Welshpool Town Council, The Vicarage Gardens, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DD
Tel: 01938 553142 Email: office@welshpooltowncouncil.gov.uk

DRAFT

Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee held on 18/11/2026 6:30pm in Council Chamber, Welshpool Town Hall.

PRESENT:

Cllr David France
Cllr Morag Bailey (Chair)
Cllr Phil Pritchard
Cllr Revd William Rowell

Apologies for absence:

Cllr Alison Davies
Cllr Richard Church

Absent:

Also in attendance:

Richard Williams - Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer

FG181126/1. WELCOME, CODE OF CONDUCT AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and reminded them of their obligations under the Members' Code of Conduct. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Alison Davies and Cllr Richard Church.

FG181126/2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

FG181126/3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

FG181126/4. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

FG181126/4.1 Previous Minutes

RESOLVED
That the minutes from the meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee on 21/10/2026 be approved.

WTCM1005 - Proposed by Cllr Revd William Rowell, seconded by Cllr Morag Bailey. A recorded vote was requested.

For: David France, Morag Bailey, Revd William Rowell
Against: Phil Pritchard

Abstain:

FG181126/4.2 Matters Arising

The Town Clerk confirmed that the recommendations from the previous meeting had been approved by Full Council.

The policies adopted by Council had subsequently been circulated to staff and incorporated into the Council's policy schedule.

FG181126/5. BUSINESS PLANNING & FINANCIAL MATTERS

FG181126/5.1 Council Accounts (October - Period 7)

Members received the Council's financial reports for October 2026, including the cash position and detailed income and expenditure report.

The Town Clerk reported that the Council's cash position remained favourable compared with the corresponding period in 2023/24. However, significant expenditure associated with the Pride in Place programme was anticipated during November, ahead of the next precept instalment in December.

Members scrutinised the income and expenditure report and raised the following matters:
- Consumables/Open Spaces: Members queried significant expenditure against this heading and whether sufficient provision had been made in the 2027/28 budget. The Town Clerk to investigate the expenditure and report back, noting that increased line-marking costs had already been reflected in the proposed budget.
- Commission Costs/Information Centre: The Town Clerk explained that increased expenditure reflected higher sales activity, particularly relating to ticket sales through the Welshpool Information Centre.
- Repairs and Maintenance/Office: The overspend related to necessary repairs to the office toilet, for which no specific provision had been made in the current year's budget. A maintenance provision had been included in the draft budget for 2027/28.
- Health and Safety/Admin & Management: The Town Clerk explained that expenditure included evacuation equipment and two additional evacuation drag mats recommended following staff training.
- Fireworks/Fireworks: The Town Clerk reported that the November fireworks display had generated approximately £3,100 in donations, around £900 more than the previous year. Additional sales income had also been received, which was expected to offset increased expenditure associated with the event.

Members expressed their appreciation for the clarity and presentation of the Council's financial reports, which assisted effective financial scrutiny.

FG181126/5.2 Payment of Invoices - November

Members considered the schedule of invoices presented for payment.

RECOMMENDED
That the payment of invoices as set out in the schedule for November 2026 be approved.

WTCM1006 - Proposed by Cllr Revd William Rowell, seconded by Cllr Morag Bailey

FG181126/5.3 Scrutiny of Payments

Cllr Morag Bailey reported on the scrutiny of October's payments.

The review included examination of payroll, overtime payments and a sample of three supplier invoices. It was confirmed that payroll payments were accurate, that all payments had been made to the

appropriate employees and that overtime payments corresponded with the approved records.

The supplier invoices examined were also found to be accurate.

The Chair highlighted difficulties with the accounting system's handling of credit notes, which made the audit trail unnecessarily complicated. This was identified as a system limitation rather than an error in the underlying transactions.

FG181126/5.4 Interim Strategic Plan Action Plan

Members considered progress against the actions allocated to the Finance & Governance Committee under the Council's Strategic Plan.

The Town Clerk reported that discussions with external parties in relation to action FS1 remained outstanding. However, contact had recently been made with relevant stakeholders and it was hoped that progress could be made ahead of the forthcoming budget decisions.

FG181126/6. DRAFT 2 BUDGET 2027/28

FG181126/6.1 Budget Consultation 2027/28

Members received the findings of the public consultation undertaken as part of the preparation of the 2027/28 budget.

The Town Clerk reported that 13 responses had been received. Whilst the responses provided some indication of participants' priorities, the limited response rate meant that the findings could not be regarded as representative of the wider Welshpool community.

Members noted that the consultation had been promoted through various channels, including social media, printed materials and local publications. The Town Clerk acknowledged that future consultations would benefit from a more robust engagement strategy to encourage wider participation.

FG181126/6.2 Fees & Charges 2027/28

Members considered the Town Clerk's report on the annual review of fees and charges for 2027/28.

The Town Clerk explained that the Council's Financial Regulations required an annual review and that the proposed changes sought to balance affordability with the increasing costs of service provision.

Particular attention was drawn to the operating costs of the Town Hall, where some bookings did not fully recover the costs incurred by the Council.

The proposed changes included increases to commercial room hire charges, a 5% increase in indoor and outdoor market charges, and amendments to various administrative and service charges. It was proposed that the existing non-commercial room hire rates remain unchanged, following the changes introduced in the previous financial year.

Members noted that the Charter Market charge would remain at £1 per foot and that public toilets would continue to be provided free of charge.

Allotment fees were excluded from the immediate review and would be considered separately in accordance with the applicable notice requirements.

The Town Clerk also explained the proposed replacement of the existing late-night hourly room hire

supplement with a flat charge for bookings extending beyond 10:00pm. Members discussed the possibility of introducing a weekend booking supplement to reflect additional staffing and overtime costs. It was considered appropriate to defer determining the level of any weekend supplement until further work had been completed on staffing arrangements and overtime costs.

Members also discussed the VAT treatment of Town Hall lettings and the implications for the Council's wider Town Hall transformation project.

RECOMMENDED
That the proposed schedule of fees and charges be adopted for the 2027/28 financial year.

WTCM1007 - Proposed by Cllr Revd William Rowell, seconded by Cllr Morag Bailey

FG181126/6.3 Draft 2 Budget 2027/28

Members considered Draft 2 of the Council's budget for 2027/28.

The Town Clerk outlined the principal amendments made since Draft 1, including:
- Reprofiling expenditure associated with the Town Hall transformation project following confirmation of National Lottery Heritage Fund development funding.
- Adjustments to the proposed provision for Mayoral and senior councillor allowances.
- Additional provision for Christmas lighting maintenance, together with anticipated sponsorship income.
- A revised budget for the Continental Market.
- Increased provision associated with the Tour de France Grand D??part 2027.
- Adjustments to vehicle leasing costs and a reduction of £5,000 in the proposed street furniture maintenance budget.

The Committee considered the following areas within its remit.

Members discussed the proposed annual transfer of £20,000 to General Reserves. The Town Clerk reminded Members that the Council's adopted Reserves Policy provided for a target equivalent to six months' expenditure and that the Council had not yet reached this level. Members expressed support for maintaining the proposed contribution, recognising the importance of financial resilience and the need to continue rebuilding reserves.

Members considered the proposed £8,000 allocation for Special Projects. It was recognised that the budget provided flexibility to respond to unforeseen requirements arising during the financial year. Members supported retaining the proposed allocation, whilst emphasising that expenditure should remain appropriately controlled and should not be used to supplement ordinary committee budgets.

Members discussed the proposed £250 budget for Welsh language provision and the potential additional requirements arising from the Place Plan project. The possibility of carrying forward any unspent provision from the current financial year was discussed to supplement the available budget in 2027/28.

Members also discussed the proposed Town Centre Ranger salary provision, anticipated increases in software costs and the need for sufficient budgetary provision for future elections and by-elections.

The Town Clerk advised that the election budget would be reviewed further in Draft 3, reflecting the Council's recent experience of by-elections and the forthcoming ordinary elections in May 2027.

Members expressed general satisfaction with the draft budget and the approach taken to its preparation.

FG181126/7. POLICY

FG181126/7.1 Eye Tests Statement

Members considered the introduction of a formal statement setting out the Council's arrangements for reimbursing employees for eye tests and corrective appliances required for display screen equipment work.

The Town Clerk explained the Council's obligations under the Display Screen Equipment Regulations and the need to establish a consistent approach to reimbursement.

Members discussed the merits of a fixed reimbursement allowance compared with payment of the actual cost of an eye test.

Consideration was also given to employer voucher schemes and the importance of allowing employees to access local opticians.

Members agreed that further information was required before determining an appropriate reimbursement level.

FG181126/8. OTHER MATTERS

FG181126/8.1 Our Welshpool Newsletter

Members reviewed the distribution and reception of the latest edition of the Our Welshpool newsletter.

The Town Clerk reported that feedback had generally been positive, with residents welcoming the information provided about the Council's activities and local events.

However, concerns remained regarding delivery to some households. Members were encouraged to report addresses where the newsletter had not been received so that delivery issues could be raised with the distributor within the relevant reporting period.

The Town Clerk acknowledged an error in the published date of the fireworks display and apologised for the mistake.

Members discussed opportunities to improve the promotion of community organisations and recurring activities, whilst recognising the distinction between the newsletter's events listings and wider community information.

FG181126/8.2 Local Elections 2027 - Public Awareness and Engagement Campaign

Members considered a report proposing a public awareness and engagement campaign ahead of the ordinary Town Council elections in May 2027.

The Town Clerk outlined proposals for a "Your Town, Your Voice" campaign designed to raise awareness of the role of Town Councillors and encourage a wider range of residents to consider standing for election.

The proposed campaign included printed information, promotional banners, dedicated website content, social media activity and opportunities for prospective candidates to learn more about the role. It was also proposed to hold information sessions in February 2027, including daytime and evening opportunities, and to engage with local community and voluntary organisations.

Members welcomed the initiative and emphasised the importance of making information widely accessible, including through local shops, community venues and organisations. It was suggested that

serving Councillors could contribute by sharing their experiences of the role, the responsibilities involved and the benefits of serving their community.

RECOMMENDED
That the proposed Your Town. Your Voice. campaign ahead of the may 2027 Town Council elections be approved and officers be authorised to implement it.

WTCM1008 - Proposed by Cllr Morag Bailey, seconded by Cllr Revd William Rowell

FG181126/9. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA & DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that there would be no Finance & Governance Committee meeting in December.

The next meeting would take place on Wednesday 20 January 2027 at 6:30pm, when the Committee would consider the final draft budget for 2027/28 and make its recommendations to Full Council.

FG181126/10. CONFIDENTIAL SESSION - EXCLUSION

Cllr Phil Pritchard left the meeting.

RESOLVED
That members of the public and press be requested to leave the meeting by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

WTCM1009 - Proposed by Cllr Revd William Rowell, seconded by Cllr Morag Bailey

FG181126/11. TOWN CENTRE MAINTENANCE [CONFIDENTIAL]

Members considered the recommendations of the Operations & Development Committee concerning future arrangements for Town Centre maintenance.

Following consideration of the options available, Members supported the establishment of a dedicated Town Centre Ranger in principle. However, it was considered that further work was required to determine the most appropriate delivery model, including the flexibility of the role and seasonal requirements.

RECOMMENDED
That the establishment of a Town Centre Ranger was supported in principle and that further work be undertaken to explore the most appropriate arrangements for the role before a final decision is made.

WTCM1010 - Proposed by Cllr Morag Bailey, seconded by Cllr Revd William Rowell

FG181126/12. STAFFING [CONFIDENTIAL]

Members received and considered the Town Clerk's confidential staffing report, which provided an update on staffing matters, service delivery, training and development.

Members noted the report and the ongoing work to support effective staffing arrangements and service continuity.

The meeting finished at 20:09.

Signed: Dated:

Councillor Morag Bailey (Chair)

Decision/Action Log

ID		Assigned
WTCM1005	**RESOLUTION** **FG181126/4.1 Previous Minutes** That the minutes from the meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee on 21/10/2026 be approved.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM1006	**RECOMMENDATION** **FG181126/5.2 Payment of Invoices - November** That the payment of invoices as set out in the schedule for November 2026 be approved.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM1007	**RECOMMENDATION** **FG181126/6.2 Fees & Charges 2027/28** That the proposed schedule of fees and charges be adopted for the 2027/28 financial year.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM1008	**RECOMMENDATION** **FG181126/8.2 Local Elections 2027 - Public Awareness and Engagement Campaign** That the proposed Your Town. Your Voice. campaign ahead of the may 2027 Town Council elections be approved and officers be authorised to implement it.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM1009	**RESOLUTION** **FG181126/10 Confidential Session - Exclusion** That members of the public and press be requested to leave the meeting by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM1010	**RECOMMENDATION** **FG181126/11 Town Centre Maintenance** That the establishment of a Town Centre Ranger was supported in principle and that further work be undertaken to explore the most appropriate arrangements for the role before a final decision is made.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer