

**Minutes of the meeting of Monmouthshire County Council held
at County Hall, Usk on Thursday, 16th January 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

PRESENT: County Councillor D.L.S. Dovey (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Batrouni, D. Blakebrough, G.C. Burrows, R.F. Chapman, P.R. Clarke, J.E. Crook, G.L. Down, A. Easson, D.L. Edwards, R.M. Edwards, D.J. Evans, P.S. Farley, P.A. Fox, J. George, R.J.W. Greenland, L. Guppy, E.J. Hackett Pain, R.G. Harris, R.J.C. Hayward, M. Hickman, R.J. Higginson, P.A.D. Hobson, G. Howard, S.G.M. Howarth, D.W.H. Jones, P. Jones, S. Jones, S.B. Jones, R.P. Jordan, P. Murphy, M. Powell, J.L. Prosser, B. Strong, F. Taylor, A.C. Watts, P.A. Watts, A.E. Webb, S. White, K.G. Williams and A.M. Wintle.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. P. Matthews	Chief Executive
Mr. S.M.W. Andrews	Monitoring Officer
Mr. S. Burch	Chief Officer: Social Care and Health
Mrs. K. Beirne	Chief Officer: Regeneration and Culture
Mrs. S. McGuinness	Chief Officer: Children and Young People
Mrs. J. Robson	Head of Finance/Section 151 Officer
Mrs T. Harry	Head of Improvement and Democracy
Mr. W. McLean	Head of Strategic Partnerships
Mr. S. Kneafsey	21 st Century Schools Programme Manager
Mr. R. Hoggins	Head of Operations
Mr. M. Howcroft	Assistant Head of Finance
Mrs. D. Hill Howells	Estates and Sustainability Manager
Mr. M. Youngman	Transport Policy and Compliance Manager
Ms. R. Rawlings	Democratic Services Officer
Miss J. Atkins	Youth Service

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor V.E. Smith.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AND RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

(a) Mr. David Hedley, Standards Committee Member.

The Chairman informed Members of the sad news of the death of Mr. David Hedley on 4th January 2014. Mr. Hedley had been a member of Monmouthshire's Standards Committee and a Community Councillor for Caerwent.

Members stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

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(b) Chairman's Engagements

Members were informed of the following Chairman's Engagements:

Festival of Flowers entitled 'Advent to Candlemas' Preview Evening
Age Cymru – Spread the Warmth Winter Concert
Monmouthshire Livestock Centre
Light up a Life Service 2013
South Monmouthshire Music Centre Christmas Concert
HRH The Prince of Wales visit to Abergavenny
North Monmouthshire Music Centre Christmas Concert
Annual Awards Ceremony for post 16 pupils
Greater Gwent Youth Brass Band Annual Concert

(c) Petitions

The following petitions were presented:

- Councillor G. Howard presented a petition requesting that the Authority give commitment and support to residents of Llanelly Hill Community in retaining and ensuring the future of Gilwern Library Service.
- Councillor R.F. Chapman presented a petition to support that the Pontrilas Saw Mills permanently stop the drivers of those of their contractors using the Hereford Road through Mardy Village. In the event of non-compliance, that MCC impose a weight restriction of 7.5 tonnes (except for access) on the Hereford Road that passes through the Mardy Village ending at its junction with the A465 trunk road at Triley.

3. YOUTH SERVICE

The Chairman welcomed Jade Atkins from the Youth Service to the meeting.

We were informed that in September, Monmouthshire Road Safety had asked for entries into a competition. Young people in Monmouthshire had created a short film which highlighted the dangers of drink-driving and had achieved success in winning the competition.

Members viewed the film and congratulated and acknowledged those involved on their success for producing such an excellent piece of work which shared the poignant message of the dangers of drink driving.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest are recorded under the relevant minute heading.

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5. MINUTES

We resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 21st November 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, with the following amendments:

- Page 16, fourth bullet point, should read 'Councillor Batrouni withdrew the motion'.
- Page 10, with regard to the Domestic Abuse Conference, it should be referred to as an 'All Wales' Conference.
- With regard to the action sheet accompanying the minutes, it was requested that an additional column be added to mark progress of actions.

In response to a query raised with regard to actions from the minutes, we were advised of the following:

- With regard to the motions submitted at items 15(c) and 15(d), it had been outlined at the meeting that a written response would be sent. We were informed that a written response had been provided for Councillor Batrouni with regard to item 15(c) and that Councillor Farley had received a draft written response with regard to item 15(d). Councillor Howarth asked that all written responses be sent to all Members for information on any items requiring a written response which arose at the Council meeting.
- In response to a query with regard to updating Councillors Taylor and Watts on progress at Thornwell School, it was confirmed that at phase 2 when information was forthcoming from the contractors, all Members would be made available of the relevant information at that time.

6. PUBLIC FORUM ITEMS

None received.

7. COMMITTEE MINUTES

We resolved that the following minutes be received:

- (a) SACRE 18th October 2013.
- (b) Democratic Services Committee 4th November 2013.
- (c) Internal Monitoring Board 17th December 2013.

8. SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

We received the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Annual Report for the period 1st August 2012 to 31st July 2013, which summarised the advice given to the Council on:

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- Locally agreed syllabus
- Standards in Religious Education
- Methods of teaching and the choice of teaching materials
- Teacher training
- Collective worship
- Advice to the LA on other issues

We resolved that the SACRE Annual Report for 2012/13 be received.

9. NOTICE OF MOTION

1% Pay Award for School Staff

At the decision of the Chairman, it was agreed that this item would be considered prior to the exclusion of press and public, in order for young people attending the meeting from King Henry VIII School to witness the debate, prior to them having to leave to access school transport.

Note: County Councillor D. Blakebrough declared a personal interest as an LEA appointed Governor at Monmouth Comprehensive School and as a parent of children attending Monmouth Comprehensive School.

County Councillor G.L. Down declared a personal interest as an LEA appointed Governor at Shirenewton Primary School.

County Councillor A. Easson declared a personal interest as an LEA appointed Governor at Ysgol y Ffin School, Caldicot.

County Councillor J. George declared a personal interest as an LEA appointed Governor at Deri View School and as a parent of a child who attends a Monmouthshire School.

County Councillor R.G. Harris declared a personal interest as an LEA appointed Governor at Deri View Primary School and Llantilio Pertholey Church in Wales School.

County Councillor S.G.M. Howarth declared a personal interest due to his two sons being in post 16 education.

The following motion was moved by County Councillor D Blakebrough and seconded:

“That as Monmouthshire County Council was aware in March/April 2013 that the 1% pay award for school staff was being considered and would have an impact on their budget but failed to inform schools until September 2013 and as this decision communicated at such a late stage in the school financial year could well impact on resources for curriculum development and the rising standards agenda for the young people in Monmouthshire schools, and due to the already

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significant financial pressures on school budgets and the late communication by Monmouthshire County Council, the council agrees to fund the Monmouthshire schools 1% pay award in full to cover the 7 month period from 1st September 2013 to 31st March 2014”

In moving the motion Councillor Blakebrough highlighted the following points:

- The motion was with reference to the current year’s budget which was agreed at March 2013 and should not be confused with the forthcoming year’s budget which would be discussed at the next meeting.
- The Authority were aware in March 2013 that a 1% pay award was being considered in Parliament, however, did not inform schools until September, half way through their budget year, that they would have to find the additional 1%.
- School Heads and Governors asked the Authority to reconsider the decision, however, were informed at the Schools Budget Forum in November 2013 that due to the lack of funds available, the Authority would not cover the cost of the 1% and that it would be the responsibility of the schools to find it within their own budgets.
- Neighbouring Authorities had built the additional 1% pay award for schools into their budgets for the year.
- There had been no meaningful discussions with the Headteachers or Chairs of Governors of the impact that this would have on the children’s education.
- Impacts on schools were highlighted as, having to take funding from planned programmes, unable to invest in key stage 3 literacy and numeracy responding to information on key stage 4, and the inability to invest in ipads and tablets for teachers which would contribute to the interactive learning agenda.
- Many schools would be pushed into a deficit budget which would result in them having difficulty buying basic office supplies and there could even be the potential of the loss of support staff.
- It was felt that the decision for the Authority not to fund the 1% award conferred with Estyn’s criticism of the leadership and management.

During the debate the following items were raised:

- Schools were unable to find additional revenue to fund the pay increase midway through their year as their funding had already been allocated and it was unfair to expect them to do so.
- The schools were not against funding the 1% pay increase for the forthcoming year, but were concerned with finding the additional revenue in the current year.
- It was queried how many schools would be sent into deficit and how this would impact on their remaining budget for the year. It was raised that this would be considerable strain on school budgets and it was considered that this issue would be raised by Estyn with specific regard to schools deficit budgets.

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- It was questioned why the reserves set aside for equal pay which had not been taken up could not be used or why this money could not be found through other revenue sources which were available to for better management.
- Total schools budgets amounted to £46 million with additional grants, the average budget for comprehensive schools was £5 million, and the average primary school budget £600,000. Those budgets were for the Governors to deal with the running costs of the individual schools for the year. Any item that arises following the budgets being set has to be accommodated at that time.
- Education was a priority for the Authority and since 2010 budgets had been increased by £2 million. Schools had received an additional 1% over and above that recommended by Welsh Government.
- A proposal in the forthcoming budget was asking for additional money for schools when other budgets were being reduced.
- This decision had followed the correct process and been discussed within the budget forum which included representatives from schools, unions and governors. No representations had been received at that forum from secondary or primary schools, governors or unions and it had been accepted that this increase had been implemented after the Council had set its budget.
- It was raised why one school with a surplus budget could not assist another school which did not have the same capacity to manage an additional pressure on their existing budget for the year.
- Concern was expressed by a number of Members with regard to the timing of the announcement that the additional 1% would need to be found at a time when the curriculum had been set for the year.

The Chief Officer outlined that there was currently £686,000 surplus from schools, the pay award would amount to £186,000. With the absorption of 1% pay award, ten would be in deficit, five of which were prior to this. It was the responsibility of Governing Bodies alongside Headteachers to be accountable for any deficit budgets and there was no reason why schools should not maintain a surplus budget for difficult situations that could arise. Estyn had recognised that there had been a high level of financial commitment in Monmouthshire with school budgets being protected, progress had been made in delegating budgets to schools with appropriate monitoring. Children within Monmouthshire schools would not be penalised through Headteachers and Governing Bodies having to fund an additional 1% pay award.

A recorded vote was requested by Councillor R.J.C. Hayward and at least 8 other members and the following votes were cast:

For the motion:

County Councillors D. Batrouni, D. Blakebrough, R.F. Chapman, J.E. Crook, G.L. Down, A. Easson, D.J. Evans, P.S. Farley, J. George, R.G. Harris, R.J.C.

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Hayward, R.J. Higginson, S.G.M. Howarth, D.W.H. Jones, F. Taylor, A.C. Watts, P. Watts, K.G. Williams, A.M. Wintle.

Against the motion:

G.C. Burrows, P.R. Clarke, D.L.S. Dovey, D.L. Edwards, R.M. Edwards, P.A. Fox, R.J.W. Greenland, L. Guppy, E.J. Hackett Pain, M. Hickman, P.A.D. Hobson, G. Howard, P. Jones, S. Jones, S.B. Jones, R.P. Jordan, P. Murphy, M. Powell, J.L. Prosser, B. Strong, A.E. Webb, S. White.

The motion was lost.

10. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

We resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

11. PARK STREET SCHOOL – HEALTH AND SAFETY WORKS CALL IN.

Note: County Councillors D.L. Edwards and R.G. Harris declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Park Street School Abergavenny, as Directors of Abergavenny Community Centre Ltd.

The Cabinet had taken the decision to vary the Property Maintenance Capital Programme by viring funding from the Schools Kitchen Maintenance Budget to undertake the required Fire Safety Works at Park Street and that the lease to ACT be completed as soon as practicable.

This decision had been called in and referred to the Strong Communities Select Committee for the following reason:

- That the uncertainty of the viability of the Park Street School project means that the viring of the funding from the Schools Kitchen Maintenance budget is an unjustifiable risk.

The call in had been considered by the Strong Communities Select Committee on 28th November 2013, which had resolved that the decision be referred to Full Council for further debate.

Councillor P.A. Fox proposed a motion that the Cabinet decision made on the 6th November 2013 be accepted, and was duly seconded by County Councillor R.J.W. Greenland.

Members debated the decision and the following issues were raised:

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- Cabinet had received a report requesting the viring of money to enable work to be carried out at Park Street School to comply with the decision made in July 2012 to grant the Lease to ACT. The health and safety works were required to fulfil that decision.
- With regard to queries on changes in the business plan, it was confirmed that there had only been a minor change in the membership, and that no material changes had been made which would justify reconsidering the original decision made in July 2012.
- When the decision had been made to grant the Lease, Members had recognised the value of this project to the community.
- As a point of order, Members were informed that if the Council referred the decision back to Cabinet they were beholden to give reasons and to offer a view on the decision or they could accept the decision made in November 2013.
- There was general support for the community project, however, it was queried whether the decision with regard to use of the building being used for this purpose should have been made by the Accommodation Board.
- The building would require health and safety works to move forward with the Lease for the community project. The Council could not Lease a building which had not had the appropriate health and safety work done.
- It was raised that the select committee were not against a scheme but were against the virement of the money and that the Council should not pay the money for the works to be completed. It was clarified that if the motion was defeated Cabinet would take into account the views expressed within the Council meeting in reconsidering their decision.
- ACT had given a commitment to provide a much needed community facility for Abergavenny which would provide job opportunities in the area.

Note: County Councillor R.J.C. Hayward left the meeting at 4.35 p.m.

A recorded vote was requested by Councillor P.A.D. Hobson and at least 8 other members and the following votes were cast:

For the motion

County Councillors G.C. Burrows, P.R. Clarke, D.L.S. Dovey, R.M. Edwards, P.S. Farley, P.A. Fox, J. George, R.J.W. Greenland, L. Guppy, E.J. Hacket Pain, M. Hickman, P.A.D. Hobson, G. Howard, P. Jones, S. Jones, S.B. Jones, R.P. Jordan, P. Murphy, M. Powell, J.L. Prosser, B. Strong, A.E. Webb, S. White, K.G. Williams.

Against the motion:

County Councillors D. Blakebrough, R.F. Chapman, G.L. Down, A. Easson, D.J. Evans, S.G.M. Howarth, F. Taylor, A.C. Watts, P.A. Watts.

Abstentions:

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County Councillor D. Batrouni, J. Crook, D.L. Edwards, R.G. Harris, R.J. Higginson, D.W.H. Jones, A.M. Wintle.

The motion was carried that the Cabinet decision taken on 6th November 2013 be accepted.

12. RE-ADMISSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

We resolved that the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

13. NOTICE OF MOTION

(a) Post 16 Learning, Training or Work.

The following motion was moved by County Councillor D. Blakebrough and seconded:

'That this council supports and encourages all young people to participate in post-16 learning, training or work. That policy decisions will be built on a principle of fairness and equity in providing an environment to ensure that all Monmouthshire young people have the opportunity to experience positive post-16 transitions. That in its endeavours to encourage inclusion and prevent isolation this council is resolved to provide continuing support to those young people living in rural communities.'

In moving the motion, Councillor Blakebrough highlighted the following points:

- The motion was setting an agreement in principle, reminding of and confirming support to practise a commitment to post 16 learning, training or work.
- The Youth Service were heavily involved with youths falling within this age range which it was considered was a vulnerable age between education and adulthood.
- There was a need to make it as easy as possible to access training and education and to keep young people engaged.
- It was raised that research had shown that there was a particular risk of isolation to young people in rural communities, with a lack of income and employment opportunities, limited broadband and transport and other services which led to a reliance on parents and less contact with friend, family and social clubs.
- Pockets of deprivation and disadvantaged areas go unmissed because they are often surrounded by affluence and if this goes unrecognised there was a high risk of isolation.

During the debate the following items were raised:

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- There were groups of vulnerable young people in rural isolation, however, there was a need to look at all areas as isolation could also occur in urban areas.
- The post 16 group of young people were in a transitional stage and there was a need for appropriate access to education and training to be easily accessible.
- All Monmouthshire young people should have equal access whether in rural or urban areas.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor D. Batrouni and duly seconded:

'That this council supports and encourages all young people to participate in post-16 learning, training or work. That policy decisions will be built on a principle of fairness and equity in providing an environment to ensure that all Monmouthshire young people have the opportunity to experience positive post-16 transitions.'

Councillor D. Blakebrough accepted the amendment and upon being put to the vote the amendment was carried, became the substantive motion, and was carried.

County Councillor S.G.M. Howarth requested that it be recorded in the minutes that he abstained from voting on this item.

(b) Hospitality

Note: County Councillor B. Strong declared a personal interest as his son was a major shareholder in two local businesses.

Note: County Councillor P.R. Clarke declared a personal interest as a shareholder in two local businesses.

The following motion was moved by County Councillor D. Batrouni and seconded:

'That this Council caps hospitality spending at £10,000.'

In moving the motion, Councillor Batrouni highlighted the following points:

- Capping hospitality sends a clear message that this budget should be controlled.
- At the last check £67,000 had been spent on hospitality, however, there was confusion as to what was defined as hospitality with a number of items fitting into budgets or being considered under miscellaneous budget codes.
- There was a need for clarity and accountability for the specific spending contained within this budget heading.

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During the debate the following items were raised:

- The information submitted within the media recently had been a misrepresentation of the facts.
- The hospitality budget for the existing year was set at £16,900 and spending within that budget by the Chairman's office currently stood at £8,600. A number of items were included within that budget which could be regarded as non-hospitality items, which included £300 to purchase wreaths and costs involved with two Members attending Manchester.
- The current civic service event was hosted as an opportunity to thank voluntary bodies for their work within the county and was attended by some Members. It was raised that acceptance at this event was often sent but that some Members then declined to attend, which caused an unnecessary expense.
- Hospitality spending supported existing and new relationships and gave clear opportunities to build networks for the future benefit of the county.
- Monmouthshire's spend on hospitality had clearly reduced over the years and was small compared to neighbouring authorities.

Note: County Councillor G.L. Down left the meeting at 5.17 p.m.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor S. Jones and duly seconded:

'That this Council caps hospitality spending at £8,500 in 2014/15.'

Members debated the amendment:

- There was a need for specific budget costing and coding to be clear to ensure that budget headings and monitoring were transparent.
- Information should be clear so that the public were not receiving a misleading picture of current expenditure within the county.
- In each civic year, there have been Chairman's functions which have not been funded by the Authority but have been done by the respective Chairman for that year.

County Councillor D. Batrouni addressed the Council summing up that a cap on hospitality spending was welcomed and that it was clear that the budget headings within the existing hospitality spending needed addressing to ensure that clear monitoring of budget codes was in place.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried, became the substantive motion, and was carried:

'That this Council caps hospitality spending at £8,500 in 2014/15.'

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Note: County Councillors D. Blakebrough, R. Chapman, R.M. Edwards, P.S. Farley, R.G. Harris, S.G.M. Howarth, D.W.H. Jones, S. Jones and A.M. Wintle left the meeting at 6.00 p.m.

14. REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICE

(a) 21st Century Schools Programme

Note: the following members declared interests in this item:

MEMBER	INTEREST DECLARED
D. Blakebrough	LEA appointed Governor at Monmouth Comprehensive School: personal non prejudicial interest. Parent of children attending Monmouth Comprehensive School: personal non prejudicial interest.
G.C.Burrows	LEA appointed Governor at Monmouth Comprehensive: personal non prejudicial interest
R. Chapman	Grandson attending Chepstow Comprehensive School: personal non prejudicial interest.
J. Crook	LEA appointed Governor at Undy Primary School: personal non prejudicial interest.
G.L. Down	LEA appointed Governor at Shirenewton Primary School: personal non prejudicial interest.
D.L.S. Dovey	LEA appointed Governor at Chepstow Comprehensive School: personal non prejudicial interest
D. Edwards	LEA appointed Governor at King Henry VIII Comprehensive School: personal non prejudicial interest
R.M. Edwards	Grandchildren attending Overmonnow Primary and Monmouth Comprehensive Schools: personal non prejudicial interest
A.E. Easson	LEA appointed Governor at Ysgol Y Ffin School: personal non prejudicial interest.
D.J. Evans	LEA appointed Governor at Caldicot Comprehensive and Castle Schools: personal non prejudicial.
P.S. Farley	LEA appointed Governor at The Dell Primary School and Chepstow Comprehensive School: personal non prejudicial interest.
P.A. Fox	LEA appointed Governor at Arch Bishop Rowan School: personal non prejudicial interest.
J. George	LEA appointed Governor at Deri View School: personal non prejudicial interest. Parent of a child who attends King Henry VIII School, Abergavenny: personal non prejudicial interest.
L. Guppy	LEA Appointed Governor at Caldicot Comprehensive School: personal non prejudicial interest Parent of children at Ysgol Gymraeg Gwnllyw School: personal and prejudicial interest.

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E.J. Hackett Pain	LEA appointed Governor at Kymin View School: personal non prejudicial interest.
R.G. Harris	LEA appointed Governor of Deri View and Llantilio Pertholey Schools, Abergavenny: personal non prejudicial interest.
R.J.C. Hayward	LEA appointed Governor at Osbaston Church in Wales and Mounton House Schools: personal non prejudicial interest.
R.J. Higginson	LEA appointed Governor at Caldicot Comprehensive School: personal non prejudicial interest.
S.G.M. Howarth	Parent of children at King Henry VIII Comprehensive School; personal non prejudicial interest.
D.W.H. Jones	LEA appointed Governor at Llanvihangel Crucorney and Ysgol Cymraeg y Fenni Schools: personal non prejudicial interest.
P. Jones	LEA appointed Governor at Raglan Primary School: personal non prejudicial interest.
S.B. Jones	LEA appointed Governor at Goytre Fawr Primary School: personal non prejudicial interest.
R.P. Jordan	LEA appointed Governor at King Henry VIII Comprehensive School: personal non prejudicial interest.
P. Murphy	LEA appointed Governor at Shirenewton Primary School: personal non prejudicial interest.
M. Powell	LEA appointed Governor at King Henry VIII Comprehensive School and Deri View Primary School; personal non prejudicial interest
F. Taylor	Parent of children attending Monmouthshire School: personal non prejudicial interest.
P. Watts	LEA appointed Governor at Castle Park Primary School: personal non prejudicial interest.
A.E. Webb	LEA appointed Governor at the Dell Primary School: personal non prejudicial interest.
S. White	LEA appointed Governor at Monmouth Comprehensive School and a community Governor at Overmonnow Primary School: personal non prejudicial interest
A.M. Wintle	LEA appointed Governor on Overmonnow School; personal non prejudicial interest.

Note: County Councillor P.A.D. Hobson left the meeting at 6.05 p.m.

We received a report seeking approval of the initial two (of the four secondary schools cluster programme) Strategic Outline Cases and changes to the original Strategic Outline Proposal which had reported to Council in November 2011, associated with Monmouthshire's 21st Century Schools Programme. The report outlined projects relating to the capital expenditure programme targeted at the re-development of Monmouthshire's Secondary Schools estates, for funding under the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme.

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The key changes were outlined as:

- The proposal was to provide new build solutions instead of extensive refurbishment and part new build. The revised proposal provided, in the long term, better value for money, modern teaching and learning environments and a more sustainable and building stock.
- Phasing the programme to meet WG funding strategy/timescales. This would deliver the four secondary school programme in two phases of two.

The programme of secondary schools projects had been amended to meet the revised Welsh Government Funding strategy, with regard to:

- Maximising the opportunity and availability of WG funding streams.
- Meeting the key assessment criteria with regard to the reduction of surplus places, estate inefficiencies and suitability with regard to meeting the needs of new and modern 21st Century teaching and learning environments.
- Development of the schools cluster model (primary and secondary) to meet Welsh Government and Monmouthshire County Council's transformational teaching and learning agenda. To promote and support knowledge, share good teaching and learning practices between all schools. To develop efficiencies in the management and running of the schools estates.

The first part of the programme, details of which were captured in the first two strategic outline cases, was due to commence in February 2014. The first two schools would be Caldicot and Monmouth. Full Council approval was sought to these two strategic outline cases before Welsh Government approval was provided and the programme was maintained.

Note: County Councillor P. Watts left the meeting at 6.12 p.m.

Members outlined their support for the 21st Century Schools programme and County Councillor G. Howard proposed, and was duly seconded, that the report recommendations be approved.

We resolved to:

- Endorse the phased building approach advocated in delivering the whole schools programme.
- Approve the revised Strategic Outline Proposal for the 21st Century Schools Programme and all changes since the previously approved Strategic Outline Proposal in November 2011.
- Approve the two Strategic Outline Cases in advance of receiving Welsh Government approval of them estimated to be achieved by the end of January 2014 and the approval to commence on the development of the next stage, being stage 4 and 5 of the Outline Business Cases for the first two bids.

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- Receive further reports as progress is made through the process and funding from Welsh Government is confirmed, in order to approve the inclusion of the projects in the capital programme.

13. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF OFFICER: REGENERATION AND CULTURE

Note: County Councillors J. Crook left the meeting at 6.28 p.m.

(a) Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013

Note: County Councillor P.R. Clarke declared a personal interest due to his businesses being included within those with responsibilities under this legislation.

We received a report in order to agree the Authority's approach to implementing its duties under the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013.

All Local Authorities in Wales had statutory responsibilities as a Food Authority to enforce relevant food law in its area.

Welsh Government had recently introduced new legislation under the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 to establish a mandatory food hygiene rating scheme. This set out statutory obligations on local authorities to inspect and rate the hygiene of food business in their area in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Government and the Food Standards Agency. The Act introduced additional responsibilities upon the Authority in relation to implementation and enforcement of the scheme. There would now be a legal requirement on food businesses to display their rating. The practical implementation of the Authority's day to day duties, required the delegation of powers to officers.

Members debated the report and welcomed the changes and the responsibility for raising food hygiene scores.

County Councillor D.L. Edwards proposed, and was duly seconded, that the recommendations in the report be approved.

We resolved to:

- Delegate the powers set out in Schedule One to the report to officers duly authorised by the Head of Regulatory Services.
- Set a fee for re-rating of businesses upon request at £150, subject to annual review by the Public Protection Manager, and revision if deemed by them to be appropriate, in consultation with the Directorate accountant.

(b) MCC Response to Welsh Government M4 Corridor around Newport Consultation

We received a report updating Members on the proposed response prepared by Monmouthshire County Council to the Welsh Government's consultation on the M4 Corridor around Newport.

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Following a number of long standing proposals and earlier consultations for a new M4 motorway, in March 2013 the Welsh Government concluded that the only solution to the traffic problems around Newport was via construction of a new three lane motorway to the south of Newport. In September 2013, the Welsh Government commenced consultation on the M4 Corridor around Newport.

The current consultation had seen a number of drop-in sessions held and further workshops on the Health Impact and Environmental Liaison. This was followed by a Members Briefing and observations and comments from these events had been incorporated into the response. The Council's response had been submitted to Welsh Government subject to any further amendments that Members may wish to make that were approved at today's meeting.

Note: County Councillors P.R. Clarke and B. Strong left the meeting at 6.36 p.m.

Members debated the report, and raised the following issues:

- At the consultation event held at Ebenezer Chapel, officers were unable to give information to form a view, other than it was Welsh Government's preferred option. It was raised that this did not consider a strategic approach to looking at transport problems in South East Wales.
- The Authority should lobby for an integrated approach to transport in South East Wales looking at how people transport around the area.
- There was mention of a potential for a link road, but no information on the location and the response made no reference to this being made clear.
- It was raised that no consideration had been given the effect on ecology or business and this was proposing a fast track to Cardiff, bypassing Monmouthshire. The response did not identify the need for a joined up approach and an integrated transport system. Severn Tunnel Junction was only mentioned in two lines and there was no reference to the link road through the steelworks.
- Whilst it was recognised that this was not ideal, Monmouthshire could only influence with views but could not make the decision.
- Local Members raised concerns that their views had not been included in the response and there should be a greater emphasis on integrated transport and the concerns raised with regard to the effectiveness of the consultation process. Local people had felt that they were uninformed on the detail.
- Transport assessments were not particularly accurate and assertions and predictions for road flows were greater than they actually are.
- This option offered was not considered to be the preferred option for Monmouthshire and there was a need for stronger representations to be made on alternatives.
- The costs of this would prevent other infrastructure projects being progressed.

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The Transport Policy and Compliance Manager thanked those Members that had contributed comments on the various drafts. We were informed that this was the second consultation on the M4 in three years, the previous containing more mention of other forms of transport. In 2013, the Authority had been informed that that had been removed and linked in with the metro. We were advised of the high level strategic position and further detail would come as it was concluded. If a route was chosen, there would be various impact assessments which would be assessed separately prior to any draft plan moving forward. Information had been sent to Welsh Government regarding the link road. Once a draft plan was presented to the Minister, more detail would emerge, and through that detail there would be more discussions with us as the Planning and Highways Authority.

Councillor J.L. Prosser proposed and was duly seconded, that the response be sent with an addendum of the importance of strengthening integrated transport with the views expressed within the meeting.

Note: County Councillor P. Jones left the meeting at 7.12 p.m.

The Head of Operations outlined that a letter could be sent as a result of the Council meeting outlining the discussion, with general comments, the emphasis on integrated transport was insufficient and that there should be a major strategy for South East Wales. There was a need for information where the link road would go and fundamentally the consultation was flawed. Local Members requested signposting for the steelworks road.

We resolved that a response be sent to the Welsh Government with an addendum of the importance of strengthening integrated transport with the views expressed within the meeting.

Note: County Councillor D.L. Edwards left the meeting at 7.20 p.m.

14. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE (SECTION 151 OFFICER)

(a) Adoption of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2014/15

Note: County Councillors R.G. Harris and R.J. Higginson declared personal interests as members of the South East Wales Valuation Tribunal.

We received a report presenting arrangements for the implementation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2014/15.

Having considered the detail of the report we resolved:

- To note the making of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations ("the Prescribed Requirements Regulations") 2013 by the Welsh Government on 26 November 2013.

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- To adopt the provisions within the Regulations in respect of its Scheme for the financial year 2014/15 as the Council's local scheme from 1st April 2014, with the following conditions regarding the discretionary elements being consistent with arrangements in 2013/14.
 - To apply a 100% disregard for war disablement pensions, war widows' pensions and war widowers' pensions, for both pensioners and working age claimants.
 - Not to increase the extended reduction periods for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard 4 weeks in the Prescribed Scheme.
 -
 - Not to increase the backdate period for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard 3 months contained within the Prescribed Scheme
 - To provide the minimum level of information to customers in order to ensure they are notified of their award in accordance with legislation
- To note the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken by the Council on the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2014/15

15. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

(a) Family Absence for Members

We received a report on The Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013, "(the Regulations)" made under Part 2 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 ("the Measure") which required the Council to make Standing Orders as soon as practicable to give effect to the prescribed conditions to be satisfied to meet the entitlement to absence set out in the regulations.

Having considered the report we resolved:

- That the Head of Democratic Services be granted delegated powers to carry out duties as required under the Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013.
- That the role and function of the Chairman of the Council, as set out in the Council's Constitution, be amended to provide for the Chairman to carry out duties as required under the Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013.
- That a politically balanced sub-committee comprising 3 members of the Democratic Services Committee be established to hear and determine any

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complaints from Members regarding a refusal by the Head of Democratic Services to grant family absence

- That the Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to make such changes to the Council's Standing Orders as are necessary to give effect to the Council's decision and compliance with the Regulations. In this regard, to refer further consideration of the matters set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report regarding Standing Orders to the Democratic Services Committee

16. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF IMPROVEMENT AND DEMOCRACY

(a) Payment of Mileage for Constituency Responsibilities

We received a report considering a scheme for the payment of mileage to Members for mileage incurred in carrying out constituency responsibilities.

Having considered the key issues, the following points were made:

- For those Members in rural wards where they had to travel long distances on constituency duties this would be worthwhile.
- Whilst there would only be one claim per month, this could include multiple journeys.
- Given the budget implications, it was inappropriate to approve the recommendation of the adoption of constituency mileage payments.
- It was unclear whether this could effectively be monitored.

Note: County Councillors R.G. Harris, D.W.H. Jones, P.A.D. Hobson and S.G.M. Howarth returned to the meeting.

We resolved that this Council would not support the payment of mileage to Members incurred in carrying out constituency responsibilities.

17. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

**(a) From County Councillor J. Crook to County Councillor S.B.Jones,
Cabinet Member for County Operations:**

"Has there already been instruction to begin implementing the proposed rural street light switch off's as included in the Conservative/Lib Dem budget proposals?"

Councillor Crook had left the meeting, however, the Cabinet Member, County Councillor S.B. Jones responded that prior to the commencement of this programme of switch off, all Community and Town Councils would be notified.

(b) From County Councillor S. White to the Leader, County Councillor P.A. Fox:

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With reference to Press Release "Gonna be a Green Christmas" dated 3rd December 2013:

We as a Council put great store by our support to farmers of Monmouthshire. We work with our tenant farmers, to be fair and helpful to landlords. We fought long and hard for our new Livestock Market to give farmers the best venue to market their prized stock.

Why then did we advocate the people of Monmouthshire should "go veggie" and "give up the turkey"

Bullet point 3 "Monmouthshire is a major food producer" conflicts wildly with bullet point 5, "go veggie" and "give up the turkey".

Bullet point 6 "Ditch the Christmas Card" many charities rely on sales of cards each year.

Where was our Christmas spirit, can I be assured this conflict of interest will never happen again?

County Councillor S. White withdrew the question.

Note: County Councillors G.C. Burrows and M. Hickman left the meeting at 7.35 p.m.

(c) From County Councillor D. Batrouni to the Leader, County Councillor P.A. Fox:

'Does he support the Coalition government's £1.7bn cut to the Welsh Government budget?'

Note: County Councillors R.G. Harris, A. Watts and K.G. Williams left the meeting at 7.37 p.m.

The Leader responded that this sort of question was inappropriate for this chamber as it did not directly relate to the Authority's business, however as it had been allowed he would reflect on the background that led to the situation that Councillor Batrouni referred to.

In 2010 Labour left the UK with over £900,000,000 worth of debt which worked out at nearly £20,000 of debt being owed by every man, woman and child in Great Britain. At that time the UK deficit was the second largest deficit of the 27 member States. By the Labour Party's own admission they almost bankrupted the country. Clearly the current UK government inherited a massive financial mess to sort out.

The UK Government was putting things right however it was a painful journey that had to be travelled.

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In Wales the grant that flows from Westminster to the Labour Government in Cardiff is unhypothecated which means that the Labour Government can spend Wales' money as they see fit and they have chosen to cut funding to local government and the services it provides. Clearly they see local government as less important than other areas hence their decision to take money away. I would argue that the question that should be asked is to the questioner himself is does he agree with his own Labour Government slashing the funding to local authorities in Wales and threatening the valuable services they all provide?

As a supplementary question, Councillor Batrouni asked that the Leader whether he supported the original question or not.

The Leader responded that Labour's record at a Westminster Level, at a Wales level and here at a local level is clear to all. The Prime Minister asks Mr. Milliband for his ideas on how he would cut the deficit and he has not got any.

I ask the Labour Leader for his ideas on how he would deal with the cuts his government has levelled on us and he has no ideas but chooses to spend his time misleading the public over hospitality rather than help find solutions to our £20mil shortfall.

**(d) From County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor P. Murphy,
Cabinet Member for Finance:**

'How much of Nesta Income has been utilised to pay for Dr Thomas' services?'

In response Councillor Murphy gave the figure of £31,871.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Batrouni asked over what period of time was this amount for.

In response, Councillor Murphy would provide this information for Councillor Batrouni following the meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.