

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held at Remote Teams Meeting on Thursday, 4th June, 2020 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Woodhouse (Chairman)
County Councillor S.B. Jones (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Batrouni, J.Becker, D. Blakebrough, L.Brown, A.Davies, D. Dovey, L.Dymock, A. Easson, R. Edwards, D. Evans, P.A. Fox, R.J.W. Greenland, M.Groucutt, L. Guppy, R. Harris, J. Higginson, G. Howard, 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

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors M.Feakins

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first remote meeting of County Council in accordance with the new emergency legislation.

Council observed a minute silence in respect of those who have recently passed, including Monmouthshire colleague Rob Gallivan, and Former Chairman of the Council Bob Wilcox.

The Chairmen commended the work of officers, staff and volunteers during the Covid19 crisis.

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Public Questions

None.

4. Chairman's announcement and receipt of petitions

Council received the Chairman's announcement.

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There were no petitions.

5. Report of the Chief Officer for Resources

5.1. Re-Fit Programme: Phase 1

Council received a report to secure financial approval for Re:fit Programme Phase 1, installing energy conservation measures (ECMs) across a portfolio of MCC buildings.

It was noted that the intention is to roll out the programme across all MCC buildings and an exercise has been undertaken to identify the greatest savings.

The system will focus on measures that deliver carbon and energy savings and therefore, sprinklers would not come under this programme.

Members recognised this as a worthwhile programme and were keen to support.

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

- To approve to install a first phase of ECMs with a combined 8-year payback across a portfolio of MCC buildings at a budget cost of up to £2.5M, generating net energy savings to the Council and reducing operational carbon emissions.
- To approve to fund the installation of the ECMs with a Salix interest-free loan from Welsh Government, repayments over a 10-year period to be covered by the energy savings generated, and add the project to the Authority's capital programme.
- To delegate final approval for the funding and commencement of the works stage of the Re:fit programme to the Chief Officer, Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member Resources, based on presentation of a detailed business case to the Chief Officer before submission of the Salix application.

6. Report of the Head of Public Protection

6.1. Licensing Act 2020 Policy Statement

Council received a report in order to consider the proposed 'Licensing Act 2003 Policy Statement 2020', as previously debated by the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

The recommendation was seconded by Councillor Peter Fox.

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

- **Members approve the updated Licensing Policy statement for adoption by Monmouthshire County Council, to come into force on 1st July 2020 (Attached as Appendix A).**

7. Chief Officer for Children and Young People Annual Report

The Chief Officer for Children and Young People presented his Annual Report to inform Council of the progress that the education system has made in the past twelve months.

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The reporting period includes the examination and assessment period that ended in August 2019. This is the first year of the new accountability framework where local authority outcomes are not aggregated, this means that the report of the end of key stage outcomes will look very different to previous years.

Reports of end of key stages outcomes are routinely taken to the Children and Young People Select Committee every year to allow greater scrutiny (Foundation phase to key stage 3 – 17th September 2019 & Key stage 4 – 28th January 2020).

The report seeks to provide members with an assurance of the progress schools are making in their improvement journey and the progress that individual learners are making.

Members highlighted concerns of the effect of schools being closed due to the current crisis. Particularly noting the effect on those from less affluent backgrounds.

In response to questions asked around the effect of fixed term exclusions on both the children excluded and those affected by the disruption we heard that return to school measures will allow impacts to be addressed

School budgets were discussed, and concerns were raised regarding deficit budgets.

Tribute was paid to all staff involved in the improvements to safeguarding.

It was asked that we push forward and get some movement on addressing growth of schools in the South of the County.

With regards to the SEN Strategy, it was asked that this addresses blended learning as we move forward in the short term.

County Cllr D. Dovey left at 16:05pm

The Chairman thanked and congratulated the officer and his team for the report.

8. Notices of Motion

8.1. Motion submitted by County Councillor A. Easson

In light of the recent decision by Stagecoach to cease operating the Bristol/Newport bus service through Monmouthshire I understand that moves are being made to seek Welsh Government subsidy support to retain this service.

Such that this may be the case I move that this Council supports any such efforts to retain the service. However, should any support be forthcoming that the NINE Wards of Severnside, comprising about 20,000 residents be included in a route realignment. The service along the B4245 through Portskewett to Magor was removed several years ago leaving those 20,000 residents without a direct route to the Bristol area, this is an opportunity to restore the service.

Councillor Batrouni seconded the motion. He added that the X14 bus service is a critical public transport service that links two major cities. A petition already has 230 signatures demonstrating an appetite in the local area to keep the service. He also highlighted the climate angle.

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Councillor P. Murphy left at 16:24pm

The Cabinet Member for Infrastructure explained the current route options. We heard that we have been working with Transport for Wales and Welsh Government to look at a longer term strategy for the Chepstow to Newport corridor through the Metro Enhancement Framework and Regional Bus Networks to enhance connectivity between the settlements within the corridor. A proposal will be put forward as part of this workstream. Our strategy is to see improved options for our residents, to help them get to work and to reduce our carbon footprint. Councillor Pratt supported the motion.

Members were keen to support and upon being put to the vote the motion was carried.

8.2. Motion submitted by County Councillor D. Batrouni

That this council creates a fixed-term Tackling poverty and Inequality coordinator position for Monmouthshire. We are about to go through one of the worst recessions for many years and it is important that we have a post that is directly responsible for co-ordinating our response and that is directly accountable to the cabinet member for social justice.

Councillor Tudor Thomas seconded the motion. In doing so he expressed full support and referred to a report that highlighted poverty stretches across society and will get worse with the impending recession.

The Cabinet Member for Social Justice welcomed the motion and stated that we will continue to build on current activity. She proposed an amendment to the motion:

As part of our ongoing review of the Community and Partnerships Development Team, this Council will create two dedicated roles who will lead and coordinate the tackling poverty and inequality agenda for Monmouthshire.

We are about to go through one of the worst recessions for many years and it is important that we have a post that is directly responsible for co-ordinating our response and that is directly accountable to the cabinet member for social justice.

Councillor Peter Fox seconded the amended motion.

Upon being to the vote the amended motion was accepted and became the substantive motion.

Members were keen to support the motion.

Suggestion was made to create a task force group to keep the issue on an agenda and to use this as a way of receiving regular feedback and updates.

Reference was made to the importance of providing support to the hospitality sector; possible redundancies; increasing apprenticeships, and how the City Deal could maybe step in to provide support.

Upon being to the vote the amended motion was carried.

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9. Members Questions

9.1. From County Councillor M. Groucutt to County Councillor P. Jordan, Cabinet Member for Governance and Law

Can the Cabinet Member inform of us of his plans to reopen Monmouthshire public libraries, in line with such plans already made public in Newport, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent?

Councillor Jordan explained that libraries are part of Community Hubs and before lockdown were visited by tens of thousands every month. The virus is still spreading and results in untimely deaths. It survives on library books and computer keyboards so there are clear risks associated with these services. Libraries are non-essential and, crucially, are indoors. It is understood that many people will miss the library service. During the period that the hubs have been closed we have been actively promoting our digital services like ebooks and magazines, and using our YouTube channel for story-telling sessions. Libraries are not expected to reopen in the next few weeks. Another facet to this is that staff are currently redeployed and carrying out vital roles elsewhere.

Staff have been asked to identify a plan for different options that would enable some increased access to library services when the time is right. This could include the reintroduction of home delivery or the creation of a click and collect service.

As a supplementary:

Regarding the comment that library books can be a source of contagion, three of the five authorities in Gwent are planning to open their libraries. Is it suggested that those councillors are trying to spread the virus?

Councillor Jordan responded in the negative and explained that at an earlier meeting of the Society of Library Chiefs it was confirmed that Cardiff plan to open a click and collect service from next week, but Newport and Blaenau Gwent have no immediate plans to do so.

Councillor D. Evans left at 17:23pm

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

Analysis of survey data on the learning of children during the current closedown, published on 17 May by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, shows that those living in the wealthiest 20% of families had already received an average of 75 more minutes of home schooling compared to those in the poorest families. Can the Cabinet Member tell us what is being done in Monmouthshire to minimise the impact of poverty on learning since our schools were closed? How does he know if teachers are seeking to ensure that our poorest children are being fully supported through the nature of the work being sent home and through the maintenance of home-school links?

Councillor G. Howard left at 17:25pm

In response Councillor John explained that our schools have established good methods of good communication with pupils and parents, some were already in place before the outbreak, while others have been developed in response to the lockdown. Schools have focused on ensuring an equality of access to learning opportunities for all pupils but particularly to those from vulnerable groups.

Schools have taken a range of steps appropriate to pupil's individual circumstances, including providing resource packs to vulnerable pupils, providing printed copies of tasks, preparing and sharing a range of

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home learning experiences. Most schools provide a weekly timetable for pupils including tasks for the week which can be completed at any time. Literacy and numeracy tasks are provided regularly and most importantly, activities to support well-being and a healthy lifestyle. Secondary schools are providing specific tasks and supporting years 10,11, 12 and 13 with specific subject work. Ensuring that pupils have access to online communication where possible using a wide variety of approaches such as providing IT equipment and supporting connectivity, providing resources on school websites to ensure that access is as wide as possible. Also monitoring the engagement of all pupils including those from vulnerable groups and following up where it is lower than expected. Schools are maintaining strong lines of communication with parents of pupils in these groups to help them support their children.

The Authority is discussing the specific support needs of identified vulnerable pupils as part of a multi-agency group on a weekly basis to ensure that support is effective and timely.

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

Could the cabinet member inform us of the percentage attendance of those children deemed to be vulnerable or at risk and allocated hub provision during the period of school closure?

Councillor John wished to take the opportunity to thank officers and all school based staff for everything they have been doing in operating the seven school hubs in Monmouthshire which are working really well, ensuring key workers are able to continue the important work they are doing. He also thanked MonLife staff, both leisure and outdoor education service, who operated the hubs during the Easter holidays.

The process of identifying those deemed vulnerable was a shared process between Social Services and officers from CYP directorate. A system was established that identified seven different categories of vulnerability and an appropriate provision was secured for those with the greatest need. This was in addition to the schools' own work to identify vulnerable learners. For those pupils identified as vulnerable by the nature of their risk profile, 85 pupils were agreed, 85 places were secured and of those 58 places were taken up. A take up rate of 68.2%. 27 places were not taken up. The attendance rate of vulnerable children whose families have taken up the provision is 82.4%. For those with additional learning needs 89 learners were offered a place but a low take up was expected given concerns around pupil health. 27 ALN pupil are attending, 30%.

As a supplementary:

Councillor Groucutt asked for a comment on the 27 families who had not taken the provision. If there were concerns around safety of those children, was it taken further?

Councillor John clarified that the provision is parental choice. We continue to engage with schools and social workers.

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

When a planned and managed return to school by pupils starts to get underway once it is safe to do so, what help will be provided to our schools to enable them to ensure that planning for their pupils' return will be safe and will not risk renewed transmission of the Covid-19 virus?

Councillor John referred the WG recent announcement regarding the reopening of schools. Pupils of all age groups would be able to return to school from 29th June 2020. It has been made clear that only up to one third of learners will be in school at any one time. Further guidance is expected next week. Officers have already begun work to start preparing, but there

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are no significant details to share. Assurance was provided that we are committed to ensure that any return to school has the safety of pupils and staff at its heart. We are also clear that the function of check-in, catch-up and prepare is to promote well-being for our children and young people. As further details emerge, regular updates would be provided.

As a supplementary:

Councillor Groucutt questioned the plans for families where parents are teachers?

It was explained that this is still at an early stage and key workers will continue to access childcare.

10. Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on 5th March 2020

The minutes of the meeting of County Council held on 5th March were approved.

The meeting ended at 5.40 pm