

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held  
at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Monday, 3rd April, 2017 at 2.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor F. Taylor (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Edwards, J. Higginson, P. Jones, S. Jones,  
J. Prosser and V. Smith

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

County Councillor A. Easson – as a substitute for County Councillor R. Harris

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Kellie Beirne	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Judith Langdon	Whole Place Officer
Owen Wilce	Programme Lead - A County That Serves
Paula Harris	Democratic Services Officer

**1. Apologies of absence**

County Councillor Roger Harris.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Members agreed to declare interests under the relevant item.

**3. Public Open Forum**

There were no items for the public open forum.

**4. To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2017**

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

It was noted that on page 2 reference was made to Purdah and it was asked that this was change to pre-election period.

**Actions:**

The Chair commented on the quality of sound in the chamber and commented that all members had been asked to check their microphones were working whilst in a meeting and to speak directly and clearly into the microphones.

Feedback is required as to whether we could live stream the meetings on the television in the reception area.

The Chair commented that during the recent changes to the Head of Democracy post, it was felt that actions and their subsequent follow up had been lost. The Chief Officer for

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Enterprise commented that she would ensure that Democratic Services collate and follow up the action list.

#### **5. Independent Remuneration Panel - Final Report 2017/18**

The Committee received the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales annual report 2017/18.

Specific changes to the determinations include a very modest increase to the basic salary for elected members with consequential increases for National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities. This increase of 0.75% is the first for 3 years and follows the slight easing of restraint in the pay of public sector employees.

They are introducing arrangements to recognise the implications of long term sickness of senior salary holders and have also made changes to provide more flexibility for authorities without undermining the principle of prescribing payments which still has continuing support.

The Local Government (Wales) Act 2015 widened the remit of the Panel to give consideration to proposed changes to the salaries of chief officers of principal councils, effectively an extension of their role in respect of the heads of paid service of councils and Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Member's comments:

A key point of the report was that the average Welsh earnings and Councillor Allowances had been broken for some time and it was asked if the figure is not based on the average Welsh earnings – what is it based on.

A point since 2012 has been the concerns raised over the constancy of support provided to Members, as different authorities have different arrangements and it has been asked that examples of best practice are brought to committee for review.

A change to the 'care allowance' as it recognises that this is a reimbursement of the cost of care already paid out by a Councillor rather than money which is claimed.

A provision for members of town and community councillors to be paid per member up to £150 per year for items such as telephone, IT and consumables. Up to three members of a Community Council can be paid up to £500 per year in recognition of their responsibilities. Is this at the discretion of the Council involved.

When there is a new Council – county, town or community it was stressed that members are made aware of the whole package on offer to them as often new members struggle to find relevant information.

There is an increase in the Members salary of £100.

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### **6. Welsh Government White Paper: Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed**

The Chief Executive spoke to the Committee regarding the Welsh Government White Paper, Reforming Local Government: Resilient and renewed.

The White Paper 'Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed' is the Welsh Government's statement of intent about the future of Local Government in Wales. The proposals in this White Paper set out arrangements for regional working; describe a strengthened role for councils and councillors; provide a framework for any future voluntary mergers; and sets out the role of community councils.

Member's comments:

Concerns were raised regarding the reference in the white paper to remote voting and using digital technology to improve services and participation as currently the broadband infrastructure in Monmouthshire is insufficient to enable residents to access these services.

A Member asked for faster progress with Community Councils cluster working. This was supported by Members of the Committee and felt that the merger of community councils would serve the residents better than the fragmented model currently in place.

The white paper reference to the voting age was commented on and lowering the age to sixteen.

The Chair observed that there was a lack of pace regarding the review of Town and Community Councils. The joining up what the authority, other public service bodies and town & community councils act in a cohesive way so that citizens are at the heart of what we do is essential.

The Chair reiterated the point regarding digital framework & democracy and spoke of the need for greater provision as current arcane local provision inhibits this ability at present.

In summing up the Chair asked that the Chief Executive circulate his response to the white paper to all members ahead of the closing date of the 14th April 2017.

### **7. Devo-Mon / Localism**

The Committee received a presentation regarding Future Monmouthshire – Communities.

We were told that evidence shows us that connected, cohesive communities comprised of confident citizens are good for everybody.

We have a duty to create the conditions that will allow the communities of Monmouthshire to realise the full potential that exists within them and to empower our citizens to lead the lives that they want.

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So what does they mean in practice;

We believe that citizenship of a place comes with both rights and responsibilities and that everyone has a part to play in helping our county to thrive.

- ▶ Developing and unlocking social capital
- ▶ Growing community leadership
- ▶ Proportionate and enabling governance
- ▶ Knowing our communities
- ▶ Changing culture, changing mind-set– redefining the relationship between the citizen and the public service

Some key actions and projects;

- ▶ Community Leadership Academy
- ▶ Support for town and community council cluster areas to develop meaningful local wellbeing plans with clear opportunities for citizen/community delivery
- ▶ Promoting participation in local democracy
- ▶ Programme of specific community initiatives to promote 'togetherness' and community cohesion (e.g. 'playing out', 'Big Lunch', 'Good Gym')
- ▶ Create substantial role for community participation in implementing Monmouthshire Wellbeing Plan
- ▶ 'Creative Communities' Toolkit

It was asked how success would be measured to ensure we are on the right track and we were told that measurements of social capital were notoriously hard to pin down, however there are a range of measures available to support this.

A Member asked how it was proposed that Members could become community leaders and asked what training would be provided. In response we were told that elected members were already community leaders and member development should not stop after the first four months induction but be an ongoing process focusing on the requirements of the individual member.

A Member spoke of the need to support new County Councillors as the scope of the work can come as a shock to the system.

Community leadership has always been part of a County Councillor's role, however this feels like a new style of leadership. If people want to take part we should ensure that bureaucratic situations don't occur and that people feel encouraged. Members were interested in how this would led into participatory budgeting in a locality, both for town and community budgets and also for pooled local budgets.

#### **8. Recording and Monitoring Motions & Petitions**

We received an update on procedures for processing Notices of Motion and Petitions presented to Council.

#### **Motions**

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1. Any member of the Council can submit a motion to be considered by full Council by giving written notice of the motion, delivered to the Head of Democratic Services, no later than midnight on the seventh working day before the Council meeting.
2. Submitted motions must be about matters for which the Council has responsibility or which affect the wellbeing of the administrative area.
3. Any motions agreed by Full Council, including any amendments made to the motion at the meeting, will be recorded by the Head of Democratic Services on the form overleaf and stored within the Members Area on The Hub for future reference.
4. The Head of Democratic Services will forward the proforma to the responsible officer and ensure that the form is updated as a log of the actions taken as a result of the motion that has been agreed.

#### **Petitions**

1. At a meeting of the full Council, any member may present a petition which is relevant to some matter in relation to which the Council or Cabinet have functions or which affects the area, or part area, of the Council. It is up to the member presenting the petition to satisfy themselves that the petition is proper to be received.
2. The member must give notice to the Chief Executive prior to the meeting at which the petition is to be presented and shall be presented in the order that notice is received.
3. The presentation shall be limited to not more than three minutes, and shall be confined to reading out, or summarising, the prayer of the petition, indicating the number and description of the signatories.
4. Any petitions submitted to a meeting of the Full Council shall be given to the Head of Democratic Services. They will ensure that the petition is delivered to the responsible officer within the authority to respond to the petition.
5. In addition, the Head of Democratic Services will ensure that the proforma overleaf is completed and stored on The Hub within the member's area. The proforma will be forwarded to the relevant officer to record the actions taken as a result of receiving the petition for members to refer back to follow up if required.

#### **Member comments:**

A Member commented that he felt the system was unclear as he had previously had a motion turned down due to the wording.

The Chair commented that the Proper Officer will make a recommendation as to whether a motion is taken to Council, this can then be taken to the Chair of the meeting to use their discretion in whether to introduce the item for discussion.

It was asked for clarity that a petition cannot relate to another member's ward.

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Clarification was sought regarding the term 'Proper Officer' and the correct officer to submit petitions and motions to. **(ACTION-DEMOCRATIC SERVICES)**

It was requested that the outcomes from all motions and petitions are reported to all members. It was asked if this could be presented to Members in a report format at the end of each council year.

### **9. New Directions in Democracy**

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

### **10. To note the date and time of next meeting as Monday 5th June 2017 at 2.00pm**

The Chair thanked the Committee for their attendance and contributions during the last twelve months and wished County Councillor Doug Edwards best wishes on his retirement.

County Councillor Doug Edwards thanked County Councillor Francis Taylor for her hard work during her year as Chair of the Committee

**The meeting ended at 3.59 pm**