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

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

PRESENT:

Cllr Chris Davies
Cllr David France
Cllr Kelly Meredith
Cllr Nick Howells
Cllr Phil Owen
Cllr Phil Pritchard
Cllr Revd William Rowell

Apologies for absence:

Cllr Estelle Bleivas

Absent:

Also in attendance:

Cllr Vix Davis
Richard Williams - Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Paul McGrath - Operations Manager

OD111126/1. WELCOME, CODE OF CONDUCT AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and reminded those present of their obligations under the Members' Code of Conduct. Apologies were received from Cllr Estelle Bleivas.

OD111126/2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

OD111126/3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

OD111126/4. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

OD111126/4.1 Previous Minutes

RESOLVED
That the minutes from the meeting of the Operations & Development Committee on 14/10/2026 be approved.

WTCM997 - Proposed by Cllr Phil Owen, seconded by Cllr Chris Davies

OD111126/4.2 Matters Arising

The Chair raised concerns regarding the consideration of Committee recommendations by Full Council, referring to recommendations from the previous meeting which had subsequently been amended or not supported.

The Town Clerk clarified that two recommendations had been approved as submitted. The Chair requested clarification of the procedural position, particularly whether Full Council could amend a Committee recommendation or whether it should be referred back to the Committee if not approved.

Cllr Kelly Meredith joined the meeting.

OD111126/5. LAND, BUILDINGS & ASSETS

OD111126/5.1 General Update

The Committee received an update from the Operations Manager covering Council buildings, open spaces, maintenance activities and recent events.

Members were informed that the Town Hall continued to accommodate a range of bookings, including an antiques event, private functions, the presentation of the Honorary Freedom of the Town to Adele Nicoll and a National Trust event.

The Committee received an update on preparations for and delivery of recent events, including the Halloween Parade, Fireworks Display and Remembrance commemorations. Members expressed their appreciation to staff and volunteers for their work, particularly in relation to the Fireworks Display, which had received considerable positive feedback.

Maintenance works undertaken in preparation for Remembrance included hedge cutting, pruning, grass cutting, pathway clearance, cleaning of commemorative silhouettes and the installation of flags and lighting. The Operations Manager advised that a remaining tree stump within the Memorial Garden would be removed and replaced with a Japanese Acer, selected for its manageable size and seasonal appearance.

The Committee was further advised that:
- Installation of the Christmas lights was nearing completion with one final run left to be installed. Electrical infrastructure had been serviced and relevant safety checks undertaken.
- Electrical improvement works and periodic electrical testing at the Town Hall remained ongoing.
- The annual servicing of the upper market entrance door had been arranged.
- New dog waste bins had been installed around the town, with an additional bin and bag dispenser proposed for Maes y Dre.
- Concrete bases had been installed for new picnic benches at the Burgess Lands and Little Henfaes.
- Replacement fencing at Little Henfaes playground and a replacement gatepost at Maes y Dre had been ordered following damage.
- End-of-season maintenance at Maes y Dre had been completed.
- The Council's honours boards had been updated.

A query was raised regarding cigarette disposal facility outside the Town Hall.

OD111126/5.3 Footfall Counters - Quote

The Town Clerk presented a quotation for the installation of footfall counters, explaining that the project formed part of the Council's Strategic Plan commitments to improve monitoring of the market and visitor information services. Members were reminded that previous funding arrangements had not progressed, requiring an alternative solution to be identified.

The proposed system would provide three fixed counters, located at the Information Centre entrance and the two market entrances, together with a portable rechargeable counter for use at Council events.

RECOMMENDED
That the quotation for the provision and installation of footfall counters for £2,386 be approved.

WTCM998 - Proposed by Cllr Phil Owen, seconded by Cllr Revd William Rowell

OD111126/5.4 RPII Training - Playground Inspection

The Town Clerk presented a proposal for playground inspection training and examinations through the Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII), at a cost of £2,815.

Members were advised that the training was necessary to maintain the competency and qualifications of staff responsible for playground inspections. The proposed arrangements included initial examination and qualification for relevant staff, together with renewal of an existing qualification.

The Town Clerk explained that the expenditure exceeded his delegated financial authority and therefore required Committee approval.

RECOMMENDED
That the quotation for the RPII training for £2,815 be approved.

WTCM999 - Proposed by Cllr Revd William Rowell, seconded by Cllr Phil Owen

OD111126/6. BUSINESS PLANNING & FINANCIAL MATTERS

OD111126/6.1 Interim Strategic Plan Action Plan

The Town Clerk presented the updated Strategic Plan Action Plan.

Members were advised that progress had been made against a number of actions, including the footfall monitoring project, which could now be returned to an in-progress status following the Committee's approval of the required equipment.

The Town Clerk also confirmed that the successful award of National Lottery Heritage Fund development funding for the Town Hall transformation project could now be reflected in the action plan.

The installation of additional dog waste bins was nearing completion, after which the relevant action could be recorded as completed.

OD111126/6.2 Budget and Committee Finance (Month 7)

The Town Clerk presented the Month 7 financial monitoring report, drawing attention to variances against the approved budget.

A query was received regarding progress regarding the non-domestic rating assessment of Maes y Dre. The Town Clerk confirmed that enquiries remained outstanding. The Town Clerk also advised that he was reviewing the Town Hall's rating assessment, particularly the classification of the premises and the proportion of the assessment attributable to the market.

OD111126/7. DRAFT 2 BUDGET 2027/28

OD111126/7.1 Budget Consultation 2027/28

The Town Clerk presented the results of the public consultation undertaken as part of the 2027/28 budget setting process.

Members were advised that 13 responses had been received. The Town Clerk emphasised that the limited number of responses could not be regarded as representative of the wider community but nevertheless provided an indication of the priorities expressed by respondents.

Town centre maintenance and cleanliness featured prominently, with eight respondents indicating support for improved maintenance arrangements.

OD111126/7.2 Town Centre Maintenance

The Town Clerk presented a detailed options appraisal concerning the future maintenance of Welshpool town centre.

Members were reminded that the Council was delivering a significant programme of town centre improvements through externally funded investment, including new street furniture, planters, bins and other public realm enhancements. The Town Clerk emphasised that the long-term success of this investment depended upon adequate arrangements for ongoing maintenance. Without additional resources, there was a risk that newly installed assets would deteriorate and the intended benefits of the improvement programme would not be sustained.

The Committee considered five options:
1. Utilising the existing Operations Team.
2. Commissioning targeted maintenance contracts.
3. Engaging a self-employed town centre ranger.
4. Employing a part-time town centre ranger throughout the year.
5. Employing a part-time town centre ranger on a seasonal basis.

The Town Clerk advised that the existing Operations Team did not have sufficient spare capacity to undertake the additional work without affecting its existing responsibilities. Members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of employing a dedicated member of staff compared with engaging external contractors.

Particular consideration was given to the flexibility of a directly employed ranger, the potential difficulties associated with determining employment status for self-employed contractors, and the importance of appropriate contractor competency checks, insurance and health and safety arrangements. Members also considered the potential for the ranger to provide a visible Town Council presence within the town centre, undertake routine maintenance, identify defects and assist with reporting issues to the appropriate authorities.

The Town Clerk advised that a directly employed ranger working approximately 16 hours per week would cost an estimated £13,749 annually, including employment on-costs. Members discussed the possibility of securing contributions from local businesses towards the cost of the service.

RECOMMENDED
That Option 4, the employment of a 16hrs p/w part-time, year-round Town Centre Ranger at SCP 5, be supported at an estimated annual cost of £13,749.

WTCM1000 - Proposed by Cllr David France, seconded by Cllr Phil Owen

OD111126/7.3 Maes y Dre - Charging for Parking

The Town Clerk presented the detailed business case and options appraisal concerning the potential introduction of parking charges at the two existing car parks at Maes y Dre Recreation Ground.

The report had been prepared following an earlier Committee recommendation and subsequent Council resolution requesting further investigation of the proposal, including financial modelling, legal considerations, enforcement arrangements and consultation with affected organisations.

Members were advised that the car parks were used by a range of individuals and organisations, including sports clubs, school and nursery visitors, employees, recreational users and other motorists. The business case examined a charging model operating on weekdays, incorporating an initial free parking period to protect short-stay users and those attending sporting activities. Financial modelling considered different daily tariffs and levels of paid parking demand.

Members were advised that, depending on the level of demand and associated costs, the scheme could generate only limited net income or potentially operate at a loss.

The Town Clerk reported that 17 consultation responses had been received, including submissions from individuals and organisations. Of these, 16 opposed the introduction of charges and one supported the proposal. Concerns raised included the potential impact on sports participation, nursery staff and parents, displacement of parking onto surrounding roads, and the effect on users of the recreation ground.

Members discussed the financial and reputational implications of introducing charges, with several expressing concern that the limited potential income did not justify the likely impact on residents and organisations using the site.

RECOMMENDED
That the Council does not proceed with the proposal to charge for parking at Maes y Dre.

WTCM1001 - Proposed by Cllr Kelly Meredith, seconded by Cllr David France

OD111126/7.4 Draft 2 Budget 2027/28

The Town Clerk presented the second draft of the 2027/28 budget, outlining the principal amendments made since the previous version.

These included revised income projections for the Town Hall and markets, incorporation of the Town Hall transformation project, amendments to playground fencing provision, a reduction in the proposed bus shelter budget and increased provision for Christmas lighting infrastructure. The Town Clerk also highlighted adjustments to waste collection costs, vehicle expenditure and other operational budgets.

A query was received regarding vehicle running costs and the Town Clerk explained the assumptions used in preparing the estimates, including provision relating to the expiry of a vehicle lease in November 2027.

OD111126/8. SERVICES

OD111126/8.1 Markets

None.

OD111126/8.2 The Hub - October 2026

The Committee received the October 2026 update concerning the operation of the Community Hub.

Members paid tribute to the late Merv Haynes, a regular and valued visitor to the Hub, who had passed away in September. Cllr Nick Howells informed Members that Mr Haynes had been a familiar and much-liked presence at the Hub and that his family had expressed their appreciation for the support and companionship he had received.

Members were advised that donations made in his memory had totalled £1,045, which had been generously donated to support the continued operation of the Hub. The Committee expressed its gratitude to Mr Haynes' family and those who had contributed.

Members were also informed that consideration was being given to an appropriate way of commemorating Mr Haynes within the Hub.

OD111126/8.3 Allotments

The Committee received an update on the Council's allotment sites.

Members were advised that the Hospital site remained fully occupied, while vacant plots remained available at the Burgess Lands site, where some additional clearance work was required.

OD111126/8.4 Community Fridge

The Committee received an update on the operation of the Community Fridge and wider food support arrangements within Welshpool.

Members acknowledged that the Community Fridge had not yet achieved the level of use originally anticipated, largely due to difficulties securing regular supplies of surplus food.

It was explained that existing arrangements between supermarkets and food redistribution organisations had limited the Council's ability to obtain surplus food directly from local stores.

The Committee was advised that alternative arrangements were being explored, including potential partnerships which could enable food to be collected and distributed more efficiently.

Members were informed that additional ambient food supplies had been made available to help support residents during the temporary absence of a local food bank service.

Reference was made to the development of a temporary food support initiative in the town and proposals to bring together local organisations involved in food distribution and food poverty.

OD111126/9. PROJECTS & NEW DEVELOPMENTS

OD111126/9.1 Welshpool Town Centre Improvement

The Town Clerk provided an update on progress with the externally funded Welshpool Town Centre Improvement programme.

Members were advised that the project was progressing, although certain elements remained dependent upon obtaining the necessary permissions from Welsh Government.

The Town Clerk expressed disappointment at delays in receiving confirmation regarding proposed tree planting on Broad Street, which had required alternative arrangements to be considered.

The Committee was informed that local contractor SWG had been appointed to undertake installation

works, with arrangements being made for the installation of equipment already delivered.

Further updates included:
- New benches were in manufacture, with delivery anticipated within the following two weeks.
- Planters had been ordered, with delivery expected within approximately four weeks.
- New bins had been received.
- Wayfinding totems were progressing, subject to final approval of mapping and design details.
- The proposed interactive information screen remained subject to formal planning approval.
- New bus stop signage had been produced and was awaiting installation.
- Quotations were being sought for the initial planting of the new town centre planters.

The Town Clerk advised that the Council was working towards completing the relevant expenditure within the funding deadline.

Members were also informed of discussions with Powys County Council concerning the design of bus stop information for other towns. In return for the Town Council's assistance, Powys County Council had indicated that it would provide a replacement bus shelter at Borfa Green. Discussion took place regarding the potential reuse of the existing bus shelter at another suitable location. The Town Clerk agreed to make further enquiries regarding the possibility of relocating the shelter.

OD111126/9.2 Changing Places

The Town Clerk reported that the Changing Places facility project had been completed and requested that the Committee formally close the project.

Cllr Nick Howells outlined his involvement in progressing the project and expressed his satisfaction that Welshpool now had a fully equipped facility capable of meeting the needs of people with complex disabilities. The Town Clerk advised that arrangements for a formal opening were being progressed.

RECOMMENDED
That the Changing Places project be formally completed and closed.

WTCM1002 - Proposed by Cllr Revd William Rowell, seconded by Cllr Nick Howells

OD111126/9.3 Maes y Dre Alternative Premises

The Town Clerk provided a brief update regarding the proposed alternative premises at Maes y Dre.

Members were advised that the project remained dependent upon obtaining the necessary planning permission.

OD111126/10. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA & DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next scheduled meeting would take place on 13th January 2027 at 6:30pm.

OD111126/11. CONFIDENTIAL SESSION - EXCLUSION

Cllr Chris Davies 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.

WTCM1003 - Proposed by Cllr Phil Pritchard, seconded by Cllr Revd William Rowell

OD111126/12. WELSHPOOL TOWN FC - LEGAL AGREEMENTS [CONFIDENTIAL]

The Town Clerk provided an update on the legal arrangements relating to Welshpool Town Football Club. Members considered the proposed arrangements and supported the granting of a lease as opposed to a licence.

RECOMMENDED
That a lease be granted for a period of 15 years to Welshpool Town Football Club to include the pitch, stand and floodlights on the same terms as the current licence.

WTCM1004 - Proposed by Cllr Phil Pritchard, seconded by Cllr Revd William Rowell

The meeting finished at 20:16.

Signed: Dated:

Councillor (Chair)

Decision/Action Log

ID		Assigned
WTCM997	**RESOLUTION** **OD111126/4.1 Previous Minutes** That the minutes from the meeting of the Operations & Development Committee on 14/10/2026 be approved.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM998	**RECOMMENDATION** **OD111126/5.3 Footfall Counters - Quote** That the quotation for the provision and installation of footfall counters for £2,386 be approved.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM999	**RECOMMENDATION** **OD111126/5.4 RPII Training - Playground Inspection** That the quotation for the RPII training for £2,815 be approved.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM1000	**RECOMMENDATION** **OD111126/7.2 Town Centre Maintenance** That Option 4, the employment of a 16hrs p/w part-time, year-round Town Centre Ranger at SCP 5, be supported at an estimated annual cost of £13,749.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM1001	**RECOMMENDATION** **OD111126/7.3 Maes y Dre - Charging for Parking** That the Council does not proceed with the proposal to charge for parking at Maes y Dre.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM1002	**RECOMMENDATION** **OD111126/9.2 Changing Places** That the Changing Places project be formally completed and closed.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
WTCM1003	**RESOLUTION** **OD111126/11 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

ID		Assigned
WTCM1004	**RECOMMENDATION** **OD111126/12 Welshpool Town FC - legal agreements** That a lease be granted for a period of 15 years to Welshpool Town Football Club to include the pitch, stand and floodlights on the same terms as the current licence.	Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer