

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held at Remote Meeting on Thursday, 3rd December, 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, D. Dovey, L.Dymock, A. Easson, R. Edwards, M.Feakins, P.A. Fox, R.J.W. Greenland, L. Guppy, R. Harris, J. Higginson, S. Howarth, R.John, D. Jones, L.Jones, P. Jones, S. Jones, P. Jordan, M.Lane, P. Murphy, P.Pavia, M. Powell, J.Pratt, R.Roden, 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
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
Julie Boothroyd	Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance
Mark Hand	Head of Place-making, Housing, Highways and Flood
Deb Hill-Howells	Head of Commercial and Integrated Landlord Services

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors J.Becker, D. Evans, M.Groucutt and G. Howard

1. Declarations of interest

To be noted under the relevant item.

2. Public Questions

None.

3. Chairman's announcement and receipt of petitions

The Chair conducted a minute silence in respect of those who have been affected by, and lost their lives to, the pandemic, noting the sad loss of Mr. Graham White, husband of former Chairman Mrs Sue White.

The Chair thanked all staff, members, and volunteers of the Monmouthshire team for their continued commitment in looking after the people of our County and beyond.

4. Reports for Council:

4.1. **SOCIAL CARE, SAFEGUARDING AND HEALTH ANNUAL DIRECTORS PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019/20**

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The Chief Officer presented the Annual Statutory Report on Performance 2019/20 from the Director of Social Care, Safeguarding and Health. Members were invited to comment.

Councillor Batrouni praised the team and the report. He sought assurance around domiciliary care post Covid19, given the demographic and rural nature of the county. He raised a question regarding the adequacy of intermediate care for people leaving hospital.

There is a national all-Wales infrastructure in place for both Adult and Children safeguarding which ensures the correct policy and procedural framework is in place. The Chief Officer would discuss this further following the meeting.

With regards to recruitment and the concern of regulators, rurality and demography does prove challenging but Members were assured that officers were on top of this. We heard that the apprenticeship programme was proving successful.

There were numerous challenges around delayed transfers particularly in community hospitals. There are a range of intermediate services in place. The figure does not capture the complexity of the issue.

The Cabinet Member commended the interactive report and the can-do attitude of the whole team.

Councillor M. Powell seconded the report and upon being put to the vote Council resolved to accept the recommendation to endorse the Annual Statutory Directors Performance Report 2019/20.

4.2. CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member for Governance presented the report to seek approval of a response to be submitted on behalf of Council to the Welsh Government Corporate Joint Committee Regulations consultation.

Seconded by Councillor Pratt.

There was some feeling that the response did not reflect the strong concerns raised at the Public Services Committee.

It was suggested that this was a way of merging Councils, without a clear line of accountability.

It was suggested that a full and thorough discussion between Members was required.

Upon being put to the vote Council resolved to accept the recommendation that the draft response to the consultation on Corporate Joint Committees contained at appendix 1 be strengthened and submitted on behalf of Council.

4.3. UPDATED ASSET INVESTMENT POLICY

Council received the report to amend the existing Asset Investment Policy to reflect Audit Committee recommendations, national guidance and learning and as endorsed by the Council's Investment Committee.

Seconded by Councillor Powell.

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It was stated that there would be support for enhanced scrutiny and additional training arrangements.

It was noted that there would be a report to Cabinet 16th December 2020 regarding the development company.

The Chief Officer for Resources explained we would still potentially look to entertain commercial investment within County.

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

That Council agree to the proposed update and amendments to the Asset Investment Policy as contained in Appendix 1.

To agree the revised terms of reference for the Investment Committee as contained in Appendix 1.

That all future investment proposals are to consider the environmental impact and sustainable development principles as part of the business case for any proposed investment.

5. Notices of Motion:

5.1. Submitted by County Councillor L. Dymock

We ask this Council to call upon the Welsh Government to adopt the Climate Emergency 10 point plan for Wales as launched by our Prime Minister Boris Johnson on November 18th 2020.

Councillor Jordan seconded the motion.

The Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Services supported the motion. She added that Welsh Government recognise MCC as the most progressive Council in Wales regarding climate change and we are working with them to identify how we can work collaboratively.

Councillor Pratt agreed to provide further information around the progression of electric vehicles following the meeting.

In response to a comment that we lack strategic direction from WG, the Leader of the Opposition provided several examples of including 100 action points in a recently released plan, a Clean Air Report in August 2020 and Climate Week in October 2020.

There were opinions that the Prime Minister's one year plan was inadequate.

Concerns were raised around nuclear energy, tree planting and the lack of progress to reduce fuel poverty.

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The Leader of the Council added his support for the motion and expressed disappointment at the lack of support from Councillors who he believed were acting politically. He added that we need direction from UK Government.

It was agreed that this matter should remain at the top of Council agenda.

Upon being put to the vote the motion was carried.

5.2. Submitted by County Councillor D. Batrouni

This Council supports the Welsh Government's firebreak policy, noting the last firebreak was estimated to save over 1000 lives. It is essential all parties and councillors support the firebreak policy because not only does it save lives but it also eases the huge pressure on all public services and staff, including council services and staff.

Councillor Thomas seconded the motion.

The Cabinet Member for Social Justice and Community Development agreed we need to do everything we can to support residents through the pandemic. She referred to the firebreak Quality Impact Assessment and highlighted areas of concern. She also referred to a WG advice note and areas declared as low impact on the R number. There were particular concerns around the impact of the firebreak on children and their peers across Monmouthshire and Wales.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and MonLife disputed that it is essential that all parties support the firebreak given the democratic process. He referred to the impact of the firebreak on issues such as mental health, domestic violence and unemployment, and the impact on vulnerable people.

It was recognised that Monmouthshire schools did an excellent job through the firebreak period.

The Leader stated that data from Monmouthshire Track and Trace demonstrated that less than 1% of cases were associated with the hospitality sector and for that reason it was difficult to support the direction of WG. But as a responsible authority we continue to help residents adhere to the rules in place.

Upon being put to the vote the motion was defeated.

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5.3. Submitted by County Councillor D. Batrouni

That the Conservative administration makes plans to implement a council tax increase on second homes left vacant for over 6 months in the county. It is becoming an increasing problem in Monmouthshire, which is hollowing out rural communities, hiking local house prices and reducing the housing supply for local people. In addition, it could generate up to £200,000 a year to help towards the council's finances.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Thomas. In support of the motion he added that those who can afford a second property would have the means to pay the increased council tax.

The Cabinet Member explained the key issues with the increase being specifically for those second homes left vacant for six months. He highlighted the administrative burden and would not be looking to endorse a policy change which would add cost pressures to the Council.

It was recognised that the system has worked well in Pembrokeshire and it was asked the Council consider a 'Monmouthshire' way to look at this.

Upon being put to the vote the motion was defeated.

5.4. Submitted by County Councillor A. Watts

This Council congratulates Aneurin Bevan University Health Board for its ahead of schedule opening of the £350m state of the art Grange University Hospital in Cwmbran. This Council recognises and agrees with the Heath Boards strategic reconfiguration of its Minor Injuries Units back into our local Community Hospitals across Gwent. With that in mind Monmouthshire County Council calls on ABUHB to reintroduce the Minor Injuries Unit to Chepstow Community Hospital.

County Councillor Eason seconded the motion.

Councillor Watkins left the meeting at 17:40pm

County Councillor Linda Guppy declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest.

There was suggestion that this could be a nurse led unit. It was also noted this could be a GP led facility, but preference would be to use the full capacity of the hospital.

It was agreed that Council should push forward the motion to re-provide MIU provision at Chepstow.

Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health and Safeguarding referred to a statement she had received from Nick Wood, Executive Director of Primary, Community and Mental Health Services which stated that the Health Board would not be revisiting the decision on the Minor Injury Unit at Chepstow Community Hospital. The Cabinet Member would continue to take this forward.

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Members congratulated ABUHB on the opening of the Grange Hospital, and supported the motion and upon being put to the vote the motion was carried

5.5. Submitted by County Councillor F. Taylor

That this Council writes to the Minister for Health and Social Services Vaughan Gething MS to call for a routine asymptomatic testing programme for domiciliary care staff working in community settings in the same way as asymptomatic testing is available to care staff working in Care Homes.

The current position would seem to put some of our most vulnerable residents at risk, and also puts carers at unnecessary and high levels of risk. Domiciliary care staff continue to appear undervalued for the vital work they do and we note that the caring workforce is disproportionately female. Whilst we acknowledge that that robust infection control and management is important in preventing transmission of the virus, this council welcomes reconsideration of Welsh Government Policy in this matter.

Councillor P. Pavia left the meeting at 18:10

County Councillor S. Howarth seconded the motion.

Councillor R. Harris left the meeting at 18:15

Members fully supported the motion and upon being put to the vote the motion was unanimously carried.

6. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October were confirmed.

In doing so it was noted that Item 6, paragraph 2 should read that the lack of consideration referred to was the opinion of Councillor Groucutt.

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm