

SUBJECT: Shape and Leadership Structure of Monmouthshire County Council

MEETING: Council

DATE: 26/06/2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To set out a refreshed permanent Strategic Leadership Team design and organisation structure for the Council.

1.2 To improve the operational and delivery capability of the organisation through a clear permanent design that aligns accountability and responsibility within balanced directorate portfolios that lend themselves well to officer development opportunity across the Council without compromising current delivery.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

2.1 Notes the revised strategic leadership team design and organisation structure proposed by the Chief Executive set out in sections 4 and 5 below and supplemented at Appendix 1 in accordance with paragraphs 14.2.1 – 14.2.3 of the Council Constitution.

2.2 Agrees to the creation of the permanent positions of Chief Officer Infrastructure and Chief Officer Place and Community Wellbeing.

2.3 Agrees to the deletion of the posts Chief Officer Communities and Place, and Chief Officer Customer, Culture and Wellbeing.

2.4 Agrees to the positions set out in paragraph 2.2 above, being advertised within the Council to all officers on Head of Service grades, as Tier 4 positions with a pay grade up to £93k. This approach satisfies paragraph 36.1.3 of the Council Constitution.

2.5 Authorises the Monitoring Officer to update the Council's Constitution to reflect changes to Chief Officer delegations brought about by agreeing to the above recommendations.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Members will recall that when the Chief Officer for Place and Infrastructure left the Council in September 2024, a decision was made to introduce an interim officer

leadership structure to ensure continuity whilst giving the Leader and Chief Executive time to reflect on the best configuration going forward. This coincided with the short-term absence of the Chief Executive and subsequent departure of the Chief Officer Communities and Place in March 2025. This paper and the attached appendix set out the changes now proposed on a permanent basis.

4 KEY ISSUES

4.1 The organisation has a clear purpose and a clear strategy, both of which are codified in the Community and Corporate Plan. The resource envelope within which the Council operates continues to be challenging and is not conducive to new activities that do not directly contribute to the agreed priorities of the organisation. The next period will be characterised by assessing progress on these priorities and their impact rather than adding to them. The leadership and shape of the organisation must align with this and remain affordable. The reintroduction of permanent leadership arrangements will bring with it a degree of certainty. The opportunity to realign directorates to contemporary challenges, without introducing unnecessary turbulence, is a timely one to take.

4.2 Change usually brings with it disruption. Managed badly it can be demotivating and lead to a fall in performance levels. Research literatures are littered with examples of grand reforms that withered away and added little. The dividend derived from reform must be greater than the premium paid. Change for improvement should always be the goal, not change for change's sake. Pace, thoughtfulness and openness applied equally, introduce good conditions for change.

4.3 The proposals that follow are not radical. They take account of the organisation's current context and set out opportunities to strengthen arrangements in a meaningful way, without compromising direction and without introducing unnecessary turmoil. Importantly they have regard for financial realities and suggest a material saving in budgetary terms of circa £100k in financial year 2025/26 that is recurrent.

4.4 Departmental Structure

- (a) One new Directorate, Place and Community Wellbeing will be created and a second, Infrastructure, will be confirmed as permanent.
- (b) The Directorates of Communities and Place and Customer, Culture and Wellbeing will be deleted.
- (c) A small Unit working directly to the Chief Executive incorporating Community Development, Communication, Engagement, Strategic Part and whole authority change will be formed. This WILL NOT have Directorate status.

4.5 Strategic Leadership Team

- (a) It is proposed to make permanent the interim Strategic Leadership positions of Chief Officer Infrastructure and Chief Officer Place, with the latter redesignated Chief Officer Place and Community Wellbeing. They will both be advertised internally and available to all Heads of Service to put themselves forward. Both positions will interview before Full Council. In the event Council determines there not to be a candidate suitable for appointment, an external exercise will be run. Both positions are graded at Tier 4 within the senior leadership structure approved by Council at its meeting in April 2025.
- (b) The post of Chief Officer Communities and Place and the post of Chief Officer Customer, Culture and Wellbeing will be deleted from the establishment.
- (c) Leadership savings of £170k were built into the 2025/26 Budget. It is expected that these permanent changes and associated consequential impacts, will free a further sum of circa £100k as a saving or to invest in front line delivery.

4.6 Customer, Culture and Wellbeing

- (a) It is intended to delete the Customer, Culture and Wellbeing Directorate and distribute the service areas into three main areas of the organisation as set out below.
- (b) MONLIFE, a component of the directorate, was originally built as a service cluster to provide a necessary critical mass for the successful establishment of a TRUST model. Ultimately Council decided that the case for a Trust model, specifically the value it created, was not made. The design principle is therefore no longer valid.
- (c) It is proposed, at least in the short-term, to continue with the brand MONLIFE, on public facing, income generating services. It does have recognition with customers. It does not feel like a good use of public money to be changing boards on the sides of buildings.

4.7 Disaggregation model

- (a) The Youth Service will move to the Children, Learning, Skills and Economy Directorate led by Will McLean. The Youth Service has a strong fit with our schooling and wider learning agenda. It is a straightforward move. The Service Head welcomes this move. Interim changes which saw Economy, Employment, Skills and Business Development move to this Directorate are now confirmed as permanent changes.
- (b) Leisure, Countryside and Culture will move to a new Directorate, Place and Community Wellbeing. Place-making, whilst a bit of a clumsy term is widely appreciated as an attempt to plan improvements and delivery with the individuals,

neighbourhoods, and communities it is going to serve. This is starting to come to fruition through the ongoing development of 'Place Plans' for larger towns. Aligning many of the primary community service delivery areas (Leisure, Sports, Play, Environment, Arts, Culture, Community Hubs) enhances the opportunity for integrated thinking to be brought into play in what is done, not just what is planned to be done.

- (c) The Business Support Team previously embedded in MONLIFE will move to the Place and Community Wellbeing Directorate.
- (d) Active Travel will move to the Infrastructure Directorate. Our recently appointed Head of Transport carried responsibility in this service area and will continue to do so.
- (e) Community Development, Engagement and Communications will be led directly by the Chief Executive as part of a small newly formed Unit. Telling a clear story of what matters to the Council and amplifying this repeatedly through outstanding communication and public relations is always a challenge for complex organisations. Recognising and committing to a clear programme of building capability within partners and communities and sharing decision-making with others is now recognised by many political leaders, commentators, and practitioners as a key in building contemporary public service. It is not easy work. A county such as Monmouthshire with atypical social capital to draw on should be able to do this well. All 46 elected members need to be supported in this. Without a steady hand, it can be disruptive. Equally it is important Councillors in their Ward role feel that they have a route into the organisation that hears their local issues. The Service Heads welcome this move.

5 OTHER CHANGES

5.1 Housing

- (a) It is proposed that Housing will become part of the Social Care, Safeguarding and Health Directorate. The largest proportion of its work centres on assisting citizens when they are vulnerable either through ongoing personal need or through an event that places them into crises. The individuals involved tend to have multiple needs and often they cross service areas. This move should strengthen a more integrated response for many. In other areas of work, Housing works very closely with Environmental Health colleagues, who form part of the Public Protection Service within this Directorate.
- (b) The Head of Housing, Rural Development and Strategic Partnerships will move to the newly formed Chief Executives Unit. She will focus high level whole authority coordination on partnerships such as Marches Forward and Cardiff Capital Region. In addition, she will offer leadership to a developing programme of whole authority change, beyond structural change. She will oversee the movement of all Housing

functions to the Social Care Directorate and Rural Development to the new Place and Community Wellbeing Directorate. The pace of these movements will be carefully managed to avoid any performance dips.

5.2 School Catering

Proposed to move from Place (as was) to the Infrastructure Directorate.

5.3 Flooding

Proposed to move from Place (as was) to the Infrastructure Directorate.

5.4 Strategic Operations

This small but important business support team will move from Community and Place (now deleted) to the Resources Directorate under the line management of the Deputy Chief Executive who will determine their subsequent deployment. Interim changes which saw whole authority procurement, building cleaning and Health and Safety move to the Resources Directorate are confirmed as permanent changes.

EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

6.1 Most of the changes within this paper are in the gift of the Chief Executive to make within his delegated powers. However, they have been developed after significant engagement across the organisation, particularly with key officers impacted. The changes have been welcomed.

6.2 The changes proposed are at a leadership level. They are designed to recognise the operating context of the organisation and ensure that we have the right capability and capacity in place to advance the priorities set out in the Community and Corporate Plan and the Council's Wellbeing priorities. Key areas of community development are being brought closer to the heart of the organisation with the intention of improving integration. The alignment with future generations commitments is strong and the core arrangements to promote safeguarding and corporate parenting are not disturbed.

7. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

7.1 Council will be aware that there are many options on how to design an organisation. A Council is undeniably complex, and there is a need to continue to deliver well as changes are introduced to improve things further. It is the Chief Executives view that the proposals for consideration marry these competing demands. Changes have been made arising from consultation across the organisation, and these improvements have strengthened the proposal put forward in this report.

7.2 The proposal has been developed with a very clear understanding of the financial environment. It is important that the organisation continues to reflect on the overall cost of its officer cadre, including leadership costs. Members will note that the proposal before you, seeks to reduce rather than increase cost.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 £177,000 was removed from the leadership cost of the organisation as part of the approved budget for financial year 2025/26. This proposal will add a further recurrent revenue saving of circa £100,000 which will begin to be realised in 2025/26.

9. CONSULTEES

Cabinet

Strategic Leadership Team

All officers of the Council

Professional Associations (Trade Unions)

10. Background papers

A paper circulated to all staff of the Council is attached as Appendix 1. Very similar papers were circulated separately to all Councillors and trade union representatives.

11. Author

Paul Matthews, Chief Executive

12. CONTACT DETAILS

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