

**Minutes of the Meeting of CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL held at Neuadd
Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely via video conferencing
on Thursday, 28th November, 2024**

PRESENT: Councillor Keith Evans (Chair), Councillors Shelley Childs, Bryan Davies, Clive Davies, Euros Davies, Gareth Davies, Gethin Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Amada Edwards, David Raymond Evans, Elizabeth Evans, Eryl Evans, Gwyn Wigley Evans, Rhodri Evans, Wyn Evans, Hugh R M Hughes, Chris James, Gwyn James, Maldwyn Lewis, Gareth Lloyd, Ann Bowen Morgan, John Roberts, Mark Strong, Wyn Thomas, Matthew Vaux, Carl Worrall and Gareth Lewis.

(2.00pm - 2.52pm)

Procedure

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Keith Evans welcomed all to the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was being webcasted.

1 Apologies

Councillors Catrin M S Davies, Ifan Davies, Keith Henson, Carol Roberts and Alun Williams apologised for their inability to attend the meeting due to other Council duties.

Councillor Ceris Jones apologised for her inability to attend the meeting. James Starbuck, Corporate Director apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.

2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 Chair Announcements

Councillor Keith Evans thanked Council staff, emergency services, Members and volunteers in responding to the recent storm.

He congratulated Cylch Meithrin Pont Steffan following its official opening on 9 October.

He also thanked all those involved with Ceredigion's sponsorship of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show during 2024, congratulating the following winners in the recent Winter Fair:

- a) Myrddin James and family from Llangeitho on winning the championship and the reserve prize for best pig, and best pair;
- b) Gwyn and Linda Davies from Llanddewi Brefi on reaching the finals in four of the North Country Cheviot sheep categories;
- c) Beryl Evans from Llangeitho on her success in the crafts section;
- d) Rebecca James, Chair of Llanddewi YFC, on winning the overall pig producer category;
- e) Alaw Freeman, on winning the Llanwennog sheep.young handler's category.

4 Declaration of Acceptance of Office and an Undertaking to comply with the Code of Conduct by Councillor Gareth Lewis

Elin Prysor, Monitoring Officer addressed the Council on the statutory requirement for all Members to make a Declaration of Acceptance and an undertaking to comply with the Code of Conduct, confirming that Councillor Gareth Lewis in making his statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office had received comprehensive training on the Council's Code of Conduct on 21st October 2024. This is in order for him to perform his functions with an understanding of the Principles of Public Life, his duties and responsibilities under the Code, and also the consequences for failing to do so. Councillor Gareth Lewis verbally accepted his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the undertaking to comply with the Code of Conduct which had been previously been signed by him and countersigned by the Proper Officer.

5 To confirm the Minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 24 October 2024 and 14 November 2024

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm as a true record the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 October 2024, and 14 November 2024.

Matters arising

Councillor Gareth Davies asked if a response had been received from the UK Government in relation to the Notice of Motion presented at the meeting dated 24 October 2024. It was confirmed that no response had been received to date.

6 To consider the Annual Governance Statement 2023-24

Councillor Matthew Vaux, Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection presented the report to Council noting that the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 requires local authorities to conduct at least annually a review of the effectiveness of their governance framework including their systems of internal control, which must be documented in an Annual Governance Statement and published as part of the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts.

He noted that the Annual Governance Statement had been considered by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting held earlier today, and that there were no comments forthcoming.

Following a vote, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2023-24.

7a To receive the Audit of Accounts Report of Audit Wales on the 2023-24 Statement of Accounts

Jason Blewitt of Audit Wales presented the report in respect of the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2023/24, noting that the audit is now complete and it is their intention to issue an unqualified audit opinion on the year's account following Council's decision, and on receipt of the letter of representation.

He noted that the accounts had been submitted by Ceredigion County Council in accordance with the deadline set, which has not been achieved by all Councils, and that there are no uncorrected errors as any misstatements

had been amended during the review and they have no overall effect on the final statement. He also made reference to accounting adjustments relating to pensions resulting from revised guidance issued after the accounts had been produced which affect a number of other Local Authorities and the inclusion of Hafan y Waun on the asset register.

He confirmed that there were no significant issues, however he did note that Audit Wales' report had highlighted some matters in relation to quality assurance and audit trail in relation to the Asset Valuations area of the accounts, acknowledging that there were a large number of asset records.

7b The Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee to formally present that Committee's comments on the report

Councillor Elizabeth Evans, Member of the Governance and Audit Committee presented feedback on behalf of the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, as neither the Chair or the Vice-Chair were able to attend the meeting due to prior commitments.

She noted that a detailed overview had been presented to the Governance and Audit Committee, with an opportunity to review and discuss the audit of accounts, and that the Committee were pleased to receive an unqualified report from Audit Wales. She also noted that the accounts had been submitted and audited earlier than that of the previous year and congratulated the Chief Finance Officer and his staff for the excellent progress made, noting the excellent relationship, open dialogue and engagement with Audit Wales.

7c To approve the 2023-24 Statement of Accounts

Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement Services presented the report to Council noting that he was pleased to receive an unqualified report, and that the accounts had been submitted to Audit Wales on 28 June 2024. He thanked the Section 151 Officer and his team for their work.

He noted that he was also pleased to confirm that the overspend at the end of the year was reduced significantly from the projected figure of £2.9m at the end of the first quarter to £10k by the end of the financial year and thanked the Leadership Group and Officers for their hard work in achieving these savings.

He also provided an overview of the situation in relation to the Council's General Balances and Reserves, and noted the significant capital projects being delivered including the Aberaeron coastal defence scheme and Ysgol Dyffryn Aeron.

He thanked Audit Wales for their unqualified report, noting that several Councils in Wales were failing to meet the deadline for submission of their accounts, and that it is of great acclaim that Ceredigion County Council has achieved this.

This was re-iterated by Councillors Rhodri Evans, Maldwyn Lewis, Bryan Davies, Wyn Thomas and Wyn Evans.

Members asked whether the savings made had impacted upon services provided to the residents, and for re-assurances that they would be involved in all future discussions relating to budget savings. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies confirmed that the budget workshops to Members will be addressing such matters.

Following discussion, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the Council's Statement of Accounts and the Harbour Statement of Accounts.

8 To receive the report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Policy, Performance and Public Protection upon the Annual Report of Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation presented the report and the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Letter to Council noting that the report had been considered by the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Governance and Audit Committee and by Cabinet.

He noted that the Council had received 300 compliments, 314 Freedom of Information Requests and 228 complaints, 84 of which had progressed to stage two.

9 To receive a report by the Corporate Lead Officer Schools and Lifelong Learning upon Local Authority representative on Governing Bodies

Councillor Wyn Thomas, Cabinet Member for Schools, Lifelong Learning and Skills presented the report to Council noting that Councillor Gareth Lewis has been nominated as Local Authority Governor at the request of Rhydypennau Community Primary School.

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm the nomination of Councillor Gareth Lewis as Local Authority Governor of Rhydypennau Community Primary School.

10 To appoint Members of Council to the Committees of the Council for the remainder of the municipal term

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm the Membership of the Council's Committees as presented at the meeting.

11 To confirm the following appointments

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Members to the following roles:

Corporate Joint Committee: sub-Committee Governance and Audit
· Councillor Rhodri Evans to replace Councillor Gareth Lloyd

Constitution Cross Party Working Group
· Councillor John Roberts

Cross Party Boundary Review Group
· Councillor John Roberts

Council Tax Premium Second Homes and Long Terms Empty Homes
Working Group

· Councillor Raymond Evans

Mid Wales Joint Scrutiny Committee for Health and Care

· Councillor Sian Maehrlein

Aberystwyth-Shrewsbury Railway Line Liaison Committee

· Councillor Gareth Lewis

Fostering Panel

· Councillor Amanda Edwards to replace Councillor Alun Williams

National Adoption Service Joint Committee (substitute member)

· Councillor Amanda Edwards

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Council held on 12 December 2024

CHAIRMAN: _____