Welshpool Town Council, The Vicarage Gardens, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DD
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DRAFT

Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee held on 21/10/2026 6:30pm in Council Chamber, Welshpool Town Hall.

PRESENT:

Cllr Alison Davies
Cllr David France
Cllr Morag Bailey (Chair)
Cllr Phil Pritchard
Cllr Richard Church
Cllr Revd William Rowell

Apologies for absence:

Cllr Carol Robinson

Absent:

Also in attendance:

Cllr Phil Owen
Richard Williams - Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer

FG211026/1. WELCOME, CODE OF CONDUCT AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and reminded attendees to show respect for all throughout the meeting, in line with the obligations of the Code of Conduct. Apologies were received from Cllr Carol Robinson.

FG211026/2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

FG211026/3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

FG211026/4. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

FG211026/4.1 Previous Minutes

RESOLVED
To approve the minutes from the meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee on 16/09/2026.

WTCM946 - Proposed by Cllr Alison Davies, seconded by Cllr Revd William Rowell

FG211026/4.2 Matters Arising

The Town Clerk is still yet to respond to the query raised regarding archiving. The recommendations were all agreed by Full Council.

FG211026/5. BUSINESS PLANNING & FINANCIAL MATTERS

FG211026/5.1 Council Accounts (September - Period 6)

Members scrutinised the Council's accounts for September 2026 (Period 6) and welcomed the positive financial performance at the halfway point of the financial year.

Members observed that overall income was ahead of budget expectations, while expenditure remained slightly below the anticipated level. The Committee particularly welcomed improvements in income generated through the Town Hall, Welshpool Information Centre and Council events.

It was noted that Welshpool Information Centre had achieved approximately 81.6% of its annual income budget by the end of Period 6, while Carnival income had significantly exceeded expectations, supported by fees and donations.

Members raised queries regarding expenditure, including:
- Open Spaces – Consumables: The Town Clerk confirmed that expenditure related to the bulk purchase of line-marking paint for sports pitches.
- Open Spaces – Legal Fees: The Town Clerk explained that the expenditure related to legal work undertaken in connection with the Rugby and Cricket Club clubhouse agreement.
- Town Transformation – Legal Fees: The Town Clerk confirmed that expenditure of approximately £1,700 related to the first registration of the Town Hall with HM Land Registry.

Members thanked the Town Clerk and staff for their work in improving the Council's financial position and welcomed the increased income being generated across Council services.

RESOLVED
To note the bank balances, accounts and overspends for Period 6.

WTCM947 - Proposed by Cllr Alison Davies, seconded by Cllr Revd William Rowell

FG211026/5.2 Payment of Invoices - October

Members scrutinised the schedule of invoices presented for October 2026.

A query was raised regarding expenditure associated with the Open Doors heritage initiative, particularly the passport booklet and the overall value of the event. The Town Clerk explained that the initiative had been a positive first experience, enabling residents and visitors to access parts of the Town Hall not normally open to the public. However, there were lessons to be learned regarding the organisation of the passport scheme, staffing arrangements and the involvement of volunteers.

RECOMMENDED
To approve payment of invoices for October 2026.

WTCM948 - Proposed by Cllr Alison Davies, seconded by Cllr Richard Church

FG211026/5.3 Scrutiny of Payments

As Cllr Phil Owen was not in attendance at this point, no update was given but Members discussed electing for October, November and December.

RECOMMENDED
To elect the following members to perform scrutiny of payments exercise:
- Cllr Morag Bailey - October 26 in November
- Cllr Alison Davies - November 26 in December
- TBC - December 26 in January
- Cllr Revd William Rowell - January 27 in February

WTCM949 - Proposed by Cllr Morag Bailey, seconded by Cllr Alison Davies

FG211026/5.4 Interim Strategic Plan Action Plan

Cllr Phil Owen joined the meeting.

Members reviewed the progress made against the Interim Strategic Plan Action Plan and welcomed the number of actions completed or progressing.

The Town Clerk reported that costings remained outstanding in relation to action FS1, despite regular requests for an update. Members expressed concern regarding the delay and the importance of progressing the matter before July 2027.

FG211026/5.5 Draft 1 Budget 2027/28

The Town Clerk presented Draft 1 of the Council's budget for 2027/28, outlining the main changes and assumptions across the Council's services.

Members were advised that the draft remained at an early stage and would be subject to further consideration by the relevant committees, alongside the results of the ongoing public budget consultation.

The Town Clerk highlighted several changes, including:
- Town Hall: Utility budgets had been reprofiled to reflect actual consumption, with adjustments to anticipated income, including the telecommunications mast lease and Assembly Room bookings.
- Operations and Open Spaces: Staffing and overtime provisions had been reviewed, with changes to maintenance, equipment servicing, sports pitch works and waste disposal budgets.
- Biodiversity and Street Furniture: Additional provision had been included for the ongoing maintenance of new planting, street furniture and public realm improvements.
- Public Toilets: Savings were anticipated from revised staffing arrangements and reduced electricity consumption following the installation of solar panels, although other operating costs had increased.
- Events: Increased provisional budgets had been included for Carnival, the Winter Festival, Christmas lighting and preparations for the Tour de France in July 2027, subject to further consideration.
- Town Transformation: Provision had been included for the Council's anticipated commitments associated with the Town Hall regeneration project.

Members discussed the adequacy of the proposed budgets and raised several matters for further consideration, including the level of provision for repairs to street furniture, the use of the heading Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience, and the anticipated financial implications of inflation and changes to the Council Tax base.

The Town Clerk confirmed that a report concerning the proposed Town Centre Ranger would be considered by both the Finance & Governance Committee and Operations & Development Committee in November.

Members also discussed the financial provision for Carnival and other events, recognising the need to balance public expectations, the increasing cost of delivering events and opportunities to secure additional income.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the comments received would inform the preparation of Draft 2, which would be presented in November 2026.

FG211026/5.3 Scrutiny of Payments

As Cllr Phil Owen had joined the meeting, the Chair allowed this item to be continued. Cllr Phil Owen reported that he had undertaken the quarterly scrutiny of payments, examining four transactions against the relevant accounting records and supporting documentation. He confirmed that all transactions examined were satisfactory and no discrepancies had been identified.

FG211026/6. POLICY

FG211026/6.1 Draft Maternity & Family Friendly Policy

Members considered the draft Maternity & Family Friendly Policy, which had been prepared following the Council's assessment against the Financial Governance Toolkit.

Members welcomed the comprehensive nature of the policy and discussed two areas requiring clarification.

Firstly, Members considered the arrangements for annual leave accrued during maternity leave, including whether outstanding leave could be carried forward into a subsequent leave year. The Town Clerk agreed to seek clarification from the Council's HR advisers regarding the applicable contractual provisions and to ensure the policy provided appropriate clarity.

Secondly, Members discussed the importance of maintaining supportive contact with employees during maternity leave. It was agreed that the wording should be amended from "may contact" to "will contact", while retaining the employee's ability to request that contact be limited.

RECOMMENDED
To adopt the draft Maternity & Family Friendly Policy, subject to the agreed amendment regarding contact during maternity leave and clarification of the annual leave provisions.

WTCM950 - Proposed by Cllr Morag Bailey, seconded by Cllr Revd William Rowell

FG211026/6.2 Draft AI Policy

Members considered the draft Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy, which had been developed to establish appropriate safeguards for the use of AI tools in Council business.

Members welcomed the concise nature of the policy and discussed the importance of ensuring that information generated through AI was checked for accuracy and that confidential or sensitive information was appropriately protected.

The Town Clerk explained that the Council already utilised certain AI facilities within its existing software systems, including Microsoft 365 Copilot, and that appropriate safeguards were necessary when using publicly available AI platforms.

Members also discussed the potential implications of AI for staffing and employment. It was acknowledged that AI could improve efficiency and support staff in their duties, but that there was no current intention to replace employees through its use. Members agreed that a specific provision regarding replacement of staff was not required at this stage.

The Committee recognised that AI technology was developing rapidly and that the policy would require periodic review.

During the discussion, Members also raised the need for a dedicated Cyber Security Policy, including appropriate awareness and training for staff and councillors. The Town Clerk agreed to investigate this further, including opportunities to incorporate cyber security awareness into the Council's training arrangements.

RECOMMENDED
To adopt the draft AI Policy.

WTCM951 - Proposed by Cllr Revd William Rowell, seconded by Cllr Alison Davies

FG211026/7. OTHER MATTERS

FG211026/7.1 Digital Engagement - Q2 2026

Cllr Phil Pritchard left the meeting.

Members received the Digital Engagement Report for Quarter 2 of 2026 and welcomed the significant level of engagement achieved across the Council's digital platforms, with content receiving almost one million views during the reporting period.

Members particularly welcomed the engagement generated by communications relating to town centre improvements and regeneration proposals.

FG211026/7.2 Our Welshpool Newsletter

The Town Clerk provided an update on the distribution arrangements for the latest edition of the Our Welshpool newsletter.

Members were advised that the 12-page newsletter had been prepared for distribution by Royal Mail during the week commencing 2 November 2026, in accordance with the Committee's previous instructions.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the newsletter would also be made available online, with a social media announcement scheduled to coincide with distribution. Residents who did not receive a copy would be encouraged to contact the Council so that delivery issues could be reported to Royal Mail within the relevant reporting period.

Members discussed the distribution of surplus copies and suggested that these could be made available through local estate agents and community facilities to help reach residents and prospective newcomers to Welshpool.

FG211026/8. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA & DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Items for future agenda include a Cyber Security Policy, a discussions on politically restricted posts and Saturday employment opportunities for young people. The next meeting of Finance & Governance Committee will be held on 18th November 2026 at 6:30pm. Cllr Alison Davies gave her apologies for the next meeting.

FG211026/9. CONFIDENTIAL SESSION - EXCLUSION

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.

WTCM952 - Proposed by Cllr Revd William Rowell, seconded by Cllr Alison Davies

FG211026/10. STAFFING [CONFIDENTIAL]

The Town Clerk summarised the report and updated the committee on staffing matters. Members also had sight of the Town Clerk's appraisal.

The meeting finished at 20:37.

Signed: Dated:

Councillor Morag Bailey (Chair)

Decision/Action Log

ID		Assigned
WTCM946	**RESOLUTION** **FG211026/4.1 Previous Minutes** To approve the minutes from the meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee on 16/09/2026.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM947	**RESOLUTION** **FG211026/5.1 Council Accounts (September - Period 6)** To note the bank balances, accounts and overspends for Period 6.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM948	**RECOMMENDATION** **FG211026/5.2 Payment of Invoices - October** To approve payment of invoices for October 2026.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM949	**RECOMMENDATION** **FG211026/5.3 Scrutiny of Payments** To elect the following members to perform scrutiny of payments exercise: - Cllr Morag Bailey - October 26 in November - Cllr Alison Davies - November 26 in December - TBC - December 26 in January - Cllr Revd William Rowell - January 27 in February	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM950	**RECOMMENDATION** **FG211026/6.1 Draft Maternity & Family Friendly Policy** To adopt the draft Maternity & Family Friendly Policy, subject to the agreed amendment regarding contact during maternity leave and clarification of the annual leave provisions.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM951	**RECOMMENDATION** **FG211026/6.2 Draft AI Policy** To adopt the draft AI Policy.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM952	**RESOLUTION** **FG211026/9 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