

Minutes of the Meeting of CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held at the Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via video conference on Friday, 7 February 2025

PRESENT: Councillor Elaine Evans (Chair), Councillors Rhodri Evans, Euros Davies, Ifan Davies, Raymond Evans, Endaf Edwards, Eryl Evans, Elizabeth Evans, Hugh R M Hughes, Caryl Roberts and Carl Worrall

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. Councillor Catrin M S Davies, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Customer Services. Councillor Matthew Vaux, Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection. Councillor Clive Davies, Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration. Councillors Alun Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing, Councillor Keith Henson, Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services and Carbon Management, Councillor Wyn Thomas, Cabinet Member for Schools, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

Councillors Gareth Lloyd, Keith Evans, Gethin Davies.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Eifion Evans, Chief Executive; Barry Rees, Corporate Director; Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer, Finance and Procurement (S151 Officer); Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer Democratic Services; Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer; Russell Hughes-Pickering, Corporate Lead Officer Economy and Regeneration; Alan Morris, Corporate Lead Officer Customer Services, ICT and Digital; Nia Jones, Corporate Manager Democratic Services; Liz Merriman, Corporate Manager Human Resources; Lisa Evans, Scrutiny and Standards Officer and Translators.

(1:30pm – 3.00pm)

14 Welcome and Apologies

Councillors Ceris Jones and Ann Bowen Morgan apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

15 Disclosures 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.

Councillor Keith Henson declared a personal interest with regards to any Staffing discussions in the meeting.

Councillor Raymond Evans declared a personal interest with regards to any discussion relating to the Fire Authority.

Councillor Rhodri Evans declared a personal interest with regards to any discussion relating to the Authority's Education Staff.

16 Chair Announcements

None

17 Report on draft 25/26 Budget

Councillor Elaine Evans, Committee 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:

- Is the Council ensuring that it is maximising income from our assets?

The Corporate Lead Officer, Economy and Regeneration outlined the wide range of initiatives that are currently underway which will generate income or provide savings and that the focus is on those areas that provide the biggest returns:

- Commercial estate
- Asset development
- Opportunities for the use of our assets
- Public conveniences
- Energy.

- Reference was made to the use of Awel Deg, Llandysul and what the Council's plans were for the asset, querying whether it could be used for children's accommodation in the South of the County in partnership with Carmarthenshire County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council.
- Reference was also made to the County Farms Task and Finish Group.

The Corporate Lead Officer, Economy and Regeneration stated that a meeting will be held with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee shortly to discuss the timetable and the vision for County Farms.

- Councillor Euros Davies queried whether the Council was losing money due to the Council Tax premium on long term empty properties.

The S151 Officer stated that he would need to look further at this and report back to the Committee.

- Councillor Elizabeth Evans queried whether street licences would be enforced this year and therefore bring additional income to the Authority.

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 18th February 2025.

18 To confirm minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising from those Minutes.

It was AGREED to confirm the minutes of the Committee meeting as a true record, There were no matters arising from those minutes.

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

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 March 2025

Chairman: _____

Date: _____