

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Thursday, 16th June, 2016 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor J. Higginson (Chairman)
County Councillor P. Jordan (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Batrouni, J. Prosser, D. Blakebrough, M. Powell, V. Smith, R. Chapman, J. Crook, D. Dovey, A. Easson, D. Edwards, D. Evans, P. Farley, P.A. Fox, R.J.W. Greenland, L. Guppy, E. Hackett Pain, R. Harris, B. Hayward, M. Hickman, P.A.D. Hobson, G. Howard, S. Howarth, P. Jones, S.B. Jones, B. Strong, F. Taylor, P. Watts, K. Williams and A. Wintle

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Kellie Beirne	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Will McLean	Head of Democracy, Engagement and Improvement
Joy Robson	Head of Finance/Section 151 Officer
Robert Tranter	Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Mark Hand	Head of Planning, Housing and Place-Shaping

APOLOGIES:

Councillors G. Burrows, P. Clarke, G. Down, R. Edwards, D. Jones, S. Jones, J. Marshall, P. Murphy, A. Watts, A. Webb and S. White

2. Public Open Forum

There were no questions from members of the public.

3. Chairman's report and receipt of petitions

Council received and noted the Chairman's report.

There were no petitions presented.

Council recognised the Rainbow Flag at half mast, which was considered appropriate given the circumstances in Orlando where 50 people had been shot and killed in a nightclub. The Chairman expressed that the sincere thoughts of Council are with relatives and friends of those involved in the atrocity. Council held a minute silence.

The Chairman advised that various people across Monmouthshire had been honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, and offered congratulations to the following:

- Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Tuggey, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Gwent, awarded a CBE;
- Mr. J. Rowlands, awarded a BEM for services to the Hood Memorial Hall;
- Sarah Byford, awarded an MBE;

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- Mrs. Jane Hart, awarded an MBE.

We heard the sad news of the Labour MP Jo Cox who had been attacked, and subsequently lost her life, in Yorkshire. Council paid respect with a minute silence.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

5. To confirm and sign the minutes of the following:

5.1. Wednesday, 4th May 2016 - Extraordinary Meeting

The minutes of the County Council meeting held on 4th May 2016 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

5.2. Tuesday, 10th May 2016 - Annual Meeting

The minutes of the County Council meeting held on 10th May 2016 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

5.3. Thursday, 12th May 2016 - Deferred Items

The minutes of the County Council meeting held 12th May 2016 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

In doing so the following points were noted:

Members highlighted the need for an action sheet to be included with the agenda and the importance of actions being updated.

Corrections to item 19 - To ratify the written response to the Welsh Government consultation on the proposed new section of the M4 motorway (copy attached) and consider what further comment, if any, members may wish to provide to Welsh Government. Members were invited to ratify the written response to the Welsh Government consultation:

Page 15 - where reference is made to to the trunk, should state the section of the B4245 at Undy, which is due to become a trunk road.

Page 15 – *liaison with Welsh Government* should refer specifically to a formal liaison mechanism between Welsh Government Officers and County Council, and not their contractors.

A Member expressed disappointment with the content of the letter issued following the debate, along with frustration that the letter had not been circulated to all Members. The quality of the letter was not considered satisfactory.

In response the Cabinet Member advised that the letter would be redrafted.

Correction to Page 11 - Category C – Joint Committees and Local Authority Companies:

Should state: A member requested that it be recorded that two members are appointed to the EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

6. To receive minutes of the following:

- ##### **6.1. Minutes of meeting Monday, 21st March 2016 of Democratic Services**

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Committee

We received, for information, the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on 21st March 2016.

6.2. Minutes of meeting Thursday, 26th May 2016 of Audit Committee

We received, for information, the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 26th May 2016.

7. Notices of Motion

There were no notices of motion raised by members.

8. Reports of the Head of Policy and Engagement:

8.1. Update on the Syrian Resettlement Programme

Council were presented with an update on the Syrian Resettlement Programme, the purpose was:

- To provide Members with an update as to the arrangements for Monmouthshire County Council's participation in the Home Office's Syrian Resettlement Programme.

Councillors Hacket Pain, Crook and Taylor were thanked for their contributions to the programme.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- It would be beneficial for local members to be informed of refugees coming to their area, to keep a watching brief.
- Members were pleased to hear that officers had recognised recommendations made by the task and finish group and had looked to other authorities who had received Syrian refugees under the resettlement programme, and to wider third sector organisations. Members wished to express thanks to officers for taking time to follow these recommendations. It was noted that colleagues at OXFAM had been of significant help, particularly around specific support for women refugees.
- The provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) related to the whole family and not just children starting school.
- A Member expressed thanks to Council for taking on the programme, and added that that there had been full representation, looking to cover every eventuality.
- The Cabinet Member thanked the group and suggested that a future Member's Seminar would be beneficial, in order to give all Members an insight.
- It was not yet determined if we would be participating in an orphan scheme.

The Council resolved to agree recommendations within the report:

That Council notes the progress made in preparing for the arrival of the first arrivals from Syria in the summer of 2016; and that the Member / Officer working group continues to oversee the arrangements for their arrival.

9. Reports of the Head of Planning:

9.1. To adopt a revised Planning Scheme of Delegation

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Council were presented with the proposal to revise the Planning Scheme of Delegation. The purpose was for Council to adopt a revised Planning Scheme of Delegation.

In considering the report, we noted:

- A Member referred to the delegation of officers to respond on behalf of the Council to HGV operator's licence applications. There was concern regarding the unawareness of such applications and it was thought important that local people are aware of this issue. Members were asked to seriously consider that such applications go to Council.
- The change to the enforcement powers was considered one of the most beneficial parts of the Planning Bill, and should be used to its full extent.

We resolved to agree recommendations within the report:

- That Council endorses the revised Planning Scheme of Delegation attached to the report, for adoption by Council.
- That the Head of Planning be authorised to update the above documents in the future in relation to factual corrections to job titles.

10. Audit Committee Annual Report 2015-2016

Council were presented with the Audit Committee Annual Report 2015/16 and 2014/15.

On behalf of the Audit Committee, the Chair of Audit Committee submitted the combined annual report for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 for consideration by the Council.

The report demonstrated that the workings of the Committee have been both valuable and productive and provides assurance to the Council regarding the Committee's activities in the effective governance of financial affairs and other matters by the Authority.

During discussion we noted the following:

- Clarification was requested to whether the lay member of the Audit Committee was co-opted or appointed. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that he would advise in due course.
- It was agreed that should Audit Committee believe setting up a sub group would enhance the work of the committee, this would be explored as the need arises. A Member considered the sub group would be a side discussion to seek further information, which would be reported back to committee, and minuted as normal.

We resolved to accept the report.

11. Members Questions:

11.1. from County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor E.J. Hacket Pain

How many full-time equivalent qualified teachers at Monmouthshire maintained schools were there in (i) 2012, (ii) 2013, (iii) 2014 and (iv) 2015?

In response Councillor Hacket Pain handed out paperwork with the figures requested. Detail was provided as follows:

- (i) 629

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- (ii) 636
- (iii) 633
- (iv) 608

11.2. from County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor E.J. Hacket Pain

How many full-time equivalent support staff at Monmouthshire maintained schools were there in (i) 2012, (ii) 2013, (iii) 2014 and (iv) 2015?

In response Councillor Hacket Pain provided the following figures:

- (i) 522
- (ii) 534
- (iii) 543
- (iv) 512

As a supplementary question Councillor Batrouni asked if we monitored these figures, and if so how often?

In response Councillor Hacket Pain explained that figures are regularly monitored but not monitored in the way they were specifically asked for. Therefore quite a lot of work had gone into providing the information.

11.3. from County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor E.J. Hacket Pain:

What percentage of school teachers took sickness absence at Monmouthshire maintained schools during (i) 2012, (ii) 2013, (iii) 2014 and (iv) 2015?

In response Councillor Hacket Pain explained that half day or full day absences were counted in the sickness absence, and provided the following figures:

- (i) 64%
- (ii) 57%
- (iii) 65%
- (iv) 59%

These figures were regularly monitored and areas for support identified.

11.4. from County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor E.J. Hacket Pain:

What was the total number of sick-days taken by teachers at Monmouthshire maintained schools during (i) 2012, (ii) 2013, (iii) 2014 and (iv) 2015?

In response Councillor Hacket Pain provided the following figures:

- (i) 5344
- (ii) 4781
- (iii) 4837
- (iv) 4644

It was noted that the figures ran from September to September in line with the academic year.

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11.5. from County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor E.J. Hacket Pain:

What was the average class size at Monmouthshire maintained schools at Key Stage (i) 1, (ii) 2, (iii) 3, (iv) 4 and (v) 5?

In response Councillor Hacket Pain provided the following figures:

Key Stage 1

- (i) 24
- (ii) 25
- (iii) 25
- (iv) 26

Key Stage 2

- (i) 26
- (ii) 25
- (iii) 26
- (iv) 26

Key Stage 3

- (i) 26
- (ii) 26
- (iii) 25
- (iv) 26

Councillor Hacket Pain explained that key stage 4 figures were not provided, mainly because a large amount of officer time had been taken to provide the figures, and when you get to key stage 4, looking at GCSE and A level years, specific numbers were difficult to obtain.

Councillor Hacket Pain added that the figures had flat-lined in 2014 and 2015. When looking the EAS Business Plan, in comparison with those in our consortium, Monmouthshire were 1st across those years at foundation phase with a 5% increase. Key stage 2 were 1st in 2012 and 2013, 2nd in 2014 and 1st in 2015 with a 6% increase. Key stage 3 was similar with a 13.1% increase. Key stage 4, again 1st across the authorities.

The Chair requested the EAS statistics be circulated to all Members

As a supplementary, Councillor Batrouni asked for clarification that he would not be receiving the requested information for key stages 4 and 5. Councillor Hacket Pain explained that the information could be found, but in terms of officer time there was a concern of how much the question would cost the Council.

12. To exclude the press and public from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information

13. EXEMPT REPORT from Head of Planning:

13.1. **Caerwent House, Caerwent**

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Council were presented with a report to provide an update on project progress and proposed action with regards to the Compulsory Purchase Order in relation to Caerwent House.

Following discussion Council resolved to accept the recommendations in the report.

The meeting ended at 6.00 pm