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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of County Council held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Thursday, 27th October, 2022 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor Laura Wright (Chair)
County Councillor Ann Webb (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: Tony Kear, Catrin Maby, Jan Butler,
Ian Chandler, Sara Burch, Alistair Neill, Su McConnel,
Mary Ann Brocklesby, Fay Bromfield, Jane Lucas, Emma Bryn,
Peter Strong, Paul Griffiths, Jackie Strong, Rachel Garrick,
Steven Garratt, Angela Sandles, Ben Callard, John Crook,
Tomos Davies, Dale Rooke, Catherine Fookes, Sue Riley,
Jayne McKenna, Jill Bond, Louise Brown, Lisa Dymock,
Tony Easson, Christopher Edwards, Martyn Groucutt,
Simon Howarth, Richard John, David Jones, Penny Jones,
Malcolm Lane, Phil Murphy, Paul Pavia, Maureen Powell,
Frances Taylor, Tudor Thomas, Armand Watts and Rachel Buckler

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Matt Phillips	Chief Officer People and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Peter Davies	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer, Resources
Jane Rodgers	Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Frances O'Brien	Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance
Kelly Turner	Child Protection Co-Ordinator

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors Meirion Howells and Maria Stevens

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 27th September 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th September 2022 were approved with the following amendments:

- Typographical error on page 4 – should read *Seconded by County Councillor Frances Taylor.*
- Page 5 - *County Councillor Frances Taylor agreed to the amendment proposed by County Councillor Rachel Garrick and asked that County Councillor Fay Bromfield's suggestion be put forward.*
- Page 4 – the reflective nature refers to the debate rather than the report, regarding Westminster and Welsh Governments.

2. Declarations of interest

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County Councillor Paul Pavia declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item 6.3, as an employee of Practice Solutions Limited.

3. Public Questions

None.

4. Chair's Announcement

The Chair welcomed recently elected, County Councillor Rachel Buckler to the meeting.

5. Council Reports:

6. COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE PLAN

The Leader presented the report to seek approval of a new Community and Corporate Plan that sets the direction for the council and county of Monmouthshire, articulating the authority's purpose, principles and priorities alongside some of the steps we will take to deliver these.

Clarity was sought around this being an initial plan and the dates of a new version to be published.

The Leader of the Opposition considered the plan to be disappointing and lacking in detail and substance. He felt that with no definitive actions in the plan there would be no opportunity to be held to account or scrutinised.

County Councillor Phil Murphy stated that MCC receive the lowest level of grant funding in Wales, which is based on Welsh Government formula.

There were concerns around areas not included in the plan and suggestion was made that consideration should be taken to developing proposals around public transport.

A question was raised about housing provision and given the current financial challenges what actions will be taken to ensure MCC follow through on their commitment to building affordable homes.

The Cabinet Member for Education endorsed the plan and stated that what has been put forward is a sign of realism and would seek to transform the lives of people neglected by the previous administration.

It was expressed that a corporate plan should contain detailed proposals for getting things done.

Scrutiny was referred to as being an essential function for council and residents, which the MCC website quotes as being the function to scrutinise performance and delivery of the corporate objectives outlined in the corporate plan. It was thought that these objectives were not clearly defined by the administration.

County Councillor Frances Taylor expressed that the recommendations in the report do not make reference to this being an interim plan and didn't consider it responsible to endorse the plan with the lack of substance. County Councillor Taylor proposed an amendment:

That this Council agree to bring a revised more detailed and robust Community and Corporate plan containing measures and targets back to the December meeting of Council.

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The proposed amendment to replace recommendations 2.1 and 2.2.

Seconded by County Councillor Simon Howarth

Upon being put to a vote the amendment was accepted and debate ensued.

The Cabinet Member for Resources explained the strategic document explains a change of approach and direction, and that large changes will not occur immediately. She continued to explain that the administration has worked with member colleagues on the content of the plan and intend to continue to collaborate going forward.

It was reiterated that people need stability and some certainty around Council's priorities.

It was suggested that to bring the plan to December Council would put a lot of pressures on officers, and maybe January would be more suitable.

A vote was undertaken to move to the vote and was defeated.

Debate ensued.

The Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Economy proposed a further amendment:

That this Council agree to bring a revised more detailed and robust Community and Corporate plan containing measures and targets back to the January meeting of Council.

Upon being put to a vote Council resolved to accept the amendment.

The Cabinet Member of Inclusive and Active Communities referred to a previous comment on housing and explained that the work was well underway, and she is working with officers on plans to reduce homelessness. She added they would be working with partners and neighbouring authorities and welcomed the opportunity to come back with more detail.

Upon being put to a vote Council resolved to accept the report with the amended recommendation:

That this Council agree to bring a revised more detailed and robust Community and Corporate plan containing measures and targets back to the January meeting of Council.

7. RESPONSE TO URGENT NEED FOR HOUSING ACCOMMODATION

Withdrawn.

8. SOCIAL CARE, SAFEGUARDING & HEALTH ANNUAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT 2021/22

Cllr Chandler left the meeting at 16:30

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The Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health presented her Annual Report 2021/22.

The aims within the report included:

- To evaluate progress against our social care priorities
- To inform Members and residents about the effectiveness of social care and health in Monmouthshire and identify key risks and challenges.
- To inform Members and residents about the progress made towards meeting the standards set out in SSWBA
- To set out actions and priorities for 2022 – 2023

The report was subject to scrutiny on 11th October 2022 via a Joint People / Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee.

The workforce was commended for their work through the pandemic.

The detailed report was thought to show examples of good practices, but difficulties within the sector were recognised, notably unmet care hours

The Chief Officer explained that through their commitment to preventative approaches it was hoped that we would see a decline in number of care hours. Such approaches include offering different ways of people coming into the workforce and how we work with external providers on smaller patch-based approaches.

The Deputy Chief Executive, as board chair, explained that the build at Crick Road is progressing well and he would look to make contact with relevant partners to arrange a visit for members.

It was confirmed that the refurbishment of the respite centre at Herbert Road is on track.

With regards to a query around agency staff we heard that the current number employed is 13, predominantly within Children's Services. In terms of the overall workforce it is a relatively small proportion.

Officers are at early stage discussions with overseas recruitment.

Remuneration for carers recently extended mileage allowance and changed from monthly to weekly.

Suggestion was made that discussions be held with young careers to identify if they wish to go on to develop a career in caring.

With regard to support for Ukrainian families officers work closely with the partnership Team, who have stood up the response to the Ukrainian families.

The Chief Officer agreed to provide further information regarding the Memory Clinic

Council resolved to accept the recommendations:

That Council endorses the report.

That Council tasks the Chief Officer of Social Care, Safeguarding and Health to maintain focus on the priority actions as set out in the concluding section of the report.

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9. SAFEGUARDING EVALUATION REPORT April 2021 - March 2022

The Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health Services presented the report to evaluate the progress of Monmouthshire County Council's key safeguarding priorities during 2021 / 2022, highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2022 - 2023. The report looked to inform Members about the effectiveness of safeguarding in Monmouthshire and the work that is in progress to support the Council's aims in protecting children and adults at risk from harm and abuse. The report also sought to inform Members about the progress made towards meeting the standards in the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy approved by Council in July 2017, amended July 2022.

County Councillor Penny Jones welcome the higher self-assessment grades, recognising the work of colleagues. She urged people to recognise perfection won't always be attained but we can always strive for it.

It was noted that the Probation Service were not included in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. The Safeguarding Service Manager confirmed that the Probation Service are involved virtually rather than physically, and they communicate well where a case involves probation.

Council resolved to accept the recommendations:

That Council endorses the safeguarding evaluation report for April 2021 – March 2022.

That Council tasks the Chief Officer of Social Care, Safeguarding and Health together with members of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group to implement the safeguarding actions as set out in current activity plan (2022 – 2023) at appendix 3.

10. APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODY - ANEURIN BEVAN COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

To appoint a councillor to represent the authority on the Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council (ABCHC)

At the AGM in May 2022, Councillors were appointed by full council to represent the authority on a wide range of outside bodies. At that time, County Councillor Alistair Neill was appointed to represent the Council on ABCHC, however due to a change in personal circumstances he is no longer able to continue with the appointment due to a conflict of interests. In consultation with the political group leaders of the Council, it has been agreed that a like for like conservative party councillor can be appointed to fill the vacancy and the conservative group have nominated County Councillor Jan Butler to fill the vacancy.

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

That Council approve the appointment of County Councillor Jan Butler to the position.

11. Motions to Council:

12. Submitted by County Councillor Jayne McKenna

Further to this Council's declaration in September about Non-Domestic Rates, this Council:

- *Recognises the perfect storm of challenges facing town centre businesses in Monmouthshire this winter.*
- *Calls on the administration to consider steps to encourage shopping local in the run up to Christmas 2022, including free parking and free public transport at weekends*

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Due to a recent announcement by the administration that there would be free bus travel and parking on weekends during December, County Councillor Jayne McKenna requested that the motion be withdrawn.

Upon being put to a vote Council resolved to accept the withdrawal

County Councillor Richard John was invited to submit an emergency motion:

This Council:

Supports the proposal of the Boundary Commission for Wales of a Monmouthshire parliamentary constituency that is coterminous with the local authority.

County Councillor Paul Griffiths proposed an amendment that:

This Council:

*Supports the proposal of the Boundary Commission for Wales of a Monmouthshire parliamentary constituency that is coterminous with the local authority **and regrets the decision the proposal by the boundary commission to reduce the number of parliamentary constituencies in wales***

County Councillor Ben Callard seconded the amendment.

County Councillor John expressed disappointment at the amendment, considering it unrelated to the functions of Council, and unrelated to the consultation with which he wishes Council to engage.

There was suggestion that the amendment gives power to the Welsh voice and not supporting the amendment would result in Wales losing even more representation in the UK.

Upon being put to a vote the amendment was carried and debate on the substantive motion ensued.

Upon being put to a vote the substantive motion was carried.

13. Members Questions

14. From County Councillor Jan Butler to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

What representations has the administration made to Welsh Government about road safety on the A4042?

The Cabinet Member thanked County Councillor Butler and expressed gratitude to residents highlighting the safety issues on the A4042. She explained that she is in conversation with Goytre Fawr Community Council who have collated evidence indicating that the criteria have been met for a safe crossing point in their area. It is now on a waiting list for the programme with Welsh Government as trunk roads are not the direct responsibility of this Council. The Cabinet Member has written to WG to support their case.

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As a supplementary County Councillor Butler sought the support of Council to force the hands of WG, and asked Cabinet to look at this more closely and to press WG and SEWTRA to act more quickly.

In response the Cabinet Member explained that she would continue to be in contact with the Community Council and support them in their efforts.

15. From County Councillor Paul Pavia to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

Will the Cabinet Member make a statement regarding a county-wide review of Council controlled car parks?

The Cabinet Member explained that the planned review of car parking was deferred by the previous administration, but it is the intention that such a review will take place early in this administration, and officers intend to start a review early 2023.

As a supplementary, County Councillor Pavia recognised the delay in the review due to the pandemic and asked if the Cabinet Member would commit to reviewing the car park arrangements over the next calendar year in 2023.

County Councillor Maby agreed and added that they would look at wider issues around sustainability and affordability, ensuring that town centres are supported.

16. From County Councillor Paul Pavia to County Councillor Rachel Garrick, Cabinet Member for Resources

What assessment has the Cabinet Member made regarding the impact of energy price rises on school budgets this year?

The Cabinet Member responded that there are provisions in the 22/23 budget, so there is a level of protection from price rises for purchases ahead of the 22/23 financial year. Whilst UK Government has brought in energy price caps, that is now extended to businesses, government departments and schools, until the end of this financial year this will not benefit schools as a result of the forward purchasing of our energy contracts.

A £446k pressure in the 22/23 budget represents forecasts undertaken as part of the budget setting process of energy costs for the year. This was calculated on a site by site basis and all schools have received their share of funding and is reflected in the forthcoming month 6 forecast.

As a supplementary County Councillor Pavia asked what the administration is doing in the short term to help our schools around the other core mitigations, namely improving energy procurement and encouraging energy reduction.

The Cabinet Member explained that the Month 4 Outturn Report showed that forecasts are showing that several schools will go into deficit by year end. Officers are working with individual officers of each school to identify savings, at energy levels and beyond.

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17. From County Councillor Christopher Edwards to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

Withdrawn. To go to December meeting.

18. From County Councillor Lisa Dymock to County Councillor Sara Burch, Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities

What action is the administration taking to improve facilities for young people in the Caldicot area in the next 12 months?

The Cabinet Member highlighted the facilities offered by Caldicot Leisure Centre, as well as the multi-use games area and skate park, which are free to use. The sports development team supports a range of sports groups in the town. Welsh Government funding has meant that we have been able to offer free swimming sessions and the summer holiday provision at the leisure centre and food and fun activities at Dewstow Primary School.

The Cabinet Member added that the Youth Service provide sessions at The Zone four evenings a week for children and young people aged 11 to 17, and a drop-in facility during the day for young people who are not in school, which provides alternative education, counselling, CV writing support and substance misuse support. They organise trips to places such as Alton Towers, and run junior youth clubs in Portskewett, Caerwent and Rogiet. They provide support on the transition between primary and secondary schools. The Youth Service ran outreach sessions through the summer at Caldicot Town Centre, skate park and other locations and have been able to secure Safer Streets Funding for Caldicot until September 2023. This has strengthened the capacity of the Youth Service and they have added extra sessions at weekends.

The Shift Project runs one to one or small group support for young people struggling with mental health issues and have recently secured extra funding to offer more help to more young people.

The Umbrella Project helps young people and their parents who are struggling with issues around sexuality, identity and acceptance.

The Cabinet Member has asked officers to look at how the Council supports volunteer run youth clubs, arts provisions and how schools can support young people out of school hours. MonLife are also looking at how Caldicot Castle facilities serve young people and how play areas and open spaces meet the needs of the older age groups.

The planned active travel improvements for Caldicot and the 20mph limit are all part of making the town a safe and pleasant environment where people can travel independently, on foot or on bike.

Caldicot Town Council extended an invitation to County Councillor Dymock to attend the next meeting of the Caldicot Multi-Agency Problem Solving Group.

As a supplementary County Councillor Dymock welcomed the invitation and extended her support for future improvements.

19. Next Meeting - 1st December 2022

Noted.

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The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

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