

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Minutes of the meeting of County Council held at Remote Meeting on Thursday, 22nd October, 2020 at 2.00 pm

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

County Councillors: P. Clarke, D. Batrouni, D. Blakebrough, L.Brown, A.Davies, L.Dymock, 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, J.Pratt, V. Smith, B. Strong, F. Taylor, T.Thomas, J.Treharne, J.Watkins, A. Watts, A. Webb and K. Williams

### OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Matt Phillips	Head of Law/ Monitoring Officer
Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Peter Davies	Chief Officer, Resources
Roger Hoggins	Head of Service - Strategic Projects (Fixed Term)
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Frances O'Brien	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance
Mark Hand	Head of Place-making, Housing, Highways and Flood
Emma Davies	Performance Officer
Jonathan Davies	Central Accountancy Finance Manager
Richard Jones	Performance Manager
Matt Lewis	Deputy Director Shared Resource Services
Rachel Lewis	Planning Policy Manager
Gareth Lucey	Wales Audit Officer
Craig O'Connor	Head of Planning
Philip White	Chair of Audit Committee
Anthony Veale	Wales Audit Officer

### APOLOGIES:

County Councillors D. Dovey and R.Roden

#### **1. Declarations of interest**

County Councillor L. Guppy declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item 6.a as a Flying Start Health Visitor.

County Councillor P. Fox declared a prejudicial interest in relation to item 5.c as an owner of a potential development site.

#### **2. Public Questions**

None.

#### **3. Chairman's announcement and receipt of petitions**

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Out of respect for those who have recently passed, and former MCC Chairman Alan Breeze Council observed a period of silence.

The Chair congratulated the Emergency Planning Team who have achieved the RSPCA Gold Award for the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

The Chair also thanked the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team, and all staff and colleagues for their efforts through the pandemic.

### **4. Reports for Council:**

#### **4.1. Corporate Plan Annual Report 2019/20**

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Law presented the report to seek council approval of the Corporate Plan Annual Report 2019/20. The report sought to ensure that members have a clear understanding of progress made against the aspirations within the Corporate Plan and the subsequent 'plan on a page' documents that were approved by Cabinet to ensure the organisation is focused on the things that matter most during its response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Cabinet Member thanked services for their hard work and efforts and added that the Corporate Plan remains under review during the uncertain times.

Concerns were highlighted regarding the impact on education services, including FSM pupils, blended learning provision and the provision of Welsh Medium education.

It was suggested that there was disconnect between qualitative discussion and quantitative measures around social justice.

The report lacked a clear plan to tackle the Welsh Government funding formula.

The Leader welcomed challenge from the opposition and recognised the report as a good position statement.

**Upon being put to the vote Council resolved to approve the recommendation:**

**That the Corporate Plan Annual Report 2019/20 be approved, subject to the inclusion of any amendments agreed by Council.**

#### **4.2. Audited Statement of Accounts 2019/2020 and ISA260 Report**

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report to provide the audited annual accounts for the Authority for 2019/20 for final approval, following the audit process undertaken by Audit Wales and review and endorsement by the October Audit Committee.

The Chair of Audit Committee highlighted that the accounts were prepared in a timely, professional manner resulting in the appropriate final opinion of an unqualified, clean report. He concluded that the Audit Committee endorsed the report to Council.

A Member asked if it would be appropriate to provide the original budget alongside the report for comparison. The Chief Officer explained that the Statement of Account is as at 31<sup>st</sup> March and therefore the revised budget is more representative.

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A question was raised around an increase in the number of senior officers and it was explained that a number of employees have moved into the £60,000 plus threshold due to pay awards.

It was asked if the procurement of Newport Leisure Park needs further scrutiny by Audit Committee. The Chair of Audit Committee did not think there was anything new to add at this point.

**Upon being put to the vote Council resolved to accept the recommendation:**

**That the final audited Monmouthshire County Council Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 (Appendix 1) are approved by Council.**

#### **4.3. Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan, Review of issues, vision, objectives and evidence base in light of COVID-19 and revised delivery agreement**

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise presented the report to provide Council with an update on the preparation of the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the Review of the RLDP Issues, Vision and Objectives and Evidence Base in terms of sensitivity to the consequences of the current pandemic.

The report also sought Council's agreement to the RLDP Revised Delivery Agreement, which amends the project timetable for Plan preparation and the Community Involvement Scheme in light of the pandemic and the recently published Welsh Government 2018-based population and household projections, for submission to the Welsh Government for approval.

More detail was required when Council receive the preferred strategy and spatial options.

With regards to high prices and affordable homes, it was suggested that consideration be given to type for type developments across South Wales. Officers recognised the challenge and seek to address the issue within the LDP.

Reassurance was sought around the evidence base given the current pandemic, and the Cabinet Member assured that Members would be kept up to date with any further need for consultation, and the ongoing review.

Further detail was sought on strategies to attract new businesses.

**Upon being put to the vote Council resolved to accept the recommendation:**

**Council endorses the Review of the RLDP Issues, Vision and Objectives and Evidence Base, and agrees that these remain relevant in light of Covid-19 and that it is appropriate to progress with Plan preparation.**

**Council agrees the Revised Delivery Agreement, which amends the project timetable and the Community Involvement Scheme as a result of the Covid-19**

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pandemic and the recent publication of the 2018-based population and household projections, for submission to the Welsh Government for approval.

#### 4.4. Future Data Hall and Data Hosting Arrangements

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report to consider the full business case for the SRS data centre and proposed data hall move from Blaenavon, replacing it initially with a move to a commercial scale purpose built data hall followed by cloud based solutions as appropriate. Also, the funding model and resultant funding requirement for the Council.

It was confirmed that CCTV across Monmouthshire is an independent function, and there were no plans to change this.

There would be no change to contact details and the service would remain the same.

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

**That Council acknowledges Cabinet's support and approval of the recommended option to move to an alternative physical data centre solution with Next Generation Data (NGD).**

**That Council supports the funding model predicated on equal costs of the shared infrastructure.**

**That Council approves that its share in the £2.3m up front capital investment of £361k and its 1/3 share of decommissioning costs (£203k) is funded as part of the 2021/22 capital budget proposals.**

**That the actual capital financing solution be determined as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process and where it is anticipated to be funded from prudential borrowing and/or useable capital receipts.**

#### 5. Notices of Motion

##### 5.1. Submitted by County Councillor A. Easson

*Flying Start is a positive facility for parents with young children. However, it is post code related which debars many parents from Public Document Pack accessing the service. In my ward in particular, young parents supported by Flying Start have in recent times moved a distance of maybe 100 metres. In doing so their post code changes and they then fall out of the Scheme. In the current climate all help that can be given by Flying Start to these families in need should be opened up to other Post Codes. I move that Monmouthshire County Council explores with some*

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*urgency the expansion of the Flying Start scheme to draw in the maximum number of families who are currently struggling to make ends meet.*

County Councillor Higginson seconded the motion.

Members were keen to support the motion recognising the support provided through the Flying Start programme.

It was highlighted that deprivation is across all areas of the County and is not dependent on postcode.

A full report on the service would be welcomed by Council.

Upon being put to the vote the motion was carried.

*Councillor Blakebrough left the meeting at 16:54pm*

#### **6. Submitted by County Councillor D. Batrouni**

*That this Council is disappointed by the Conservative cabinet's decision to close Usk recycling centre and believes the cabinet should have worked with Usk residents, the Surf campaign group and Usk town council to remedy the problems at the site and deliver a solution that worked for everyone.*

County Councillor Groucutt seconded the motion, and in doing so referred to the matter being discussed at Strong Communities Select Committee meeting and the support at the meeting, compared to the lack of consideration at the meeting of Cabinet meeting. He urged the Cabinet to reverse the decision and work with Usk Town Council.

The Cabinet Member was confident the right decision had been taken and explained that officers are happy to provide expertise and work with Usk Town Council.

A Member asked how many Members had visited and observed the site, and highlighted the financial savings of the closure.

*Councillor Fox left the meeting at 17:30pm*

*Councillor Pavia left the meeting at 17:34pm*

The results of a recorded vote were:

For	10
Against	20
Abstain	1

Therefore, the motion was defeated.

#### **7. Submitted by County Councillor D. Batrouni**

*That the Conservative cabinet should abandon plans to increase kerbside garden waste charges by 94%.*

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Councillor Batrouni proposed to withdraw his motion, which upon being put to the vote was agreed by Members.

*Councillors Williams (18:02) and Groucutt (18:04) left the meeting.*

#### **8. Members' Questions:**

#### **9. From County Councillor L. Dymock to County Councillor S. Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Justice and Community Development**

*What support has been given to children and young people during the last 7 months in terms of those struggling with mental health and wellbeing?*

As Councillor S. Jones was unavailable to provide a response Councillor Dymock agreed to accept a written response, a copy of which would be distributed to all Members.

#### **10. From County Councillor J. Watkins to County Councillor J. Pratt, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Services**

*On September 18th the Cross Destination Space stage of Caldicot Regeneration Plan was completed, however signage – announcing speed limit change and pedestrian right of way - was not installed. At time of writing October 12th still no signage has been installed (after repeated contact with council officers) leading to a dangerous situation of confusion for motorists and pedestrians. Can the Cabinet member please give details when the signage will be installed and how it was possible that it was omitted?*

Councillor Watkins was pleased to report that since submitting the question some signage has been installed and assurance has been provided that more signage will be coming. She asked Councillor Pratt for further information.

*Councillors Howarth (18:10), Batrouni (18:08) and Treharne (18:11) left the meeting*

Councillor Pratt thanked Councillor Watkins for her question. With regard to signage it was thought that some signage had been installed, such as new road layout and restricted zone but there has been a delay installing the 20mph speed limit signs so it was pleasing to hear one has been installed. It was understood that there had been some confusion between teams over who was arranging the installation, but this has now been resolved and temporary signage was installed yesterday. The complete 20mph scheme is to be installed tomorrow. She acknowledged wider concerns of local members regarding pedestrian safety and advised further warning signage is to be installed, and a road safety audit being undertaken.

Councillor Pratt will ask officers to provide briefings and update on measures being undertaken.

The Head of Strategic Projects explained that the road had opened after completion of the scheme. The RSA3 can either be carried out prior to, or after, the scheme being in place. Feedback will be provided to the Authority.

As a supplementary Councillor Watkins stated there has been a huge amount of upset around a scheme removing pedestrian crossings without enough public information.

It was confirmed that a note for wider distribution is being prepared.

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#### 10.1. **From County Councillor A. Watts to County Councillor P. Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health**

*How will Council continue to support care homes?*

Councillor Jones thanked Councillor Watts for his question and confirmed she would also email responses to Members. She gave assurance that MCC have been supporting care homes throughout the pandemic and officers of social services and public protection have been in regular contact. She provided examples of work carried out such as regular weekly check-ins with care providers, providing daily reports on the number of cases, fortnightly virtual get-togethers with all care at home providers, increasing frequency as required. There has been coordination with officers with Environmental Health, Finance and Business to provide support and advice. There has been coordination with colleagues from ABUHB to ensure infection control measures were correct. There has been a two weekly PPE ordering system with all providers.

Providers have been supported through the claims process to access WG funds and provided with specific financial support.

Councillor Jones assured Members that parity was given to all care homes throughout Monmouthshire and will continue to do so.

#### 11. **From County Councillor A. Watts to County Councillor P. Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health**

*Is there any evaluation of better practise across Monmouthshire's care settings?*

Councillor Jones responded that the care sector across Monmouthshire has had to deal with a rapid change in the delivery of services during the pandemic. We continue to be in close communication with providers and have seen the efforts that have needed to be in place to keep people safe. Care Inspectorate Wales continue to carry out inspection work and our social work and nursing staff continue where possible to have access to people.

There are concerns around the limited access families have had but we have worked with the sector to ensure communication and socially distanced visits have taken place when allowed.

The Cabinet Member thanked care home sector and all staff at care homes across Monmouthshire for their hard work and dedication to keeping our most vulnerable people safe.

All care home staff and residents are tested fortnightly. If a positive result is detected they are all re-tested, carrying on until all tests are negative.

#### 12. **From County Councillor A. Watts to County Councillor P. Murphy, Cabinet Member for Resources**

*How much new money has been invested in the Council's preparedness for a second wave?*

Councillor Murphy explained that the Gwent Local Resilience Forum (LRF) has received £150,000 Covid19 specific funding to support the partners in the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) and the work of any tactical groups. MCC has received around £11,000.

In terms of the Council's preparedness for the ongoing response and planning, this is being managed by existing organisational capacity and staff resource. As and where necessary staff have been reassigned and the response effort prioritised.

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The Council continues to monitor Covid19 risks, impact on service provision, engagement with partner agencies in mitigating the consequences in delivering the agreed strategic aims of the Council.

The Council has enacted its emergency management plan and business continuity arrangements to coordinate response with external partnerships, neighbouring authorities and WG. These continue to operate in a dynamic and challenging environment, evolving and adapting to manage and mitigate as far as possible a variety of risks to Council service delivery and the well-being of staff and residents.

The ongoing planning and preparation around the Covid response remains an ongoing feature of the SCG.

As a supplementary Councillor Watts asked if there is now a good opportunity to ensure that care workers are being paid the minimum living wage.

Councillor Murphy responded that Council has been paying the living wage, and the last budget saw an increase in payments to care homes to ensure staff were paid the living wage.

Councillor Jones responded that there are talks around future recruitment of social workers and domiciliary carers and how working standards can be improved.

#### **13. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 were approved.

**The meeting ended at 6.35 pm**