

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 20th December, 2018 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor P. Clarke (Chairman)

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Matthew Phillips	Head of Law/ Monitoring Officer
Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Frances Williams	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Julie Boothroyd	Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors D. Blakebrough, R.J.W. Greenland, L. Guppy, B. Strong, J.Treharne and S. Woodhouse

2. Public Open Forum

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Jones-Griffiths who was in attendance to speak in support of Councillor Batrouni's motion regarding SENCOM. She spoke of her four month old daughter who is diagnosed as having bilateral sensory hearing loss of a severe and significant nature, meaning she is severely and profoundly deaf and will never hear unaided. Mrs Jones-Griffiths explained the fantastic support and benefits received through SENCOM. Concerns were that the restructure of SENCOM in Newport would have a knock-on effect Countywide. Members were urged to support the motion, as something that has to be fought.

The Chairman moved the motion to the next item for discussion.

4.1. From County Councillor D. Batrouni

Councillor Batrouni had visited the centre and witnessed the incredible care and assistance provided. Concerns were that the regional service remains resilient for children of Monmouthshire.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Groucutt.

Councillor F. Taylor declared a non-prejudicial interest as a member of Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Councillor Taylor questioned if colleagues had seen Impact or Future Generations Assessments, and asked that officers procure and circulate the information.

Members were unanimous with their support and following a recorded vote the motion was carried.

3. Chairman's announcement and receipt of petitions

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We noted the Chairman's report.

Councillor Rev. M. Lane presented a petition on behalf of the residents of Coed Y Brenin regarding traffic concerns along the Hereford Road.

Councillor Howarth requested that responses to petitions are reported back to Council.

4. Notices of Motion:

4.2. From County Councillor D. Batrouni

The motion was seconded by Councillor Williams.

The Cabinet Member for Finance sympathised with the problem but expressed problems with the mechanics of the motion, noting the difficulties in the practicalities. He could not support the motion as it stands.

The overall feeling amongst the Conservative Party was that this was a laudable motion, with good intentions, but further analysis was required.

Councillor K. Williams proposed an amendment to the motion to state:

That the Council starts the process of 'examining the possibility of' increasing council tax on second homes that have been vacant for over 6 months in the next financial year. Notes that it is estimated to raise over £200,000 per year and will have the added benefit of discouraging people from purchasing Monmouthshire properties as holiday homes that are only lived in for part of the year. As well as offsetting some of the budget deficit, the Labour group urges the Council to set aside £30,000 raised from this, on a per annum basis, to help fund young local carers with their tuition fees if they go to university. Any amount of the money unspent each year should go into a new social justice reserve in order to support the Council's social justice agenda.

The amendment was duly seconded and debate ensued.

Following discussion the amendment was withdrawn and votes were cast on the original motion. The motion was defeated.

4.3. From County Councillor T. Thomas

Motion withdrawn.

Councillor Thomas took the opportunity to highlight concerns of residents and bus users about the unofficial bus stop on Park Road. Highways have told bus companies to not use the bus stop but they continue to do so. He explained the ongoing issue around bus stops and routes in Abergavenny.

4.4. From County Councillor J. Watkins

Councillor Becker seconded the motion.

The motion was supported and the Cabinet Member agreed to write to Transport for Wales and hope for action.

The Chair requested that platform signage be mentioned in the correspondence.

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Upon being put to the vote the motion was carried.

5. Members' Questions:

5.1. From County Councillor J. Becker to County Councillor P. Murphy

The Cabinet Member responded that Interserve were appointed to undertake the construction of Caldicot and Monmouth Comprehensive Schools. Caldicot opened in September 2017 and with the exception of resolving minor defects Interserve have concluded this contract. Monmouth Comprehensive opened in September 2018 and outstanding works relate to the demolition of the old buildings and completion of defects. Council are already working on contingency plans that would result in MCC assuming responsibility for the demolition and resolution of any outstanding defects. The Council is holding retention funds on both projects which will enable us to step in with limited financial consequence.

6. Reports of the Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health:

6.1. Crick Road Care Home

The Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health presented a report providing an updated position in regards to the development of the new build care home that will replace Severn View Residential Home. The report details the case for change and presents the finalised care home designs that will sit on the Crick Road site in Portskewett.

The report set out the current options and seeks approval from Council members to move the project forward to implementation phase.

Concerns were raised that Adult Select Committee had strongly argued for a 48 bed unit and a request was made that this be kept in mind. The Integrated Service Manager explained that key criteria for capital funding from Welsh Government is deliverability, which at this stage is 32 beds. The ambition is 48 beds, but would require partnership work with third sector or ABUHB.

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

That Council consider the options outlined below and that members approve the Crick Road Care Home scheme to go forward to implementation phase as detailed in Options 3 and in Appendix 1 (Case for Change).

That Council members endorse the proposals outlined in Appendix 1 (Case for Change) for inclusion in the 2019/20 capital programme, understanding that Members have subscribed to any additions to the programme meeting one of two conditions:

- **Either that the project replaces something already in the capital programme as a higher priority, or:**
- **That the business case is demonstrably self-funded**

Work is progressing on refining the costs and seeking a more up to date valuation for the Severn View site which may recast the anticipated net cost to zero. However, there remains a small imbalance and following consultation with finance colleagues the intention would be to make an additional request of full

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Council to utilise a maximum £300k corporate capital receipts from the anticipated available by end of 2018-19.

6.2. Gwent Homelessness Strategy

Council received a report presenting the proposed Gwent Regional Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 and Action Plan, including the proposed Monmouthshire specific actions setting out the approach for tackling homelessness across Gwent. The report also includes a regional review of homeless services for Gwent, which informed the development of the strategy.

The housing company has not been dismissed and could be factored into the strategy.

The Leader of the Opposition questioned the innovativeness of the strategy, and asked what was new that would solve the problems faced across the County. The Housing and Communities Manager explained that in terms of innovation there is still a number of conversations to be had.

A member referred to rough sleepers located in Newport and was pleased to see the five authorities working together.

A Member reflected on personal experiences and highlighted the importance on prevention.

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

To accept and adopt the draft Gwent Homelessness Strategy.

7. Report of the Chief Officer for Children and Young People

7.1. Establishment of a project team to support Monmouthshire's 21st Century Schools' Developments

Council received a report in order to seek agreement for the creation of a new team, funded through the Authority's 21st Century Schools' capital programme. The purpose of the team is to support the development of a Full Business Case (FBC) for the next tranches of capital investment in Monmouthshire County Council's 21st Century Schools' redevelopment programme. Beyond that initial substantive phase, the team will be responsible for all liaison and programme management of the build programme itself.

Questions were raised regarding the preparatory works for Chepstow School, and a firm commitment was requested that the school would remain as a comprehensive school in its existing form. It was stated that we need to make a clear statement of intent regarding the education at Chepstow School.

The Cabinet Member for Education gave a clear commitment to Chepstow School and stated that he had been clear that this is a 4 school renewal project of which is halfway complete.

The Leader added that financial restraints should be recognised and supported the next stage of the programme.

County Councillor R. Harris declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a governor at Deri View School.

County Councillor T. Thomas declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a governor at Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni.

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The commitment regarding the two form Welsh entry stream in the new development was questioned. The Cabinet Member explained that the Welsh medium stream is a key part of the Welsh Education Strategic Plan, and consultation is due to take place. There is a clear commitment to provide parents with a choice to where their children are educated.

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

Approve the creation of the Project Team to ensure the completion of a robust and extensive FBC, undertake appropriate de-risking activity to ensure that the programme remains within the parameters of affordability and act as the client liaison side in the construction phase.

Approve that this team is funded by the capital programme in preparation for the commencement of construction of a new all-through school in Abergavenny. In the event that the FBC does not gain support of the Council or the Welsh Government these costs will have to be written off to a revenue account; if this is the case they should be met by the Capital Investment Reserve.

Approve the creation of a team to be made up of seconded officers from the local authority's existing establishment and agree that these posts should be back filled where appropriate and necessary

Note that the shape and purpose of this team will flex and change over time depending on the stage of the programme's development and that there may be future amendments in the future. In light of the potential requirement to change the shape of the team it is recommended that Council delegates responsibility for future amendments to the Cabinet Member for Education in consultation with the Chief Officer, Children and Young People.

8. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of County Council held on 25th October 2018

The minutes of the meeting of County Council held on 25th October 2018 were approved and signed by the Chair.

I doing so we noted an amendment in declaration of interest. Should read Councillor Roger Harris, not Roger Hoggins.

9. To note the County Council Action List

Councillor Batrouni referred to a motion regarding the Housing Company and asked that a commitment to come back to Council be added to the Action List.

10. To note the following minutes:

10.1. Audit Committee 13th September 2018
Noted.

10.2. Democratic Services Committee 24th September 2018
Noted.

10.3. Public Service Board 18th July 2018
Noted.

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The meeting ended at 16:25pm