

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 21st June, 2018 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor P. Clarke (Chairman)
County Councillor (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Batrouni, D. Blakebrough, M. Powell, V. Smith, D. Dovey, A. Easson, R. Edwards, D. Evans, P.A. Fox, L. Guppy, R. Harris, G. Howard, S. Howarth, P. Jones, S. Jones, S.B. Jones, P. Jordan, P. Murphy, B. Strong, F. Taylor, A. Watts, A. Webb, K. Williams, L.Brown, A.Davies, M.Feakins, M.Groucutt, R.John, L.Jones, M.Lane, P.Pavia, J.Pratt, R.Roden, T.Thomas, J.Treharne and J.Watkins

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Kellie Beirne	Deputy Chief Executive
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Robert Tranter	Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors R.J.W. Greenland, D. Jones, J.Becker, L.Dymock and S. Woodhouse

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Chairman's announcement and receipt of petitions

County Councillor G. Howard asked that Council acknowledge the sad passing of Jenny Barnes MBE, a resident of his ward, Llanfoist Fawr.

The Leader echoed the sentiments of Councillor Howard.

There were no petitions presented to Council.

4. Public open forum

There were no matters for the public open forum.

5. To confirm the minutes of the meetings of County Council:

5.1. 8th May 2018

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 8th May 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

5.2. 10th May 2018

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 10th May 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

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6. To note the minutes of the Public Service Board 4th April 2018

Noted.

7. To note the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee 12th March 2018

Noted.

8. To note the minutes of the Audit Committee 8th March 2018

Noted.

9. To note the County Council Action List

Council received the action list of the meeting held on 10th May 2018. In doing so Councillor Howarth expressed disappointment at the length of time it has taken to receive a response from Monmouthshire Housing Association. He stated that he had agreed to the housing stock transfer on the basis that tenant's needs would be looked after, and that queries would be addressed. Councillor Howarth did not believe this to now be the case and would not continue support MHA.

Councillor Watts supported the comments and acknowledged the noticeable lack of presence of MHA representation at Council.

10. Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

10.1. Cardiff Capital Region City Deal ~ Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Leader presented a report to present the proposal to establish a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

At its meeting held on the 20 November 2017, the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Joint Cabinet received a report detailing proposals for the establishment of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. This report also included a suggested draft 'Terms of Reference' for the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was agreed by the Joint Cabinet that Bridgend County Borough Council would undertake the role of Host Authority and would provide the necessary scrutiny support for the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Leader wished to add to the recommendations:

That the Chair of Economy and Development Select Committee, Councillor P. Pavia, be appointed as a member of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee, ably supported by the Vice-Chair, Councillor A. Davies.

The nomination was seconded.

Periodical reports would be brought to Full Council to ensure Members remain fully informed.

Where a Council may have concerns around an area, they would be entitled to request feedback from the Joint Scrutiny Committee. The Chief Executive assured Members the Scrutiny Committee would be guided by the powers and delegations agreed in the Joint Working Agreement.

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It was agreed that the deputy member could attend meetings as an observer for continuity, as could any Member as they are open meetings.

In terms of the openness of papers, these would be available via the CCRD website. Also, a link could be made available via our Hub.

It was confirmed that Bridgend, as the host authority, would provide the scrutiny support and this would not affect MCC officers.

Upon being put to the vote, Council resolved to agree the recommendations:

Consider the report and appendices and recommend to Council the establishment of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal;

To recommend to Council to appoint a non-executive Member to represent Monmouthshire County Council on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee, taking into consideration paragraph 2.3 of Appendix A.

To recommend to Council to appoint a deputy non-executive member to attend meetings in the absence of the appointed member.

That the Chair of Economy and Development Select Committee, Councillor P. Pavia, be appointed as a member of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee, ably supported by the Vice-Chair, Councillor A. Davies.

11. Report of the Head of Operations

11.1. Plastic Free Monmouthshire

The Cabinet Member presented a report to obtain a policy commitment from the Council to work towards becoming a "plastic free county", and to advise Council of the following which was presented to Strong Communities Select Committee on 24 May 2018:

- The efforts being undertaken within Monmouthshire communities to reduce the use of single-use plastics.
- The progress the Council is making in reducing the use of single-use plastics.

There has been a huge increase in interest in reducing the use of single-use plastics in the last few months, not least because of the shocking scenes of plastic contamination in our oceans shown on the BBC's Blue Planet series. Single use plastics use precious fossil fuels, take hundreds of years to break down, injure wildlife on land and at sea, blight the landscape as litter, block drains and cost money to buy, clear up and dispose of. This has resulted in actions being taken at local, regional and national levels.

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Councillor Howard commended the report but recognised that saying and delivering are often separate. He referred to our reliance on single use recycling bags, and the expectation of residents to use black bags for residual waste, and welcomed detail of alternative plans

The Head of Operations was asked to provide an update on litter and food waste within the contract, and highlight any impact this may have on the proposals. He explained that MCC have entered into contract for the disposal of our food waste, where the contractor would prefer to see the food presented to them in plastic bags rather than compostable bags. However the contract requires them to accept it in compostable bags should we wish to do so. The matter will be taken back to Strong Communities Select and, ultimately, Cabinet. If we do convert to use plastic bags there is a financial benefit to the Authority.

Members expressed the importance of 'getting our own house in order', examples being the use of plastic cups in the chamber, and single use plastic bottles at leisure centres.

Upon being put to the vote Council resolved to agree the recommendations:

That Council agree to work towards becoming a 'plastic free county' through reducing single use plastics, in line with the Plastic Free Coastline campaign run by Surfers Against Sewage.

That Council commit to the following steps, which were unanimously supported by Strong Communities Select Committee:

- **Make a commitment to work toward plastic free status.**
- **Review its own use of single-use plastics and take steps to identify unnecessary plastic use and reduce this.**
- **Support voluntary and community action to reduce plastic use, undertake litterpicks etc.**
- **Work with schools, businesses and other partners to reduce plastic use.**
- **Work with organisers of events on MCC property to reduce single use plastics to a minimum (and ensure that effective recycling for necessary plastics is in place).**
- **Participate in meetings to support and co-ordinate plastic free activities across the County.**

12. Report of the Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

12.1. Corporate Parenting Strategy

The Cabinet Member presented a report to Council to seek approval for the revised Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan 2018 – 2021.

The Cabinet Member for Finance added that there would be a proposal at the next meeting of Cabinet to exempt Looked After Children from Council Tax when they enter the housing chain.

Councillor Jones extended an invitation to all Members to the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel.

It was explained that prevention is an integral part of corporate parenting. There are steps and measures in place to identify problems at the first stages. This strategy focuses on looked after children, but it was suggested that reference be made to prevention as part of the strategy.

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It was agreed that foster agencies were more expensive and salaries were hard to compete with, but support is provided in other ways. A recent foster carers fortnight had proved successful with positive responses.

The Chair of Children and Young People Select Committee wished to commend the report, stating that it reflects very good practice. Officers were commended on the work being undertaken.

It was noted that County Councillors Blakebrough and Taylor would share a role on Corporate Parenting Panel.

Upon being put to the vote, Council resolved to agree the recommendations:

- **To note the content and intentions of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan.**
- **To note the membership and Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel.**
- **To consider the implications for all elected members and the wider council.**

13. Notices of Motion:

13.1. From County Councillor T. Thomas

MCC resolves to endorse Abergavenny Just Food's document Towards a Manifesto for Food Justice for Wales and to commend it to WLGA and WG.

The Council agrees to ask officers to report on ways in which MCC is already contributing to the aims of the manifesto and on changes in policy and/or practice that are needed to achieve more.

The motion was seconded and debated:

County Councillor P. Jones read a statement on behalf of County Councillor S. Jones thanking Councillor Thomas for the motion and highlighting the important issues around food injustice. Members' thoughts were welcomed to address the issue. In terms of the motion the Cabinet Member is fully supportive of the manifesto and welcomes the opportunity to recommend it to WLGA and WG. She will also refer this to other groups when attending stakeholder sessions. MCC have committed to developing a food strategy and officers are working with partners to establish a framework. The Social Justice Group will be asked to engage with Abergavenny Just Food, and other groups, to ensure food is a major feature.

Comments were made regarding the rurality of Monmouthshire, and grasping this manifesto would set an example to the rest of the country.

Councillor Murphy looked forward to a report of clarification around the policy.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

13.2. From County Councillor D. Batrouni

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Council granted permission to alter the motion, which now reads:

There seems to be common ground across the chamber that we need to do more to make sure that people across Monmouthshire have the opportunity and can afford to live in this beautiful place that we live in. It is undeniable that we have a supply side issue in the housing market and that we are seeing price spikes, and this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. I believe this council can do more. I believe there are examples in England of councils equipping themselves to be more active in the housing building market through the establishment of council owned housing companies. I would like to work with my colleague leaders and the Cabinet Member over the summer months with a view to bring forward an evidence based proposition to Council in September.

The Chief Executive expressed support of the motion on behalf of the Leader, and from an officer perspective.

Group Leaders were in support of the motion, and happy to work together to achieve progress on the issue.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

14. Members Questions:

14.1. From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor R. John

In light of the growth of house building across Severnside. which could be upwards of 1000 houses in the foreseeable future, with a longer term potential of even more houses with the implementation of a reviewed LDP. What actions will the Cabinet Member for Education be taking to cater for the expected increased need for school places across Severnside?

Councillor R. John responded that the Local Education Authority is a statutory consultee of the LDP and will be fully involved in the emergence of that plan. The scale and location of growth is yet to be determined. That will inform the need to increase school capacity in the areas outlined. The school access team is working closely with the Planning department to understand both the type and the scale of new developments in the area. Where there is insufficient capacity within the existing school sites, Section 106 agreements will be negotiated with developers. Currently there are 601 surplus places in the Caldicot area, of which 260 are in the primary schools.

As a supplementary:

As part of the Sudbrook building programme an amount of money has already been committed by the developers for education. There will be a further settlement due from Crick Road. When will we be putting forward specific plans to use these packets of money? Do you believe, for example, that Dewstow School, which was originally planned for a 420 placement school, is able to be upgraded, and equally the Durand School. And do you believe there is room for a new catchment area as Caldicot School will not cope?

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Councillor John responded that a breakdown of figures would be forwarded regarding the 601 places. He has attended meetings with Caldicot Town Council to address concerns.

14.2. From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor P. Jones

In light of the growth of house building across Severnside. that is upwards of potentially 1000 houses in the foreseeable future, with a longer-term potential of even more with the implementation of a reviewed LDP. What actions will the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health be considering together with the ABUHB to cater for the Health and Social Service needs of the Severnside Communities? Particularly as the ABUHB did not foresee any Service Delivery concerns at the time of the current LDP consultation?

Councillor P. Jones responded that the ABUHB is a key consultant of the LDP and discussions are already underway to ensure that engagement in the new LDP is more effective than it was in the previous LDP, and it will be more fully involved in the emerging plan. The scale and location of growth is yet to be determined so no numbers are available. The Health Board has to work with all authorities regarding population expansion, and an increase in numbers, and this is reflected in the resource mechanism of the NHS.

As a supplementary:

Will you ask the ABUHB to meet with Members to hear our concerns? And also will you be able to stop the slow decline of Chepstow Hospital.

Councillor Jones responded that she continues to keep Members informed of negotiations regarding Chepstow Hospital. She reiterated that ABUHB have to be involved with the Local Authority at all stages.

14.3. From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor B. Jones

With the envisaged growth of house building across Severnside, which will increase traffic movements and pose problems for the Highways infrastructure. What actions will the Cabinet Member for County Operations be taking to address the needs for a realistic Strategic Transport policy for pedestrian, cyclists and drivers across Severnside?

Councillor B. Jones responded that the Local Highway Authority and Welsh Government Transport Division are statutory consultees on the LDP and will be fully involved in the emerging plan. The scale and location of growth is yet to be determined and the impact on highway capacity is therefore unknown, as are solutions. Officers are minded to progress a Local Transport Plan in parallel with the LDP to align and coordinate the highways, transport and active travel requirements going forward. This will feed in, as appropriate, to the Strategic Transport Plan on a regional basis.

As a supplementary:

Since the adoption of the current LDP public services have been drastically reduced. Would you support the opening of Portskewett station?

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Councillor Jones responded that yes, he would support.

14.4. From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor P. Fox
Deferred.

14.5. From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor S. Jones
Deferred

14.6. From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor R. Greenland
Deferred

14.7. From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor P. Jordan
In view of the radical changes to the electorate as a result of the planned and ongoing house building across Severnside, would the Cabinet Member for Governance consider that it is too early at this point in time to implement Community Boundary changes, particularly in Caldicot and Portskewett?

Councillor Jordan responded that the community boundary changes took account of the five year forecast of electorates and allocated councillors based on those forecasts. The review applies to the whole of the authority and changes to the arrangements are overdue. If the proposals are approved by WG following the consultation and recommendations from the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales, then the Authority may review communities rather than hold a county wide review which can reflect changes in demographics in individual communities.

14.8. From County Councillor A. Easson to County Councillor P. Murphy
This projected increase in the population across Severnside will impose greater pressures upon Monmouthshire County Council's resources. How does Cllr Murphy intend to address the financial pressures on Monmouthshire's budgets to realise the difficulties expected and aspirations of the Communities of Severnside in this time of growth, and what will be your priorities, and how will you deal with them?

Councillor Murphy responded and in doing so he cautioned against getting ahead of ourselves. New house building significantly to our financial sustainability. Growth in population and households would see likely upward adjustments of the WG funding settlement, which is population based.

As a supplementary:

Do you consider the prudential borrowing may be the necessary way forward to put improvements in place?

Councillor Murphy responded that any prudential borrowing has to be supported by a water tight business case, and everything would be looked at on its own merits.

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm

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