**Report to Abermule(with Llandyssil) Community Council Meeting 14/01/15**

**From: County Cllr. Wynne Jones. Elected Member Dolforwyn Ward.**

1. Gospel Hall Planning Application.

This should be the last time I have to report on this matter I am pleased to say. After a very very good day in County Hall on the last Friday before Xmas ( know usually Black Friday I believe), I returned home and on checking my emails found one sent to be by the Case Officer, informing me that the appeal by the Dolafon Trust, to WG Planning Inspectorate, against the Powys County Council decision to refuse the application on 9th January 2014, had been DISSMISSED by the Inspector. In a ‘nutshell’ he agreed that the application was not in accordance with the Powys UDP and he also linked that into PPW and ruled it therefore failed the sustainability criteria set out in PPW.

This is therefore the end of the process for this application, there is no leave to appeal the Inspectors decision which is final. Of course the applicants could go for judicial review, buts that about process and not the decision, and I are confident that the process has been very correct.

I consider that the Gospel Hall/Plymouth Brethren application was indeed an ambitious and well thought out project, except that it should be situated in an area settlement and not a village.

1. Unauthorised development at Danycoed, Dolforwyn.

I have mentioned this in previous reports, the applicants were given until 20th December to submit a retrospective planning application. They failed to meet this deadline and promised it was on its way, but to date we have not received it. Meanwhile the development seems to have been completed and it looks like the building may now be occupied. If a planning application to regularise this development is not to hand by end of January I shall be requesting that enforcement action is commenced.

1. Political Changes at Powys County Council

As I have previously reported, Powys CC has been in a position since the last election where it has been politically ruled by a ‘minority’ administration and more recently that has been an administration consisting of 23 elected Members with 50 in opposition. This ridiculous situation is holding the Council back from taking some of the difficult decisions it needs to take, in getting budgets agreed, does not provide an certainty for Council Managers and certainly has been causing concern at Welsh Government. Since my election in August to the position of Leader of the Opposition I have been in constant discussions with all political groups on the Council, with a sole purpose of ending this situation and returning the Council to a majority administration of some sort. I are delighted to say that after a breakthrough meeting on the Friday prior to Xmas( yes Black Friday turned out to be some day!!) we have proceeded to a situation where a new coalition administration was announced n Friday last, and came into being on Monday 12th January. This is a coalition of the three Independent Groups, who come together to make a political administration of 46 Members in total, going well beyond the 37 required for a majority on the Council. In the new arrangement Cllr. Barry Thomas remains as Executive Leader and I join the Cabinet ( again !!!) as Deputy Leader. I shall for the time being have responsibility for Highways, but in due course will move on to become the Finance Portfolio Holder. One of my Group Members, Cllr. Avril York also has joined the Cabinet as the Regeneration Portfolio Holder, and we will be joined by Cllr. Brunt and Cllr.Hayes in the near future.

Achieving this coalition between ‘warring’ Independent Groups has proved that politics is the art of the possible, most people inside the Council would have rated my chances of getting this particular coalition as virtually nil. This political change has been warmly welcomed inside the Council and outside the Council, and both I and the Leader have received many calls and emails from both individuals and organisations in the last few days, all welcoming the change. This only adds to the pressure to make sure that we may this work for the Council and the residents it serves.

1. PCC Budget situation.

On the current budget we look like coming in at about £1.5m over budget at March 31st. This will then have to be added to the savings that will need to be made for 2015/16. The Council has received a 4.3% reduction in funding from WG ( 5th year in a row to have a budget cut) and therefore that leaves the Council needing to made £16m of savings to which any overspend in current year needs to be added. The cuts in funding are expected to continue until at least 2020 and we are looking at having to save £70 between now and then. Some fairly big decisions are going to have to be made, as the MTFP has huge gaping holes in it, and any ‘easy’ savings have been now exhausted. At present we are now about to embark on a secondary school review, which could see High Schools closing and 6th Forms also being shut in some schools. I have only been in my job for three days but I am already in the middle of embarking on huge changes in Highways with a view to making a saving of £2m in that budget for next year, and further savings in the following 2 years at least. This can only be achieved by changing the entire way that this service is delivered.

I can confirm that the proposed budget for 2015/16 does not contain any proposed savings from the possible transfer of local services to Communities. There may be some savings that will be achieved from ‘pilot’ schemes in Welshpool, Llanfyllin, Hay on Wye and Ystradgynlais however, but the main savings from this initiative will be targeted at 2016/17. The Council has a huge amount of work at its end ascertaining the actual costs of services, before we can begin to really move forward on a wider scale.

 5.Marketing Mid Wales.

I previously reported that at last the Minister Edwina Hart had agreed to do something about marketing Mid Wales with a view to attracting inward investment into the area, with a view to getting development started on both Offas Dyke and Abermule business parks as well as filling some of the existing unoccupied premises in the area.

As the first part of this work, she has placed a top WG Officer in charge of this initiative, and he has called a meeting for 4th February to begin the process. I have been invited to that meeting and will of course be attending. At last it seems WH are listening and hopefully this will lead to positive action that will lead to the creation of jobs in the area.

1. Waste Recycling

The roll-out of the new kerbside recycling system which started in the area of Abermule, Llanmerewig, Cefnycoed and Llandyssil, in early December (although Abermule village were already on it) seems to have gone very well. A few moans and groans but in fact no actual complaints as such. The area of Dolforwyn and New Wells and Aberbechan were not included in the December ‘roll out’ as that is a different ‘round’ and it is now planned that the roll-out for that area will be in the next month.

Wynne Jones

Elected Member – Dolforwyn Ward