

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held at Remote Meeting on Thursday, 14th January, 2021 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Woodhouse (Chairman)

County Councillors: P. Clarke, D. Batrouni, J.Becker, L.Brown, A.Davies, L.Dymock, A. Easson, R. Edwards, M.Feakins, P.A. Fox, R.J.W. Greenland, M.Groucutt, L. Guppy, R. Harris, J. Higginson, G. Howard, S. Howarth, R.John, D. Jones, L.Jones, P. Jones, S. Jones, P. Jordan, M.Lane, P. Murphy, P.Pavia, M. Powell, J.Pratt, R.Roden, V. Smith, B. Strong, 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
Ruth Donovan	Assistant Head of Finance
Jane Rodgers	Head of Children's Services
Owen Wilce	Community and Partnership Development Lead

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors D. Dovey, D. Evans and S.B. Jones

1. Declarations of interest

None.

2. Public Questions

None.

3. Chairman's announcement and receipt of petitions

No petitions presented.

The Chairman expressed thanks to the workforce of MCC who have in the past month, including the Christmas period, responded to major flooding throughout the County in addition to the pressures placed on them by the pandemic. Thanks were offered to those who gave up their Christmas break to carry out a variety of duties, and all those playing a part to get through these difficult times.

4. Reports for Council:

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4.1. SAFEGUARDING EVALUATION REPORT April 2019 - March 2020

The Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health presented the report in order for Council to evaluate the progress of Monmouthshire County Council's key safeguarding priorities during 2019/2020, highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2020/2021. •

The report aimed 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, and the progress made towards meeting the standards in the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy approved by Council in July 2017, amended January 2019.

Seconded by County Councillor M. Powell.

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

For members to receive the Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report and Activity Plan.

4.2. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2021/22

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report to present arrangements for the implementation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and to approve it for 2021/22. The report also sought to affirm that, in the absence of any revisions or amendments, annual uprating amendments will be carried out each year without a requirement to adopt the whole Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Seconded by County Councillor L. Dymock.

It was agreed that self-employed people had been adversely affected by the pandemic, and in was explained that in terms of council tax criteria:

- if they are a new business, the trading position is assessed rather than trading accounts
- If not on universal credit, and an established business, the previous years accounts are looked at
- If on universal credit different arrangements are in place.

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

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.

To adopt the provisions within the Regulations above ("the Prescribed Requirements Regulations") and any 'annual uprating regulations' in respect of its Scheme for the financial year 2021/22 including the discretionary elements previously approved as the Council's local scheme from 1 st April 2021.

4.3. ELECTORAL REVIEW - RESPONSES TO DRAFT PROPOSALS

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Law presented a report for Council to consider submitting representation to The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales ("The Commission") in response to their Electoral Review – Draft Proposals Report.

Seconded by County Councillor J. Pratt.

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Concerns were expressed that the recommendations made by the cross-party working group were not considered. There were frustrations around the combination of the Usk and Llanbadoc areas.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and MonLife explained that the recommendation to combine Usk and Llanbadoc to become a two Member ward had been approved at Council in July 2020. He reassured Members that the process had been above board and approved by Full Council in the usual way. He thanked the officers for their work in the review.

Council was informed that there were to be further discussions with Govilon Community Council regarding the housing development, and separate representations would be made.

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

That members approve the response at Appendix A, as agreed by the cross-party working group for the electoral review, to be submitted to the Commission as a full council response for their consideration into the future electoral arrangements for Monmouthshire.

4.4. DIARY OF MEETINGS FOR 2021/22

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Law presented the report for Council to approve the draft diary of meetings for 2021/2022.

Seconded by County Councillor P. Jones

It was noted that given the current situation the diary may be subject to change and should be considered as a draft version.

Members were pleased to see that, where possible, meetings were not being scheduled within school holidays.

Remote meetings will continue until pandemic figures allow otherwise.

With regards to Planning Committee, the Chair of Planning agreed that early August meeting should remain as is.

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

That the diary of meetings for 2021/2022, be approved.

5. Notices of Motion:

5.1. Submitted by County Councillor Groucutt

Motion withdrawn.

6. Members Questions:

6.1. From County Councillor M. Groucutt to County Councillor R. John Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and MonLife

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Could the cabinet member for CYP inform council what steps are being taken to ensure the maximum engagement of young people in the democratic process and to encourage those newly enfranchised 16 and 17 year olds to use their vote in future Welsh elections?

In response the Cabinet Member explained that the Senedd and Elections Wales Act 2020 introduced legislation that allows 16 and 17 year olds, and foreign nationals to vote in the Senedd Elections from May 2021. The legislation requires Councils to promote awareness for the steps necessary to help people to register on the electoral roll. In undertaking the annual canvass, a leaflet had been included to make residents aware that young people and foreign nationals are able to register to vote with clear instructions on how to do so. These materials will also be used in the build up to the election in May 2021. It is also necessary for 14 and 15 year olds to register on the electoral roll in anticipation of them becoming 16.

Schools continue to raise awareness of the democratic process, and their right to vote through a range of means: inviting political figures to talk to students; holding mock elections schools.

As a result of the pandemic, engagement workshops in schools are not able to be conducted as originally planned. Government have established a working group to consider engagement and are working with a variety of organisations to put plans engagement plans in place.

As a supplementary Councillor Groucutt spoke of the confusion at the links between constituency members of the Assembly and list members of the Assembly and what happens when you cast a vote for the Welsh Government.

Councillor John agreed that there may be confusion among all ages as to how the regional seats are allocated and agreed that there is more to be done in the role for political awareness, a key educational role. There is a duty in all political parties, and the media, that as much is done as possible to raise awareness of the facts.

7. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December 2020

The minutes of the meeting of County Council held on 3rd December 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

The meeting ended at 3.05 pm