

## **1. Community Information**

### **Changes to Household Recycling Centres April 2025**

Further to the notification in a previous report about the changes to the operation of the Household Recycling Centres to commence in April 2025, I prepared a short briefing containing the questions residents have asked me about the booking system for visits to the centres and the new charges for Do-It-Yourself waste, and the information provided in response by recycling team officers.

The briefing is attached. I will update the briefing with new questions and answers not already included as they arise going forward.

### **Review of 20 MPH default speed limit on Powys roads - update**

As noted in previous reports, Welsh Government began a review of the 20 MPH default limit in September 2024, and has been working with the 22 Welsh local authorities since that date to finalise the roads which will remain subject to the default. As part of the review, Local authorities consulted their populations and reviewed all roads/sections of roads where requests for reviews of the default were received.

The Powys Highways Service reviewed forty roads and has prepared a report for county, town and community councillors setting out its findings and recommendations. The report has been sent to councils directly and I've also attached it here. Councillors (county, town and community) are now asked to feed back their views as to whether all concerns relating to roads in their areas have been captured and addressed by the findings and recommendations.

You will note that none of the county roads within this community council's area was reviewed, but that some roads in neighbouring areas were.

The Strategic Road Network Team at Welsh Government is responsible for the review of 20MPH and 30MPH limits on trunk roads, and expects to complete its report and recommendations (roads where the default limit of 20MPH will change) this Summer. The report and list of roads will be shared with local authorities and with the public, and I'll update the community council and share the report at that time.

### **Volunteers for School Admissions Appeals Panel**

Volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds and experience are being sought to participate in deciding appeals by parents and carers against decisions about school admissions applications.

Any child refused a place at a school of their choice is entitled to appeal the decision. Appeal Panel members consider the reasons for the choice of school and the reasons for the

admission decision and decide whether to uphold or reject the appeal. Training is provided to panel members and a trained clerk advises the panel on legal and administrative issues.

Each panel consists of a minimum of three people and includes both a person with some experience of education, such as a teacher or school governor, and a person without any such experience (a lay member). Apart from the one person with educational experience, panel members are not required to have educational expertise or specialist knowledge. The council seeks to appoint people with a range of different skills and backgrounds, able to bring different viewpoints, experience and fresh ideas to the process. All panel members must be independent of the local authority, the school and the families involved.

Appeals take place throughout the year, but the majority are held between April and June.

Between them, the members of a panel would be able to demonstrate:

- Excellent listening skills and the ability to listen impartially
- The ability to put people at ease
- The ability to assess evidence and evaluate the arguments and evidence presented by both sides
- Decisiveness – appeal decisions are made soon after hearing the appeal

School Admission appeals are generally heard during working hours. Members' availability will always be sought prior to the date of an appeal hearing being set, but applicants should be able to accommodate appeals during the weekday.

Applications should be submitted by 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025. Applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of their applications by the end of March and those accepted will be invited for training.

For more information or to apply, visit: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/job-vacancies>

### **Support with paying rent**

Powys residents who receive Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit may be eligible for support to pay their rent via a Discretionary Housing Payment from the county council.

Discretionary Housing Payments can be used to cover:

- Rent shortfalls, when Housing Benefit or Universal Credit doesn't cover the full rent.
- Rent deposits, when a house move is necessary but a resident is unable to afford to pay the deposit
- Rent in advance, when rent is required in advance for a move to a new home

Information and support can be requested by telephone by calling: 01597 827 462.

The claim form can be completed online here:

<https://en.powys.gov.uk/discretionaryhousingpayments>

Residents who have not previously applied for a council tax reduction are also encouraged to check their eligibility, here: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/4813/Council-Tax-reductions>

Residents are also reminded about the county council's money advice service, which supports people who are experiencing financial difficulties and offers guidance on bills, benefits and debt. Further information is available here: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/moneyadvice>

### **Prostate testing and advice event**

Third sector organisation Prostate Cymru is hosting a public event in Brecon in April providing tests for prostate-specific antigen (PSA), which when present in high levels in the blood might indicate prostate cancer. Testing may be recommended for people who have symptoms that could indicate prostate cancer, and advice and information will be provided at the event.

The event is on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April at Brecon Rugby Club. No times have been provided. People are invited to register an expression of interest using the QR code on the attached flyer, or contact Prostate Cymru using the contact details also on the flyer.

### **Avian influenza disease control zone extended into Powys**

Disease control zones declared after a case of Highly Pathogenic Avian influenza H5N1 was confirmed at a premises near Kington, Herefordshire have now been extended into Powys. A 3km protection zone and a 10km surveillance zone have been imposed by Declaratory Order around the Kington premises to limit the risk of disease spread. A part of the 3km protection zone and 10km surveillance zone, declared by Defra and by Welsh Government, extends into Powys.

Within this zone, bird movements and gatherings are restricted and all holdings where birds are kept must be declared.

Powys County Council's Animal Health Team are notifying Powys bird owners within the 3km protection zone and the wider 10km surveillance zone of their obligation to comply with the measures set out in the Declaratory Order.

Bird owners outside the protection zone and surveillance zone are reminded that the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) will remain in force across Wales until further notice.

This means all bird keepers in Wales (whether they have pet birds, or a commercial or a backyard flock) must until further notice continue to abide by the mandatory biosecurity

measures, and complete the mandatory biosecurity self-assessment checklist. This includes refraining from touching or picking up any sick or dead birds.

Responsibilities of people who keep birds:

All keepers of birds are asked to:

- be vigilant for signs of the disease, such as increased mortality, respiratory distress and drops in food or water intake, or egg production.
- consult their veterinary surgeon in the first instance if birds are unwell.

If a keeper or their vet suspect that avian influenza could be causing illness in their birds, the keeper must, by law, report this to the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

Keepers must apply strict biosecurity measures to prevent any materials, equipment, vehicles, clothing, feed or bedding that could have been contaminated from wild birds coming onto their premises.

Anyone who finds dead wild birds of any species should report them to the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77.

Public health advice remains that the risk to human health from the virus is very low and food standards bodies advise that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers.

Latest updates on Avian influenza can be found at: <https://gov.wales/avian-influenza-bird-flu-latest-update>

### **Contacting the county council**

Powys county council aims to be an open, accessible and responsive council. Set out below are a range of ways to contact the council, report faults or issues with council services, and make a complaint.

Opening a My Powys Account

Residents can use a My Powys account for a range of activity, including:

- Keeping a record of requests and reports, and information obtained
- Viewing and tracking requests and reports
- Pre-filling forms with address and contact information
- Expediting phone calls by enabling the call handler to view and track requests and reports
- Enabling the council to send residents updates about their requests and reports

Residents can open a My Powys account here: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/login>

The pathway is via the 'Log in/Register' function at the top right of the county council's homepage, here: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/>

All residents, with or without a My Powys account, can contact the council by any of the following means:

#### Contacting the council online

- Use the online live Chat function on the website's Contact Us page, here: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/contact>

The pathway is via the 'Contact Us' function at the top right of the council's homepage.

- Identify the email address for the service required and contact the service direct (on the same Contact Us page, scroll down to the grid of different services at the base of the page)

#### Contacting the council by phone

General Enquiries: 01597 827 460

Enquiries for a specific person whom the resident can name: 01597 826 000

#### Contacting the council in person

Several transactions with the council can be undertaken at local libraries, Monday to Friday.

Library staff can signpost residents to the council services required and put them in touch with the appropriate council staff member/s for their enquiry.

Information about all Powys local libraries is available here:

<https://www.storipowys.org.uk/find-a-library>

#### Reporting an issue

Residents can report a range of service-related issues directly via the council's website, here: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/816/Report>

Pathway: From the county council's homepage, scroll to the first row of options below the search bar. 'Report' is second on the left. The function enables the uploading of photographs, also.

#### Complaining and commenting about a service

Residents can submit complaints and comments about any council service directly via the 'Contact Us' page of the county council's website, here: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/complaints>

Scroll down to the grid of options at the base of the page. The complaints and comments function is the first option in the second row in the grid. There is a separate function (second grid on the second row) specifically for complaints and comments about Social Services.

Complaining formally in this way ensures that the complaint is logged and can be tracked by the resident making the complaint.

All of the functions outlined above can be performed via a resident's My Powys account, and 'as a guest' for anyone without an account.

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## **1. Council Information**

### **Powys County Council Budget 2025/26**

Further to the briefing for residents on the draft budget shared with the community council in January (attached for reference), the county council discussed and approved the draft budget for 2025/26 at a meeting of Full Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February.

The draft budget included a proposed Council Tax increase of 8.9% to close the budget gap remaining after the Welsh Government Settlement, income from grants, fees and charges, and proposed savings and cost avoidance totalling £12.2 million had been factored in.

The briefing noted that local authority leaders across Wales were lobbying Welsh Government to implement a funding floor for local authority Settlements. In recognition of the key importance to residents of timely and adequate maintenance and repairs of county roads, the Cabinet proposed, as an additional recommendation in its draft budget on 20<sup>th</sup> February, to transfer all additional monies received as a result of the implementation of a funding floor to the Highways Service.

The funding floor was confirmed by Welsh Government on 20<sup>th</sup> February, published with its Final Budget while the Powys Full Council meeting was underway and confirmed at a percentage increase figure of 3.8%. Powys County Council received additional monies equivalent to the difference between its Settlement percentage increase figure of 3.3% and the floor figure of 3.8%. This amounted to £1.226 million.

Full Council voted to approve the recommendation to transfer the funding to the Highways Service.

Links to the papers, the webcast and the voting results are provided on page 8 below.

## Cabinet and Full Council meetings

### Cabinet met on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 18<sup>th</sup> February and 4<sup>th</sup> March

Cabinet meetings are open to the public and are live-streamed and recorded for public view. The links to the live-streaming and the webcasts, the Minutes, and all documents discussed, are available on the PCC website.

The pathway to access this is:

PCC homepage > My Council (top menu bar) > Committee Meeting Information (select 'Cabinet and Committee Meetings') > Calendar of Meetings > The relevant date and meeting in the calendar grid

The focus of the meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> February was the annual update to the Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan.

The direct link to the page is:

<https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=9138>

Items discussed on 18<sup>th</sup> February included:

- A proposal to close Ysgol Bro Cynllaith, in Llanfyllin, North Powys (decision adjourned)
- A proposal to submit a Strategic Outline Case to Welsh Government for investment to develop a new English-medium primary school to replace the current building at Ysgol Golwg Pen y Fan, Brecon (approved)
- The Local Housing Market Assessment, conducted by Housing Services to estimate housing need in the county until 2037 (approved).

The direct link to the page is:

<https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=9144>

Items discussed on 4<sup>th</sup> March included:

- Two papers related to the promotion of Welsh Language in Powys (one approved, one to be brought back with costings)
- The proposed Business Rates Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme for the financial year 2025-26 (approved)
- The Financial and Capital Forecasts for the financial year 2024/25
- A proposed Charter for Families Bereaved Through Public Tragedy (adopted)
- A report on the activity of the Corporate Safeguarding Board

The direct link to the page is:

<https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=8933>

Full Council met on 20<sup>th</sup> February and 6<sup>th</sup> March

The focus of the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> February was the proposed budget for 2025/26, as published on 14<sup>th</sup> January, amended to reflect recommendations made by scrutiny committees and the Finance Panel accepted by the Cabinet. As noted above, the budget was approved.

Also discussed and approved was the Corporate Strategic and Equality Plan agreed by Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

The papers for the meeting, including the committee and panel recommendations, the minutes, the webcast and the voting results, can be viewed by following the pathway:

PCC homepage > My Council (top menu bar) > Committee Meeting Information (select 'Cabinet and Committee Meetings') > Calendar of Meetings > The relevant date and meeting in the calendar grid.

The direct link to the page is:

<https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=149&MId=8967>

Items discussed by Full Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March included:

- The proposed Council Tax Resolution and Council Tax charges for 2025/26
- A proposed virement amendment to the budget for 2024/25 to remove a request for use of the Housing Revenue Account reserve which is no longer required
- The proposed Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26 setting out the methods by which employee salaries are determined, as required by the Localism Act 2011.

Motions discussed at the meeting comprised:

- A motion that Full Council endorses the report titled The Road Safety Crisis in Powys authored in 2024 by Cllrs Charlton and Church and submitted to Welsh Government; endorses an approach to work with motorcyclists to improve their safety and with partner agencies to improve road safety for all users; and calls on Welsh Government to fund a trial of the Perceptual Rider Information for Maximising Expertise and Enjoyment (PRIMES) motorcycle safety scheme in Powys.
- A motion that Full Council supports the work of a campaign group, Protect Bronglais Services, to prevent reduction of services at Bronglais Hospital in Aberystwyth

Members of the public are invited to submit questions to Full Council. Questions are submitted and responded to in writing in advance of the meeting. Questioners are able to submit one supplementary question each and also to attend Full Council to ask their supplementary questions. They are not required to give advance notice either of their intention to ask a supplementary question or of the question itself.



Questions from members of the public on 6<sup>th</sup> March comprised:

- A request that the county council ensures that none of its pension fund investments are at risk of benefiting companies that may be linked to potential war crimes
- A question challenging the compliance of the council's Home to School Transport Policy with the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure
- A question challenging the lack of 3G football pitch provision in Powys
- A question challenging road surface maintenance of a specific Powys unclassified road.

The papers for the meeting, the minutes, the answers to the questions from residents, the voting results and the webcast, can be accessed via the pathway outlined above.

The direct link to the page is:

<https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=149&MId=8968>

A PDF about public participation at council meetings is available here:

<https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD672&ID=672&RPID=9845814>

It can be reached via the following pathway:

Powys home page > Contact Us (top right) > Consultations (bottom left) > Get Involved (bottom left) > Document Public Participation (bottom right)

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**9<sup>th</sup> March 2025**