

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT BY TEAMS ON
THURSDAY, 15 JULY 2021**

PRESENT

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, M Barnes, B Baynham, 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, D O Evans, J Evans, 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, R Powell, WD Powell, D R Price, 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, T J Van-Rees, E Vaughan, M Weale, J Wilkinson, 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 E Durrant and P Pritchard.

2.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 25th February, 4th March, 19th March, 30th April and 13th May 2021 as correct records.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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All Members had personal, non-prejudicial interests in item 7 Members' Schedule of Remuneration. The Monitoring Officer advised that there was a general dispensation but that Members should complete a declaration of interest form.

County Councillor David Thomas declared a personal interest in the notice of motion on the ambulance service as his brother worked for the Welsh Ambulance Service.

4.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
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The Chair advised that a tracker for notices of motion had been developed by the business intelligence unit and that details on how to access it would be circulated to Members.

He advised that he had awarded Silver Kites to Lesley Alexander-Carter, Jennifer Coppell, Mairwen Price and Amanda Edwards.

5.	LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
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The Leader welcomed the First Minister's decision to lift restrictions on outdoor events. She noted that the number of cases was rising again but that Powys was leading the way in the percentage of people vaccinated.

She was pleased to report that innovation in Children's Services had been shortlisted as a finalist for the Municipal Journal awards and that a commendation had been received in the digital transformation category and that the Transformation and Communications team had received an award for the best use of data.

She reported that the Secretary of State for Wales who along with the MP and MS for Montgomeryshire and the MP for North Shropshire had visited the Montgomery Canal which was part of the Council's Levelling Up grant application. The bid if successful would be an important catalyst for economic development in the north of the county. She was also pleased to join the Prince of Wales on his visit to Riversimple who were developing eco-friendly hydrogen powered cars in Llandrindod Wells.

6.	CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING
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The Chief Executive reported on the rising number of Covid cases in the county with the highest increases amongst the 10 – 19 and 20 – 29 age groups. She urged everyone to take up the offer of vaccinations.

She advised Council about ongoing investigations into allegations of fraud and theft which were being investigated by Dyfed Powys Police. She assured Council and the public that the Authority took a zero tolerance approach towards fraud and theft.

7.	VISION 2025: OUR CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
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Council considered the Vision 2025: Our Corporate Improvement Plan annual performance report. The report presented the Council's performance during 2020-21 against the well-being objectives published in Vision 2025: Our Corporate Improvement Plan and, for the first time, included the Strategic Equality Objectives.

The report had been considered and endorsed the Cabinet and by the Scrutiny Working Group. The report had been amended to reflect the comments and recommendations made by the Working Group.

A Member asked about the climate emergency which had been declared by Council and whether it should be embedded in all the Council's objectives. Members were advised that the report dealt with performance against the original plan. The updated Annual Improvement Plan approved by Council in March had strengthened some of the content on climate change, but further work was going on in the background which would inform the next iteration of the plan. In

addition, Heads of Service would be required to consider climate change when bringing forward budget proposals.

A Member asked if there could be a workforce champion and was advised that the Democratic Services Committee would be reviewing champion roles. A member asked for numbers of people with disabilities employed by the Council to be measured and to be included in the report.

Members also asked about the gender pay gap. It was confirmed that the Head of Workforce and Organisational Development led on an action plan addressing the gender pay gap. This would be brought to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee to consider whether there were any aspects which could be strengthened. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that there was a rigorous job evaluation process should protect against equal pay claims.

A Member asked about the project to develop the Automobile Palace and was advised that the Council had just commissioned the design work and had put in a bid to the Levelling Up Fund to acquire the land next to the Automobile Palace.

The recommendations in the report were moved by County Councillor Michael Williams and seconded by County Councillor Rosemarie Harris and by 54 votes to 10 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED that County Council consider the content of the Vision 2025: Our Corporate Improvement Plan Annual Performance Report 2020-2021 (including integrated Strategic Equality Plan Objectives) and approve for publication in line with statutory reporting duties.

County Councillor David Price left the meeting at 12.04.

8.	REVENUE AND CAPITAL VIREMENTS
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Council considered Revenue virements to set up three new specific reserves, utilising the year end outturn underspend of £4.241 million, transferred into the General Reserve:

- £1 million set aside to assist council services with Covid recovery.
- £1m set aside for match funding for large economic growth/recovery capital schemes.
- The remaining balance of the surplus, £2.241 million, into a specific Capital Financing Reserve to support the Council's Capital Programme, reducing borrowing requirements and easing the pressure on the revenue budget.

Council was also asked to consider approving the carry forward of two year end underspends for a Transport fund of £730,000 and a Flood Recovery Reserve of £950,000.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transportation confirmed that all grants had been utilised in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant.

Responding to queries raised by Members he advised that the Capital Financing Reserve replaced borrowing rather than funded borrowing. It was more effective to utilise it for one off funding, limiting the ongoing cost of borrowing.

The recommendations in the report were moved by County Councillor Aled Davies and seconded by County Councillor Rosemarie Harris and by 58 votes to 5 it was

RESOLVED to approve the virements set out in section 2 of the report and set out above transferring the amounts from the General Fund Reserve into the appropriate specific reserves.

County Councillor James Evans left the meeting.

9. DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY DECLARATION
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Council considered a Diversity in Democracy Declaration which the WLGA had asked every Council to approve ahead of the local elections in 2022 to give a clear, public commitment to improving diversity and demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all. The draft declaration had been considered and recommended by the Democratic Services Committee. If approved by Council, an action plan to deliver the objectives would be developed and brought to Democratic Services Committee for approval later in the year. A member expressed the hope that future iterations of the declaration would include a statement expressing a zero tolerance approach to racism as well as bullying.

The recommendations in the report were moved by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Beverley Baynham and 61 votes to 1 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED

- 1. That the draft Diversity in Democracy Declaration as amended, and attached as Appendix 1 to the report be approved;**
- 2. That an action plan be prepared setting out the measures to deliver the declaration by May 2022, for approval by the Democratic Services Committee and Council.**

Council adjourned from 12.50 to 1.15 pm

County Councillors MJ Jones, K Lewis, P Lewis and Tim Van Rees left the meeting.

PRESENT

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, M Barnes, B Baynham, 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, D O Evans, 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, D Jones-Poston, F H Jump, K Laurie-Parry, H Lewis, MC Mackenzie, I McIntosh, S McNicholas, DW Meredith, C Mills, G Morgan, R Powell, WD Powell, 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, E Vaughan, M Weale, J Wilkinson, A Williams, G I S Williams, D H Williams, J Williams, J M Williams, R Williams and S L Williams

10. CONSTITUTION

Council was asked to consider making amendments to the Constitution in respect of Section 7 Scrutiny Committees, Section 9 Regulatory Committees and Section 2 Purpose, Definition, Interpretation. The amendments had been considered and recommended by the Democratic Services Committee. IN response to a question from a Member, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that if any Member wished to add an item to the Scrutiny forward work programme they should raise that with the Chair of the relevant committee. He further advised that Audit Wales had given verbal feedback on their report on Scrutiny in Powys but that the final report had not yet been received.

The recommendations were moved by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Stephen Hayes and by 52 votes to 1 with 2 abstentions it was

RESOLVED

- 1. That the amendments to Section 7 of the Constitution (Scrutiny Committees) are approved as set out in the draft Section 7 in Appendix A of the report.**
- 2. That the Monitoring Officer is authorised to make such other changes to the Constitution as may be required to reflect the change set out in Recommendation 1 above.**
- 3. That the amendments to Section 9 of the Constitution (Regulatory Committees) are approved as set out in the draft Section 9 in Appendix B of the report.**
- 4. That the Monitoring Officer is authorised to make such changes to the Constitution as may be required to reflect the change set out in Recommendation 3 above.**
- 5. That the amendments to Section 2 of the Constitution (Purpose, Definition, Interpretation) are approved as set out in the draft Section 2 in Appendix C of the report.**
- 6. That the Monitoring Officer is authorised to make such changes to the Constitution as may be required to reflect the changes set out in Recommendation 5 above.**

County Councillors E Michael Jones, Joy Jones, Les George, Roger Williams and Maureen McKenzie abstained from voting having missed part of the debate.

County Councillor S Hayes left the meeting at 13.30. County Councillor D Price rejoined the meeting.

11.	MEMBER ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES 2020/21
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The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reminded Members that they had a personal interest in this item but that there was a general dispensation which allowed Members to speak and vote.

Council received for information details of the salaries, allowances and expenses received by Members and Co-opted Members in 2020-21. Council was advised that the amount claimed for travel had reduced by £77.8k (97.08%) from £80.2k in 2019/20 to £2.3k in 2020/21, which was attributed to the pandemic, with all Council meetings being conducted virtually through the year and limited other business mileage claimed. The recommendation was proposed by County Councillor Michael Williams and seconded by County Councillor Edwin Roderick and it was

RESOLVED to note the report.

12.	APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES AND COMMITTEES
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12.1. Appointment to Powys Community Health Council

County Councillors Hywel Lewis and Maureen McKenzie were nominated. Following a ballot it was

RESOLVED that County Councillor Hywel Lewis be nominated to Powys Community Health Council.

12.2. Appointments made by Political Groups and approved by the Monitoring Officer

Council noted the appointments made by political groups since the last meeting and approved by the Monitoring Officer under delegated authority:

County Councillor Graham Breeze appointed to the Democratic Services Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee in place of County Councillor Beverley Baynham.

County Councillors D Evans and D Price left the meeting at 13.50.

13.	NOTICE OF MOTION - AMBULANCE SERVICES
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County Councillor Claire Mills left the meeting at 14.11.

County Councillor David Thomas did not take part in this part of the meeting having declared an interest.

Council debated the following notice of motion proposed by County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and seconded by County Councillor Bryn Davies.

“Far too often our ambulances are stuck outside our major hospitals such as Telford, Shrewsbury or Wreccsam, resulting in ambulances being drafted in from

other parts of Montgomeryshire to relieve the pressures in Welshpool or Newtown, but in doing so undermine the cover in places such as Machynlleth, Llanfyllin or Llanidloes.

This is a particular problem at night where a crew from Machynlleth will be called to Newtown only to then end up in Telford or even Hereford hospitals to cover cases from Knighton or Presteigne.

We already have a situation where Llanfyllin and Llanidloes stations are closed at night, we understand there's a real threat that will happen also in due course at Machynlleth meaning that most of Montgomeryshire will have hardly any cover at night. Bearing in mind that Tywyn and Bala stations are also closed at night and that the Dolgellau ambulance is often drawn towards the northern half of Gwynedd, it means that most of South Gwynedd and North Powys could have hardly any cover at night.

We are therefore calling on the Ambulance Trust for:

- all Ambulance stations in Powys to be 24hr this to include:
- extending Llanidloes and Llanfyllin stations to 24hr
- keep Machynlleth 24hr and not cut it as threatened
- provide extra ambulance for Newtown and Welshpool

We want a coordinated, sensible approach that ensure all our rural communities can have the same level of service as urban settings. This doesn't involve a huge cost, but it does ensure that lives will be saved."

Councillors noted that this was an issue affecting the whole of the county with several relating personal experiences affecting family members and neighbours. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care noted that the upcoming roll out of home support would help reduce demand for ambulance services and she suggested that the issue be raised at the Regional Partnership Board which she chaired and which was attended by representatives of the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust. A Member suggested that the Council assist the Community Health Council with surveying Powys residents with their views on ambulance services. Members felt that it would be useful for a representative of the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust to attend a Council meeting to talk about ambulance coverage in the county and answer Members' questions. The mover of the motion indicated that he supported the suggestions made in the debate but would like to put the motion as drafted.

By 40 votes to 3 with 6 abstentions it was

RESOLVED to call on the Ambulance Trust for

- **all Ambulance stations in Powys to be 24 hour this to include:**
- **extending Llanidloes and Llanfyllin stations to 24 hours**
- **keep Machynlleth 24 hours and not cut it as threatened and**
- **provide extra ambulances for Newtown and Welshpool.**

Councillor David Thomas returned to the meeting.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION - PEST CONTROL
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Council considered the following motion proposed by County Councillor Sandra Davies and seconded by County Councillor Matthew Dorrance:

1. "Rats and pests can carry diseases, cause damage to property and problems will only get worse if left untreated;
2. Powys County Council is best placed to deliver a county wide Pest Control Service and
3. The 2014 decision to cease delivery of a Pest Control Service was a mistake.
4. Residential areas often experience significant problems with rats and pests;
5. The role of Environmental Health Officers in providing advice and guidance to communities and
6. Hiring a private contractor to deal with rats and pests is unaffordable for too many people.

This Council resolves:

1. That a Powys County Council run pest control service should be established to serve our communities and
2. Cabinet should be advised of the will of Council and asked to consider implementing its decision."

The mover and seconder of the motion advised that they were increasingly receiving calls about pests and vermin in people's homes. They noted that other Councils still had a pest control service with some providing a free service and some charging for the service. Several members noted that the proposal had not been costed nor there had been any assessment of the impact on small businesses now providing the service in the county. The Portfolio holder noted that this was a non-statutory service and that the Council no longer had trained staff or equipment and that it would therefore require significant outlay to reintroduce the service.

The motion was put to the vote and by 29 votes to 23 with 2 abstentions it was

RESOLVED

- 1. That a Powys County Council run pest control service should be established to serve our communities and**
- 2. Cabinet should be advised of the will of Council and asked to consider implementing its decision.**

15. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION
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County Councillor G Ratcliffe left the meeting at 14.53.
County Councillor G Breeze left the meeting at 14.57.
County Councillor D Rowlands left the meeting at 14.58.
County Councillor S McNicholas left the meeting at 15.05.
County Councillor A Williams left the meeting at 15.08.
County Councillor L George left the meeting at 15.08.

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

Language in schools is currently being considered and consultations for changes to be made.

It appears Powys County Council does not have a clear policy regarding pupil numbers and dual stream schools.

Might consideration of drawing up a policy to clarify how many children (of either English language or Welsh language) in a school are required before a school is classed a Dual stream school?

Response

The definitions of schools according to their language provision are outlined within the Welsh Government's document 'Defining Schools According to Welsh Medium Provision' 2007. A primary dual-stream school is defined as follows:

- *Dual Stream Primary School Curriculum - Two types of provision exist side-by-side in these schools. Parents/pupils opt either for the mainly Welsh-medium or mainly English-medium provision which is usually delivered as in categories 1 and 5 respectively.*
- *Language of the School - Both Welsh and English are used in the day to day business of the school. The language of communication with the pupils is determined by the nature of the curricular provision, but in some schools high priority is given to creating a Welsh-language ethos throughout the school. The school communicates with parents in both languages.*
- *Outcomes - for pupils in the Welsh stream, normal expectations are as for category 1. For pupils in the English medium stream, normal expectations are as for category 5.*

The guidance does not state that there needs to be a specific number of pupils in either streams to be classed as a dual-stream school.

There was no supplementary question.

15.2. Question to Powys Members of the Police and Crime Panel from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance

I am aware of an increase in crime, anti-social behaviour and drug related incidents in my community.

How are you as Powys members of the Police and Crime Panel holding the Commissioner and his police and crime plan to account to ensure that communities like mine are properly resourced and prioritised by Dyfed Powys Police?

Response

As members of the Police and Crime Panel we scrutinise how the Police and Crime Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account for ensuring that

policing in local communities is properly resourced and prioritised in the following ways:

- Scrutinising the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan, which sets the priorities for the police force. The commissioner is currently consulting on his new plan following the elections in May and we understand it will be placed before the Panel for consideration at the end of July.
- Scrutinising the annual police precept, which contribute approximately 50% of the police budget. This includes scrutiny of the Commissioners annual accounts and mid-term financial plan.
- Attending meetings of the Policing Accountability Board every quarter to observe how the Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account across the whole range of his functions, including policing in local communities.
- Questioning the Commissioner at Police and Crime Panel meetings. This includes not just questions on reports that appear on the agenda, but also on any issue that Panel members wish to raise, provided they fall within the remit of the Panel.
- Requiring the Commissioner to provide reports to the Panel on any issue within its remit.

The Panel specifically identified how the Commissioner held the Chief Constable to account as one of its priorities in 2018/2019 and was satisfied that the Commissioner carried out that function in an appropriate and robust way.

As you may be aware the Chief Constable Mark Collins retired in March 2021, to take up a post in the British Virgin Islands. A temporary Chief Constable has been appointed pending the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May and the process of recruiting a permanent replacement is currently underway.

A report on anti-social behaviour considered by the Police and Crime Panel on 4 November 2020 and a response provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner on 19 February 2021 are attached for information and can be seen here:

[Dyfed Powys Police And Crime Panel \(dppoliceandcrimepanel.wales\)](https://www.dyfed-powys.gov.uk/PoliceAndCrimePanel)

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In response to Councillor Dorrance's question as to how the Police and Crime Panel could ensure that the Commissioner delivered on the commitments in the Police and Crime Plan, Councillor William Powell advised that the Panel regularly raised the issue of anti-social behaviour with the Commissioner. He had also arranged for the Commissioner to meet Councillor Dorrance and residents particularly affected by anti-social behaviour.

15.3. Question for the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Community Safety from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance

How is the Cabinet Member for Community Safety ensuring the Council is responding to the needs of people in Brecon, St John Ward and taking action to deal with the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Response

Powys County Council is an active part of the Powys Community Safety Partnership. The Community Safety Partnership is a statutory (Crime & Disorder Act 1998) multi-disciplinary partnership. Organisations work together with a

common aim to tackle crime and disorder in the county and to maintain Powys' position as one of the safest places to live.

Councillor Dorrance's supplementary question was to ask the Portfolio Holder if she would commit to reassessing the priorities of the Community Safety Partnership to ensure that tackling anti-social behaviour was given greater focus and resource and to reporting back to Council. The Portfolio Holder advised that she would review Councillor Dorrance's request and to report back to Council on the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

15.4. Question for the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property from County Councillor Gwilym Williams

With regard to Dolau School the last inspection by Estyn put the school in green, which means it's of a high standard in education.

The two nearest primary schools are not in green, therefore can the Cabinet member for education tell me and members is it illegal for children from Dolau School to be sent to either of these primary schools that are not in the green?

Response

It is important to understand that there is a difference between Estyn inspections and National Categorisation.

In the last Estyn inspection for Llanfihangel Rhydithon in 2019, the school was judged to be good for standards, provision and leadership.

Llanbister Primary School was inspected by Estyn in 2019 and was also judged to be good for standards, provision and leadership.

Crossgates School was inspected in 2016, and was placed in Estyn review. However, within a year they had addressed the recommendations and were removed from any form of follow up.

National Categorisation identifies the amount of support a school will receive on an annual basis. The last categorisation took place in the autumn term 2019. Since that period, Welsh Government have suspended categorisation. There are four colours for categorisation (Green and Yellow are seen as self-improving schools; Amber and Red are schools in need of significant support).

Llanfihangel Rhydithon was classified as Green, Llanbister and Crossgates were categorised as Yellow in 2019.

However, although there is no National Categorisation for schools, the local authority has continued to work closely to support these schools. All three schools are strong schools for standards, provision and leadership and have responded well to the challenges of providing education over the pandemic period. This has reinforced the view of the local authority that the schools are self-improving schools and provide education that is equitable.

Pupils would not be disadvantaged by attending other schools in the area.

In response to Councillor Williams' supplementary question as to whether Estyn would recommence inspections or national categorisation continue the Portfolio Holder advised that Estyn hoped to recommence inspections in September and the authority carried out its own monitoring visits.

15.5. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Economic Regeneration from County Councillor Gwilym Williams

With regard to the current pandemic evictions from peoples homes have been suspended, this is going to come to an end shortly.

Can the portfolio holder inform me and members what provisions including numbers of properties that are available for the likely increase when this restriction is lifted? Do not include in the numbers properties that are under repair or improvement.

Response

Housing Services uses a range of options to try and help people avoid the loss of their home. This includes advice and support; for example, maximising income from the social security system to help make rent payments, the payment of Discretionary Housing Payments to help pay rent, and direct intervention and negotiation with landlords. When it is simply not possible to prevent the loss of a home, the Council is able to draw upon a range of resources to secure accommodation for people who may become homeless as a consequence of their landlord evicting them from their home. This includes Council-owned properties, homes owned by housing associations and helping people find accommodation provided by private landlords.

It is difficult to predict how many homes will be available to let at any moment in time, as the availability of such properties is dependent upon existing tenants moving to different homes. On average, based on figures for 2020-2021, circa 58 social housing properties are let each month, including to people who are or at risk of becoming homeless. In addition, a further 170 properties are currently being used as temporary accommodation for people while they wait for permanent homes that suit their long term needs to become available.

Each month the Council itself, based on data for the past year, has circa forty tenancy terminations creating void properties available to relet. At present (28.06.21) the Council has thirty-eight void homes available for letting to new tenants on either an introductory or secure tenancy and six void homes held for use as emergency temporary accommodation by homeless households.

Increasing the number of homes available to people who may become homeless is challenging, as there is high demand for all homes across all tenures and of all types in Powys. The majority of homeless demand is from smaller households needing homes with one bedroom. Just 6% of all homes in Powys have one bedroom – that figure includes homes designated for accommodation by older people.

The Council and housing associations have a confirmed development programme of 401 additional affordable homes 'in plan' (with a further 188 'in reserve') due to start work over the next two years, with the Council alone on target to add 250 new homes by 2025. A combination of new development, acquisition of properties for social rent, and enhanced resources for homelessness prevention will help the Council meet the challenges that may arise following the ending of the eviction moratorium.

Councillor Williams' supplementary question was on the number of empty properties under repair not available to rent. The Portfolio Holder agreed to let Councillor Williams the information.

15.6. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property from County Councillor Roger Williams

What assessment has the Portfolio Holder for Education made of the new Post 16 Education Policy in retaining Post 16 pupils in Powys Schools and Colleges?

Response

The post-16 report presented to Cabinet on the 18th May 2021 included an assessment of a number of different options for the governance of post-16 in Powys which were fully evaluated, as can be seen in the appendices to the Cabinet report.

There was no supplementary question.

15.7. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property from County Councillor Martin Weale

If learner entitlements are an important factor to this process, why is it acceptable to move children that are already receiving a higher level of learner entitlement producing children that are all well rounded, lifting the standard at Ysgol Calon Cymru to alternative schools? How is this improving learner entitlement, surely learner entitlements should be looked upon as education standards using standardised judgements by ESTYN and ERW and not subjective and unsubstantiated phone calls to headteachers.

Response

I assume that the question is related to the current consultation on small schools, and in particular Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School. The vision for education in Powys is about improving learner entitlement and experience, aligning with the new curriculum from September 2022 – this is about more than standards of education.

In the last Categorisation exercise in 2019, Llanfihangel Rhydithon was classified as Green, Llanbister and Crossgates were categorised as Yellow. However, although there is no National Categorisation for schools, the local authority has continued to work closely to support these schools. All three schools are strong schools for standards, provision and leadership and have responded well to the challenges of providing education over the pandemic period. This has reinforced the view of the local authority that the schools are self-improving schools and provide education that is equitable.

In the last Estyn inspection for Llanfihangel Rhydithon in 2019, the school was judged to be good for standards, provision and leadership.

Llanbister Primary School were inspected by Estyn in 2019 and were also judged to be good for standards, provision and leadership.

Crossgates School were inspected yn 2016, and were placed in Estyn review. However, within a year they had addressed the recommendations and were removed from any form of follow up.

There was no supplementary question.

15.8. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property from County Councillor Martin Weale

There is a surplus amount in the local authority budget, Why are we putting our communities through this, especially with Covid. It has been said that the last 18 months have been MOST stressful time not only for pupils but teachers and parents. Why are the transformation and education teams not listening to the clear messages given by local MS/ MP, councillors and the Welsh government?

Response

It is recognised that school reorganisation is always an emotive issue for schools and their communities. However, Welsh Government recognised that local authorities needed to continue with reorganisation plans during the pandemic and issued non-statutory guidance, which has been followed.

In terms of why the authority is progressing with the Transforming Education Programme: In 2019, Estyn reviewed the Council's education service and found it in need of significant improvement. The following is an extract from the Estyn Report:

- *However, there are many areas of the authority's work causing significant concern, such as those relating to school organisation, financial management, school governance, lack of action regarding schools causing concern and the co-ordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs or who may require extra support. These issues affect school leadership, staffing structures, curriculum planning and staff morale, which in turn limit the impact of challenge advisers and other school improvement staff.*

Following this inspection, the Council carried out an extensive engagement exercise with schools and other stakeholders, which highlighted a number of challenges facing education in the county and the need for transformational change.

There was no supplementary question.

15.9. Questions to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property from County Councillor William Powell

Would the Portfolio Holder please outline the steps taken by Powys County Council to ensure that any property within the Authority's estate subject to heritage designation by Cadw is regularly monitored?

In the light of the findings of such monitoring, how is investment allocated to protect the asset, for this and future generations, in line with Welsh Government legislation on heritage and the built environment?

Response

The recent implementation of the Corporate Landlord model has allowed Strategic Property Services to employ an asset surveyor. The asset survey will be tasked with undertaking regular condition inspections of council properties, including heritage assets. This will ensure all properties, including those subject to a heritage designation are appropriately reviewed and managed on a cyclical basis. Capital and revenue funding will be allocated on the basis of this asset review to ensure that all assets are appropriately managed and protected for future generations.

In response to Councillor Powell's supplementary question the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the asset surveyor appointed was an experienced officer with the relevant qualifications. He would provide a more detailed response to Councillor Powell's question insofar as it related to Gwernyfed manor house.

16. EXEMPT ITEMS

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).

All officers except the Chief Executive, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Scrutiny Manager and the Cabinet Manager left the meeting.

17. STAFFING MATTERS

Council considered the confidential report of the Chief Executive. The purpose of the report was to formally note changes to the Senior Leadership Team structure that had taken place since the start of the pandemic period that did not require Council approval and to reflect other changes due to a review of the Senior Management structure and to regularise some anomalies in salaries.

By 40 votes to 1 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED to approve recommendation 1 in the report.

By 30 votes to 8 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED to approve recommendation 2 in the report.

By 38 votes to 1 with 1 abstention it was

RESOLVED to approve recommendation 3 in the report.

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)