

Minutes of the Meeting of LEARNING 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 Chris James (Chair), Councillors Caryl Roberts (Vice-Chair), Euros Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Amanda Edwards, Endaf Edwards, Elizabeth Evans, Gareth Lloyd, Ann Bowen Morgan and Mark Strong

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 Gwyn James, Keith Evans, Eryl Evans, Rhodri Evans, John Roberts, Ifan Davies, Hugh Hughes, Gwyn Wigley Evans

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; Elen James, Corporate Lead Officer, Lifelong Learning; Russell Hughes-Pickering, Corporate Lead Officer Economy and Regeneration; Carys Fowles, Assistant Accountant; Lisa Evans, Scrutiny and Standards Officer and Translators.

(1.30pm - 4.30 pm)

1 Apologies

None

2 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.

Councillor Chris James 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.

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

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 Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on the 6th of February 2025 at 1:30pm. 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:

- Had the savings in relation to the review of schools been absorbed.
- The proposals put forward by the Independent Group in relation to Council staffing, want to safeguard the schools budget.
- How the funding formula for schools works.
- Are there opportunities for staff to work collaboratively with other authorities.
- Scrutiny should review services across the whole of the authority.
- Questions were raised in relation agency staff. A report on agency staff is due to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee in March.

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 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 Learning Communities Overview and
Scrutiny Committee held on 8 May 2025**

Chairman: _____

Date: _____