Standards.

Comment was made that the level of calls abandoned by both Welsh and English callers were fairly similar and that improvements to the Customer Service response times for all users was required.

County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan noted the historic context of the report but considered that the promotion plan which would be considered in the next few weeks showed the cross-party political will to the development of the Welsh Language. Leaders and staff need to understand the policy and take action and the number of staff fluent in Welsh needed to increase.

In response to a question from Councillor Aled Davies, the Leader advised that resources would be made available to implement the action plan.

RESOLVED to approve the Draft Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023 for it to be published on the Council's public website by 30 June 2023.

6. FINANCIAL OUTTURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023

Cabinet considered the revenue budget outturn for the 2022/23 financial year. The final outturn reported a net underspend, after contributions to specific reserves, of £6.7 million against the £221.9 million budget a 3.0% variance (excluding Schools and the Housing Revenue Account).

The Council's financial position had improved by £3.3 million against the published February underspend forecast of £3.4 million, supported by additional grant funding provided by Welsh Government and the UK Governments Shared Prosperity Fund.

This position would release one off funding to support the increasing pressure already facing the 2023/24 revenue budget particularly that relating to teachers and staff pay as pay award negotiations create unfunded pressure in next financial year. This goes some way to de-risk the Councils financial position in the short term but did not reduce the ongoing base budget pressure that continued to create a gap in budget plans for next year and future years.

The report set out a number of virements.

Councillor Aled Davies questioned whether investments had been delayed too quickly and noted that over £1m had been underspent in social care and commissioning at a time when people are in hospital and not being provided with a care package. In response, the Leader and the Cabinet Member for a Caring Powys advised that the inability to provide care packages was due the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in the care sector, which was a national problem. Work was ongoing with health and care providers to address this issue.

RESOLVED

1. **That Cabinet note the full year outturn position to the end of March 2023 and the variances reported against the approved budget.**
2. **That the virement to transfer the £468,000 balance on the Transformation budget, as set out in section 6.3 of the report, is rolled forward to support transformation costs in 2023/24.**
3. **That the virements proposed as set out in section 7 are approved**
4. **That the virements at 7.2 relating to Insurance and at 7.5.1 relating to the Transport Fund are recommended to council for approval in order to comply with Financial Regulations, being requests for over £500,000.**

7.	CAPITAL OUTTURN 2022-23, AS AT 31ST MARCH 2023
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Cabinet considered an update on the financial position of the Council's capital programme for 2022/23 as at 31st March 2023. The revised programme at the 31st March 2023 was £95.00 million following the successful award of additional grants and the reprofiling of budgets between financial years. Actual spend amounted to £65.54 million, representing 69% of the total budget. The report also set out requests for a number of virements.

RESOLVED

1. **That the contents of this report are noted.**
2. **That the virements in section 5 of the report are approved.**

8.	DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING
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Cabinet noted the delegated decisions taken by Cabinet members since the last meeting.

9.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
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Cabinet noted the forward work programme.

10.	EXEMPT ITEMS
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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 3 of The Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007).

11.	PROPERTY IN NEWTOWN
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Cabinet considered a confidential report on the purchase of a property to enable improvements to the active travel path and National Cycle Network.

Officers responded to questions regarding the availability of grants from the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales. Officers advised that “in principle” agreements had been obtained from the Welsh Government.

RESOLVED to approve the purchase of the property for the sum reported and thereafter carry out active travel improvements and re-sell the property.

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)