

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

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

**PRESENT;** Councillor Marc Davies (Chair), Councillors Gwyn Wigley Evans (Vice-Chair), Shelley Childs, Gethin Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Wyn Evans, Chris James, Sian Maehrlein, John Roberts and Carl Worrall

**Also in attendance:** Councillors : 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 Endaf Edwards, Amanda Edwards, Raymond Evans, Keith Evans, Eryl Evans, Rhodri Evans, Elizabeth Evans, Ifan Davies, Euros Davies, Hugh Hughes, Gareth Lloyd

**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; Rhodri Llwyd, Corporate Lead Officer, Highways and Environmental; Russell Hughes-Pickering, Corporate Lead Officer Economy and Regeneration; Roger Davies, Assistant Accountant; Lisa Evans, Scrutiny and Standards Officer and Translators.

(9.30 am - 12.30 pm)

**1 Apologies**

Councillor Ann Bowen Morgan apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

**2 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.**

**3 Report on the draft 25/26 Budget**

Each Overview & Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider the draft 25/26 Budget report presented to Cabinet on 21 January 2025 and the associated impact on the respective Services within its remit. The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on the 7th of February 2025 at 9am. Cabinet had 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:

- A Councillor questioned why gold and platinum had been given as an option at the budget meetings when the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee had previously recommended the platinum option to Cabinet. The Leader explained that as it would affect the Council tax % they wanted to consider both options.
- A review of the harbours within the County should be undertaken in order to re-launch the harbours. This was suggested as an item to be included on the forward work programme.
- Questions were raised in relation to car parks. Some members expressed there may be local interest to take over the running of car parks in certain areas. Members were asked to contact officers with further information.
- Options to work with other Authorities should be explored in order to make savings.
- Are jobs reviewed when they become vacant. Officers responded that the recruitment process is kept under review, there are mechanisms in place.
- is general maintenance and repair kept in house or does the authority have to go through procurement. This should be kept under to review to keep costs down. It was suggested that this be added to the forward work programme.
- Options relating to the workforce - are there options to reduce the workforce without removing a service, opportunities for shared posts, opportunities for AI.

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 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.

**4 To confirm the 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.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Thriving Communities Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee held on 19 March 2025**

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

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