

**Minutes of the Meeting of HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**held at the Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via video conference on Thursday, 6 February 2025**

PRESENT: Councillor Amanda Williams (Chair), Councillors Caryl Roberts, Ceris Jones, Carl Worrall, Mark Strong, Amanda Edwards, Eryl Evans, Keith Evans, Ann Bowen Morgan, Gwyn James, Wyn Evans, Elaine Evans, Sian Maehrlein and John Roberts.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation. Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement Services. Councillors Alun Williams, Clive Davies, Matthew Vaux, Keith Henson and Wyn Thomas. (Cabinet Members).

Councillors Elizabeth Evans, Euros Davies, Chris James, Gwyn Wigley Evans, Gethin Davies, Ifan Davies, Hugh Hughes, Shelley Childs, Gareth Lloyd a Rhodri Evans.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Eifion Evans, Chief Executive, Barry Rees, Corporate Director; Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer, Finance and Procurement, Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer and Monitoring Officer, Audrey Somerton-Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, Greg Jones, Corporate Lead Officer, Lisa Evans, Standards and Scrutiny Officer, Translators.

(9.30 am - 12.20 pm)

**9 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Councillor Ceris Jones apologised for her inability to attend the meeting.

**10 Disclosure of personal interest (including whipping declarations).**

**Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies declared a personal interest with regards to any discussion relating to the Authority's Education Staff.

Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member, declared a personal interest with regards to any discussion relating to the Fire Authority.

**11 Chair Announcements**

None.

**12 Report on draft 25/26 Budget**

Councillor Amanda Edwards, Committee Vice-Chair, outlined the meeting procedure and welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies, Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement Services, Committee Members, the remaining Cabinet Members, non-Committee Members and Officers to the meeting. Cabinet considered and agreed 9 recommendations in relation to the draft 25/26 Budget report.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies, presented the report on the draft budget for 2025/2026. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement, Councillor Gareth Davies, presented the remaining information. Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer, Finance and Procurement, then provided a brief verbal update on the latest Budget situation.

The Leader of the Council raised an issue relating to the fire levy and the recent Independent Cultural Review of the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service. It was stated that the Council as a constituent Authority would want to scrutinise the situation and to ask questions of the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority.

There was an opportunity for questions and input from Cabinet Members and officers regarding the relevant service areas.

The main points raised during discussion were:

- Councillor Wyn Evans referred to a letter which had been sent by the Independent Group to Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council, for consideration by Cabinet. The letter proposed that staff rationalisation should be identified as savings for the budget setting process.

It was reiterated to Members that it would be more appropriate if suggestions were put forward as to which Services they wished to investigate to achieve the necessary savings. It was also noted that a reduction in staff would result in a reduction in services.

- A request was made for information relating to spend on the Wellbeing Centre and Leisure Services and it was confirmed that this would be included on the Forward Work Programme.
- Concern was raised that the spend in relation to Through Age Wellbeing had increased.

The S151 Officer noted that costs had reduced across the Through Age Wellbeing services in the last year, with the exception of out of county

placements. It was noted that there was a legal requirement to provide support to our most vulnerable residents and that safeguarding is a priority.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to consider the following recommendations.

**Recommendations:** For the respective Services that are within the remit of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. To consider:
  - a) the overall draft 25/26 Budget position.
  - b) the relevant elements of the Revenue Budget Movements.
  - c) the relevant elements of the Revenue Budget Cost Pressures.
  - d) the relevant elements of the Revenue Budget Reductions Proposals.
  - e) the relevant elements of the Fees & Charges proposals.
  - f) the relevant elements of the Multi-year Capital Programme.
  
2. To consider the options recommended by Cabinet on 21/01/25:
  - a) A draft 25/26 Budget Requirement of £209.109m, resulting in a Council Tax increase (for the Ceredigion County Council component) of £13.94 per month for a Band D property (9.7%), which would include provision for a £230k investment in the Planning Enforcement Service and a £481k investment in the Waste Collection Service.
  - b) A draft 25/26 Budget Requirement of £209.234m, resulting in a Council Tax increase (for the Ceredigion County Council component) of £14.24 per month for a Band D property (9.9%), which would include provision for a £346k investment in the Planning Enforcement Service and a £481k investment in the Waste Collection Service.
  
3. To make recommendation(s) for Cabinet to consider on 18/02/25, as the Committee deems appropriate, in relation to the Budget.

**Committee's recommendation:**

Following discussion, Committee Members agreed that they had considered the recommendations in 1. a) – f); and agreed to recommend to Cabinet:

Option **(b)** as the preferred option:

*A draft 25/26 Budget Requirement of £209.234m, resulting in a Council Tax increase (for the Ceredigion County Council component) of £14.24 per month for a Band D property (9.9%), which would include provision for a £346k investment in the Planning Enforcement Service and a £481k investment in the Waste Collection Service*

No further recommendations were made by the Committee for Cabinet to consider.

**Reasons for recommendations:**

To assist with the preparation of a balanced budget, to ensure appropriate scrutiny of the overall Budget being proposed and to make recommendation(s), as appropriate, for Cabinet to consider at their next meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

The Chair and Committee Members thanked Officers for their hard work in preparing the agenda papers. The Chair thanked Lisa Evans for her continued support throughout the meeting.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 March 2025**

**Chairman:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_