

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Thursday, 24th October, 2019 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Woodhouse (Chairman)
County Councillor S.B. Jones (Vice Chairman)

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Matthew Phillips	Head of Law/ Monitoring Officer
Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Peter Davies	Chief Officer, Resources
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Frances O'Brien	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Julie Boothroyd	Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance
Diane Corrister	Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Service Manager
David Jones	Head of Public Protection
Matthew Lewis (Countryside)	Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead for MonLife
Jane Rodgers	Head of Children's Services

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors L.Dymock, M.Feakins, J.Pratt and V. Smith

2. Declarations of interest

3. Public Questions

None.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT AND RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were presented.

The Chair commended staff, Rhys and Darren, at the Five Lanes HWRC on their efforts in retrieving a lost engagement ring.

The Chair congratulated the Emergency Planning team on achieving a Gold Paw Print Award from the RSPCA. Monmouthshire County Council is the only Welsh authority to achieve this accolade, and one of five in the UK.

Congratulations were offered to Hannah Carpanini of the Social Care Team on receiving a gold Dignity in Care Award.

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Council held a minute silence in respect of the tragic events involving the death of 39 immigrants.

4.1. Statement from Armed Forces Champion, County Councillor L. Jones - Briefing Paper attached

The Leader of the Council presented the following statement on behalf of County Councillor L. Jones:

Our county is home to the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (Militia) based in The Castle in Monmouth and is the service centre for 1 RIFLES currently based at Beachley Barracks just outside Chepstow.

Our Council takes every opportunity to commemorate and celebrate Armed Forces events and recognise the contribution that veterans have made in service to their country and that which current serving personnel and their families continue to make. Each year we promote Armed Forces Day and Reservists Day, as well as marking special dates throughout the year with tributes and workplace gatherings.

As an Authority we employ many individuals from the Armed Forces Community and understand the benefit of capitalising on military talent. The introduction of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme will not only highlight Monmouthshire County Council as an Armed Forces friendly employer but also provide additional support to those who may struggle to secure meaningful employment due to their careers and mobility.

This scheme will provide this cohort with the ability to have an interview, where they meet the essential criteria and have the opportunity to present themselves face to face.

Monmouthshire and Newport Councils were successful in employing a dedicated officer whose role is to engage directly with schools and Service Families to ensure that they are not disadvantaged or experience any educational barriers. In conjunction with the Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru project, we have already identified over 100 Service Children across our schools and have supported school clusters to apply for MOD funding to support this cohort.

As you will have read in the briefing paper, Monmouthshire County Council are currently Silver Award holders. Through our continued commitment to work in partnership with the Armed Forces Community, we will be making the application for Gold Award in 2020.

We will be holding a ceremony with military representatives to re-affirm our pledge of mutual support and understanding at the next full council ([5th December](#)) with a re-signing ceremony. Not only is this an opportunity to raise the profile of our dedication to supporting the Armed Forces Community, but we will also be doing this jointly with our 5 Town Councils, with representatives from each signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant in their own right.

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If you'd like to know more about the Armed Forces Covenant, training is available and I'd encourage you to take a look.

5. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF OFFICER FOR ENTERPRISE:

5.1. Re-Appointment of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum

Council received a report in order to secure the appointment of members to the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum (LAF) for its next 3 year period.

County Councillor Batrouni nominated County Councillor M. Groucutt on behalf of the Labour Group.

County Councillor Fox agreed to inform Democratic Services of the two Conservative Group nominations in due course.

Upon being put to the vote the recommendations were agreed:

That the following retiring members of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum be reappointed: Irene Brooke, Anthea Fairey, Shelia Hampshire, Phil Mundell, Mark Storey, David Smith and Anne Underwood;

That Sylvia Fowles be appointed as a members of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum in view of her previous attendance as an observer;

That the following individuals be shortlisted for appointment as members of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum: - Jenny Crockitt, Gordon Davies, David Farnsworth; Tracy Hook, Shan Lewis and Martin Sweeney

That a selection panel of three appropriate Members be established and delegated authority to interview and appoint members from the shortlist and to appoint further members should the Forum asks the County Council to seek additional members to reflect any specific interests felt not to be appropriately represented;

That the County Council nominate its representative to serve on the Local Access Forum;

That the retiring members of the Forum be thanked for their valuable contribution.

6. REPORTS OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE:

6.1. Remit of the PSB Select Committee

The Cabinet Member for Governance presented a report to request a change to the title and the terms of reference of the Public Service Board Select Committee, in order to broaden its remit which will provide enhanced governance arrangements for services delivered to Monmouthshire citizens.

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The proposal has been approved by the PSB Select Committee and Democratic Services Committee. The proposed changes would enable the Select Committee to scrutinise wider public service provision and where powers allow, to provide greater accountability of services delivered in collaboration or by external partners.

The proposal was seconded and upon being put to the vote Council resolved to accept the recommendations:

That Council agrees the changes proposed (below) and alters the Constitution accordingly:

To change the title of the existing “Public Service Board Select Committee” to “Public Services Select Committee” for reasons outlined in this report.

To revise the existing Terms of Reference to extend the Select Committee’s remit to:

Scrutinise and constructively challenge (where powers allow) the work and effectiveness of strategic partnerships (including the Public Service Board) and other public service providers to ensure public accountability of collaborative services and improved outcomes for people in Monmouthshire, through;

a) considering evidence and different views and perspectives on public service provision in order to make recommendations on improving services delivered to residents

b) influencing the decisions, policy and practice of public service providers by providing a platform for greater accountability and democratic involvement.

6.2. Climate Emergency Strategy

Council received the report to set out Monmouthshire’s strategy and action plan to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by Council in May 2019 and describing the objectives and actions to reduce the council’s carbon emissions.

The Leader of the Council read a statement on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure. In doing so thanks were given to officers across the Council for their hard work since the climate emergency was declared by this Council in May. The report is not finished and remains a flexible document to which further actions and information can be added.

The Labour Group applauded the work of MCC, particularly officers responsible for the document. It was thought that there should be a greater involvement of people within the County in the form of citizen’s assemblies, who are kept informed of climate mitigation, and to prepare the public on the options on behaviour to dramatically reduce carbon emissions.

It was stated that the report contained blind-spots around the likely changes in agriculture in the light of future local food procurement facilities necessary for reducing emissions.

Councillor Thomas proposed an amendment on option 2, *to include an input from Planning and highlighting emissions in the LDP, and involve discussions with the general public about climate issues.*

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The amendment was seconded by Councillor Watts, and debate ensued.

The Cabinet Member referred to the Cabinet meeting of 3rd July 2019 where an additional report was brought forward as a result of passing the climate change issues. Cabinet had confirmed that, in formation of the LDP, take issues into account. Taking this into account he stated that the amendment was unnecessary as it is already agreed as part of the LDP.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment was defeated.

Discussions returned to the original recommendations.

It was agreed that the first bullet point of 3.2:

That this council will ensure it will reduce its own carbon emissions to net zero before the Welsh Government target of 2030.

Should read:

That this council will strive to reduce its own carbon emissions to net zero before the Welsh Government target of 2030.

Further clarity was sought over the finances of the strategy.

It was asked that the working group address the barriers to in-work poverty.

With regards to the action of planting 10000 trees, it was asked if sites had been identified, and whether this could be done through association with the Woodland Trust.

Further information was sought around greener, electric vehicles.

With regards to encouraging people to travel more sustainably, concern was raised over the current condition of bus stops.

An issue with our school buses was raised, where engines remain turned on whilst waiting outside schools. This can be a lengthy wait and it was asked that our own drivers are made aware that they should turn their engines off.

It was asked that Council put pressure on Welsh and UK Governments about the infrastructure needed in the National Grid.

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

That Council approve the ten objectives within the plan, listed in paragraph 3.7, which cover the areas of activity that the council will need to focus on to achieve its goal of reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2030.

That council endorse the action plan which will be an evolving document as new technologies develop and other opportunities arise.

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That a member led-working group is created to accelerate progress and take responsibility for ensuring the action plan continues to evolve and be shaped by emerging evidence and cutting-edge practice and opportunities.

7. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF OFFICER FOR SOCIAL CARE, SAFEGUARDING AND HEALTH:

7.1. Modern Day Slavery and Exploitation Protocol

The report was presented to raise awareness of the Council's recently adopted 'Modern Day Slavery and Exploitation Protocol', and advise on next steps including training for Officers and Members.

Questions were raised over the financial implications and resources available.

Officers explained that one of the opportunities is that this is now on a national and Gwent wide basis, with huge activity across partnerships, specifically police. The Home Office provide specialist support. MCC have been more pro-active than many other local authorities, with other authorities looking to our protocol to develop their own work.

A Member stressed that elected members should develop links within communities and identify where people are exploited.

Where people are trafficked for exploitation, they are offered support and the opportunity to obtain specialist services.

Members welcomed the opportunity to undertake training, and were expressly informed of the importance of County Lines training.

Councillor J. Watkins and J. Becker left at 15:30pm

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

That Council familiarise themselves with the Authority's 'Modern Day Slavery and Exploitation Protocol', provided in Appendix One, and understand the importance of this issue in our County.

Members engage in the forthcoming training being organised - recognising their key community role, understanding local residents, businesses, etc. – and understand what to do should they receive any reports of suspicious situations.

7.2. Corporate Parenting Annual Report

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Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health presented Council with the Corporate Parenting Annual Report to provide a summary of the work and activity of the Corporate Parenting Panel at the 'half-way point' with regards to the objectives within the Corporate Parenting Strategy (2018 – 2021).

Over the last 18 months the Corporate Parenting Panel has continued to promote the Council's duty towards children and young people who are looked after or who are care leavers with a focus on 9 priority areas:

The current Corporate Parenting Strategy (2018 – 2021) was endorsed by the Council in June 2018 (see appendix 1). The strategy is set around 9 priority areas:

Priority 1: All elected members and officers understand and act on their responsibilities as corporate parents

Priority 2: All looked after children have a safe and stable home

Priority 3: Looked after children enjoy a range of educational and learning opportunities

Priority 4: Looked after children enjoy the best possible health

Priority 5: Looked after children enjoy a range of play, sport, leisure and cultural opportunities

Priority 6: Looked after children are listened to and treated with respect

Priority 7: Looked after children are supported and enabled to achieve independence

Priority 8: Looked after children are cared for by Monmouthshire carers and remain close to their homes and communities

Priority 9: All care leavers are supported in education, training and employment

We welcomed care leavers Carys Davies and Catherine Morgan-Owen, and their personal advisor Mike Jones, who were in attendance to provide Council with an insight into the life of care leavers.

We heard of a recent event where 12 care leavers had attended to discuss with Corporate Parenting Panel the nine priority areas, and the areas for focus. Main areas referenced included:

- They did not like the term Corporate Parents as it was considered too business-like. A new name is being considered.
- There is difficulty for care leavers to attend the meetings of CPP due to work commitments. Alternative days/times were suggested.
- At age 18 young people are rushed to move out of their foster / residential accommodation, with no integration. There is a need for supported lodging and 'when I'm ready' placements.
- Through advertisements for foster carers there should be reference to say they are willing extend placements past the age of 18, and they should remain supported financially.
- With regards to training and education for young people there is a shortage of apprenticeships and opportunities. It was thought that Council should put care leavers first when it comes to apprenticeships.
- There is a shortage of mental health services.
- Care leavers leisure passes are a good idea but both ladies were still waiting for this.

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- Issues around loneliness and isolation were common and it was felt that care leavers events were a cathartic exercise.

Members commended our guests and thanked them for the insights provided.

When discussing apprenticeships it was acknowledged that the low rate of pay meant apprenticeships may not be suitable for those over the age of 18 in terms of living wage.

Members who had attended the Foster Carers event highly commended it and found it a moving experience.

A Member agreed that care leavers should be given priority in terms of housing, employment and education. Employment should be considered a priority by this authority and associated partners.

Suitable accommodation should be addressed and Council should look at this with more care.

The Chair wished to add her thanks and expressed that through working with officers and Members, and with all the care leaver contributions, will help people in the future.

In summing up, the Cabinet Member explained how matters are being addressed and expressed the importance of attendance on the Corporate Parenting Panel, and asked that all parties are represented.

Council resolved to accept the recommendations:

To note the work and activity of the Corporate Parenting Panel over the last period within the context of the Corporate Parenting Strategy;

To endorse the on-going work of the Corporate Parenting Panel towards the objectives identified within the Strategy;

To consider the implications for all elected members and the wider council.

8. Notices of Motion:

8.1. Submitted by County Councillor D. Batrouni
Withdrawn.

9. Members Questions:

9.1. From County Councillor S. Howarth to County Councillor P. Fox
Withdrawn.

10. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2019

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

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The meeting ended at 4.45 pm