

17 September, 2014.

LLANELLI RURAL COUNCIL

Minute Nos: 189 – 195

At a Meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** of the Llanelli Rural Council held at the Council Chamber, Vauxhall Buildings, Vauxhall, Llanelli, on Wednesday, 17 September, 2014 at 4.45 p.m.

Present: Cllr. S. M. Donogue (Chairman)

Cllrs.

L. J. Butler	M. L. Evans
G. N. R. Edwards	R. E. Evans
H. J. Evans	S. N. Lewis
A. G. Morgan	

189. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. T. Bowen, T. Devichand, C. A. Rees, A. J. Rogers (Cllr. S. N. Lewis deputising) and G. H. Wooldridge (Cllr. R. E. Evans deputising).

190. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

191. DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS)

Further to Minute No. 149, Members received correspondence replies from the DBS Customer Relations, DBS and also Welsh Government in response to the Clerk's letter dated 29 July, 2014.

DBS Customer Relations informed that the DBS did not own the legislation and any modifications would require an addition to the Exceptions Order which was owned by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The Council would have to submit a business case to the MoJ for a standard level DBS check. However, if an enhanced level DBS check was required a business case would need to be presented to the Home Office.

Members then considered the correspondence received from the Welsh Government about the subject. It stated that it was of the opinion the requirement for DBS checks was a matter for councils and councillors. However, it was not appropriate to make DBS checks a requirement for all since there were many types of situations to consider. The writer touched upon the notion of the Council appointing youth representatives stating then it would be for the Council to determine whether it was entitled to ask for a DBS check and at what level for councillors, clerks and staff working with youth representatives.

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The writer suggested the Council might wish to raise the matter with One Voice Wales (OVW).

Members briefly discussed the responses received and felt it was clear that there would be no point in pursuing the matter with a sector representational body such as OVW. If the Welsh Government or the DBS felt there was merit in pursuing a general DBS check for all Members then reference would have been made to it and some guidance would have also been provided over the next steps.

Members were content that all avenues had been explored and in view of such no further action could be taken in respect of the matter, and it was

RESOLVED that the correspondence be noted.

**192. FINANCIAL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION
(WALES) BILL**

Members received a consultation document from the National Assembly for Wales. The Children, Young People and Education Committee was calling for evidence on the general principles of the Financial Education and Inclusion (Wales) Bill.

The primary policy objective of the Bill was to equip people in Wales with the necessary financial knowledge and capability they needed to manage their financial circumstances effectively. The proposal would help to increase prosperity in Wales by improving the financial education and capability of its citizens.

Members were informed that the Bill would improve financial capability amongst school-age (age 8 – 16) children and young people by making it a legal requirement that financial education was included in the school curriculum. The Bill would strengthen the role of local authorities in helping people avoid falling into financial difficulty, and required local authorities to adopt a financial inclusion strategy. The Bill would give local authorities duties in respect of providing advice and arranging for advice about financial management, both generally and specifically to looked after children aged 16 to 17, to former looked after children and to students.

Following a brief general discussion, it was

RESOLVED that the correspondence be noted.

Cllr. A. G. Morgan left the meeting.

**193. DEVOLUTION, DEMOCRACY AND DELIVERY
WHITE PAPER – REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Members considered the White Paper ‘Reforming Local Government’ from the Welsh Government. It was the Welsh Government’s statement of intent about the future of Local Government. The White Paper also responded to the Local Government aspects of the report of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery (the Williams Commission).

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The White Paper sought views on whether the Welsh Government's vision was the right one and whether consultees had suggestions on how it could further be developed.

The Welsh Government's ambition was to make Wales a better place, to deliver real change to improve the lives of people now and leave a better legacy for the nation's children and grandchildren.

The Clerk informed Members that he had been selected as the Wales project lead for dealing with this subject by the Society of Local Councils Clerks. As such he was responsible for drafting the Society's response to the issues stemming from the White Paper.

He stated this was probably the most important reform of public services that Wales had witnessed over the last two decades.

Public services faced real and prolonged challenges. The effects of recession and austerity on public sector budgets would be felt for many years. The population in Wales was growing, becoming older and public expectations were higher than ever before. The demand for public services was growing while the resources to provide them were falling.

The Clerk commented that the White Paper focused on the actions the Welsh Government intended to take between now and the end of the current Assembly in May 2016 to facilitate a programme of Principal Authority mergers; but the White Paper also set out a wider vision for the future of local government and the services it delivered. In responding to this initial White Paper, the Council should take the opportunity to voice its support for Carmarthenshire County Council remaining as a stand alone Local Authority under the Local Government reform proposals.

The Clerk went on to state that the Welsh Government planned to conduct further consultations in the autumn and the Council should look to participate as fully as possible in those consultations; not least focussing on the paper dealing with community governance. This would have a significant bearing on the future operation of the community and town council tier of local government in Wales.

As a precursor to what lay ahead in the autumn it was pleasing that Welsh Government had positive plans for the sector. It was particularly pleasing that the First Minister was keen to look at further empowering community and town councils in some manner.

The Clerk encouraged the Council to explore further the notion put forward by the First Minister of what he expected to see in the future whereby the community and town council sector was afforded an asymmetrical devolution of powers. There were exciting times ahead for the local council sector and the Council must make sure it plays its part in helping to shape and bring about positive changes where needed.

In anticipation as to what lay ahead in the autumn the initial White Paper – Reforming Local Government was an important cornerstone for developing the general framework for the series of planned consultations.

There then followed a stimulating and lengthy discussion, following which it was

RESOLVED that

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(1) The Clerk responds to the White Paper – Reforming Local Government, highlighting Members’ views and comments.

(2) In responding to the White Paper, Welsh Government be informed that under the said reform proposals the Council fully supports Carmarthenshire County Council remaining as a stand alone Local Authority particularly as it is the Welsh Government’s first preference for the proposed Principal Authority arrangements and as prescribed in the White Paper.

194. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT, 1960

RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the following matter be considered in private and that the power of exclusion of the public under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, 1960 be exercised.

195. STAFFING MATTERS

Members considered the report of the Deputy Clerk (Administration) informing of staffing matters.

RESOLVED that the report referenced 09:2014 be accepted.

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The meeting concluded at 5.45 p.m.

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The afore-mentioned Minutes were declared to be a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman presiding thereat and were, on 15 October, 2014, adopted by the Council.