

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Council**  
**held at Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely**  
**via video conference on Thursday, 23rd January, 2025**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Keith Evans (Chair), Councillors Shelley Childs, Bryan Davies, Catrin M S Davies, Clive Davies, Euros Davies, Gareth Davies, Gethin Davies, Ifan Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Amanda Edwards, Endaf Edwards, David Raymond Evans, Elaine Evans, Elizabeth Evans, Eryl Evans, Gwyn Wigley Evans, Rhodri Evans, Wyn Evans, Keith Henson, Hugh R M Hughes, Chris James, Gareth Lewis, Maldwyn Lewis, Gareth Lloyd, Sian Maehrlein, Ann Bowen Morgan, Caryl Roberts, John Roberts, Mark Strong, Wyn Thomas, Matthew Vaux, Alun Williams and Carl Worrall.

**(10.00am - 11.47am)**

**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 Gwyn James and Ceris Jones apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

James Starbuck, Corporate Director and Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer for Legal and Governance apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

**2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests**

Councillor Amanda Edwards declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 9 and withdrew from the meeting during discussions.

**3 Chair Announcements**

- a) Councillor Keith Evans extended his condolences to the family and friends of former Councillor Haydn Lewis on their recent bereavement;
- b) Councillor Keith Evans extended his condolences to Councillor Eryl Evans and her family following the recent bereavement of her father-in-law, Rhythwyn Evans from Silian;
- c) Councillor Keith Evans extended his condolences to the family of Tony and Jan Tucker on their recent bereavement;
- d) Councillor Keith Evans congratulated former Councillor Dan Potter on celebrating 30 years as a volunteer with the New Quay RNLI;
- e) Councillor Keith Evans congratulated Carys Davies, Dawn and Robert Davies and Ann Hughes on being awarded a British Empire Medal.

**4 To confirm the Minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 12 December 2024**

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm as a true record the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 December 2024.

Matters arising

Councillor Rhodri Evans enquired as to whether a response had been received in relation to the Notice of Motion presented at the meeting dated 12 December 2024. It was confirmed that no response had been received to date.

**5 To consider the report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Finance and Procurement upon the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26**

Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement presented the report noting that, in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulation 2013 there is a statutory obligation for a report to be presented to full council on an annual basis, even if there has been no change in the scheme since the previous year.

The regulations approved by Welsh Government to be adopted by all Councils in Wales provide for claimants to receive a reduction of up to 100% of their Council Tax liability in certain circumstances and ensure that each local authority consistently provides support for Welsh council taxpayers. The regulations also provide for 3 specific discretion elements, namely the War Disablement Pension, war Widows' Pension and War Widowers' Pensions, the extended payment period for working age claimants, and the backdating of late applications.

He noted that last year, the Council resolved to disregard all of the pensions above the first £10 for calculation purposes, and that it is estimated that for 2024/25 the disregard of war pensions for CTRS will cost the Council approximately £1.6k. the Council also resolved last year not to extend the payment period beyond the statutory 4 weeks, and that up to November there had only been 1 extended payment awarded costing £124.59. In addition, the Council resolved last year not to extend the backdating period for late applications beyond the statutory 3 months.

Councillor Gareth Davies noted that the majority of the costs of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme payments is met by Welsh Government, however there is still a significant requirement for Councils to meet the costs of payments that exceeds their contribution which in Ceredigion is equivalent to circa £1.8m.

Following a vote, it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to:

1. Note the making of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2025;
2. Adopt the provisions of the Prescribed Requirement Regulations (2013) as the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26, subject to the local discretions that the Council is able to exercise as set out below:
  - (i) Continue to apply a 100% disregard beyond the statutory £10 disregard for War Disablement Pensions, War Widows' Pensions and War Widowers' Pensions, for both pensioners and working age claimants.
  - (ii) Not to increase the extended payment periods for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard 4 weeks currently contained within the Prescribed Scheme.

- (iii) Not to increase the backdate period for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard 3 months contained within the Prescribed Scheme.

**6 To consider the report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Economy and Regeneration upon the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans Public Consultation**

Councillor Clive Davies, Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration presented the report to Council noting that Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and that there are 13 conservation areas in Ceredigion.

He noted that the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 which superseded previous legislation, brings existing legislation on the historic environment together in one bilingual act, providing a basis for more detailed management appraisals. In order to ensure that the Local Planning Authority is meeting its statutory duty, the Planning Policy Team sought funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support the preparation of conservation area appraisals and management plans. These plans are subject to public consultation, and it was noted that once the current Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans have been adopted, the intention is to prepare appraisals and management plans for the remaining conservation areas once resources allow.

Members asked regarding the flexibility of Article 4 on areas such as Llanddewi Brefi in relation to air source heating, solar panels and window frames. It was noted that this report related to consent to commence consultation, and that it did not propose the implementation of an Article 4. Members also asked about the removal of chimney stacks in Lampeter and it was noted that residents should apply for conservation area consent prior to removing the chimney stacks.

Following a vote, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans be released for public consultation.

**7 To consider the report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Customer Contact, ICT and Digital upon the Digital Strategy Post Consultation**

Councillor Catrin M S Davies, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Customer Services presented the report to Council noting the need to be open to adapt to new technology that is developing, with a smart approach due to limited resources.

She noted that 27 responses were received to the consultation on Ceredigion County Council's digital strategy, noting that comments received were being implemented such as the plans to develop staff ICT skills and the inclusion of the community being essential.

Councillor Elaine Evans, Chair of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that the strategy had been considered during the

meeting dated 6 January 2025, and that it was agreed to recommend that Council approve the Digital Strategy.

Members asked about the high score of 9 on the risk register, and it was noted that capacity and finance is a risk to all services and that cyber security is a constant challenge to maintain and mitigate. Members also noted the importance of digital technology, whilst considering the needs of an ageing population. It was noted that the service should be designed with the end user experience in mind, involving public testing and feedback, and that the strategy looks to set up user groups to improve engagement and consultation. It was also noted that a presentation would be given to the Democratic Services Committee to ensure Councillors have a better understanding of Artificial Intelligence.

Following a vote, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the Digital Strategy 2024-2030.

**8 To consider the report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services upon Member e-learning modules**

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation presented the report to Council noting that members of the Democratic Services Committee considered a recommendation during its meeting held 5 December 2024 in relation to e-learning modules that are available to Members, which prioritised the various e-learning modules available.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans, Chair of the Democratic Services Committee noted that whilst the face-to-face training provision is very important, the e-learning modules are also excellent, and that the Committee recommended that the Local Government Finance e-learning module be added to the list of mandatory e-learning modules.

Members asked for refresher training on accessing the e-learning modules and it was noted that guidance would be sent to all Members.

Following a vote, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the categorisation of the e-learning modules available for Members as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, noting that all e-learning modules identified as mandatory must be completed by all Members.

**9 To consider the report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services upon a formal substitute appointment to cover a family absence period of a senior salary holder**

Councillor Amanda Edwards left the meeting for the duration of the discussion on the following item.

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation presented the report to Council noting that the Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013 and the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) allows Councils to

determine whether it is necessary to make a substitute appointment to cover the family absence of a senior salary holder and if so, the Member substituting will be eligible if the authority so decides to be paid a senior salary.

He noted the importance of strengthening equal opportunities, noting that if approved during a meeting to be held in March 2025, a recommendation would be made for a blanket approach to be implemented which would also apply to sickness absence and family absence. This would mean that, it would not be necessary to refer to specific individuals.

Members asked for clarification of the period of maternity leave, paternity leave and sickness absence and it was noted that this would be clarified with the IRPW and included in the report to be presented to Council in March 2025.

Following a vote. it was unanimously **RESOLVED**:

- a) That Councillor Amanda Edwards be appointed as a substitute for Councillor Ceris Jones;
- b) that Councillor Amanda Edwards is paid for the full duration of the family absence i.e. back-dated to 20<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and to be paid until such time as Councillor Ceris Jones returns after maternity leave.

**10 To consider the report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Schools and Lifelong Learning upon Local Authority representatives on Governing Bodies**

Councillor Wyn Thomas, Cabinet Member for Schools and Lifelong Learning presented the report to Council noting that Councillors Marc Davies and Ceris Jones had been nominated as Local Authority representatives at the request of the Governing Body of Ysgol Dyffryn Aeron.

Following a vote, it was **RESOLVED** to confirm Councillors Marc Davies and Ceris Jones as Local Authority representatives on the Governing Body of Ysgol Dyffryn Aeron.

**11 To confirm the following appointment:  
Audit Wales Planning follow up Task and Finish Group: Councillor Raymond Evans**

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Council held on 3 March 2025**

**CHAIRMAN:** \_\_\_\_\_