

Public Document Pack

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of County Council held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Thursday, 27th July, 2017 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor M. Powell (Chairman)
County Councillor P. Clarke (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Batrouni, D. Blakebrough, V. Smith, D. Dovey, A. Easson, R. Edwards, D. Evans, P.A. Fox, R.J.W. Greenland, L. Guppy, R. Harris, J. Higginson, G. Howard, S. Howarth, D. Jones, P. Jones, S. Jones, S.B. Jones, P. Jordan, P. Murphy, B. Strong, A. Watts, A. Webb, K. Williams, J.Becker, L.Brown, A.Davies, L.Dymock, M.Feakins, R.John, L.Jones, M.Lane, P.Pavia, J.Pratt, R.Roden, T.Thomas, J.Treharne and S. Woodhouse

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Kellie Beirne	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Joy Robson	Head of Finance/Section 151 Officer
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Claire Marchant	Chief Officer Social Care, Health & Housing
Ian Saunders	Head of Tourism, Leisure and Culture

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors F. Taylor, M.Groucutt and J.Watkins

2. Public Open Forum

None.

3. Chairman's Announcement and receipt of petitions

Council received the Chairman's announcement.

County Councillor A. Easson presented a petition on behalf of residents of Park Road, Caldicot with regards to rubbish discarded at a property.

4. Declarations of interest

None.

5. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2017

The minutes of the meeting of County Council held on 29th June 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. To note the Action List of the meeting held on 29th June 2017

We received the Action List from the meeting held on 29th June 2017. In doing so:

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- With regards to the '63 is the new 60' motion, it was questioned if the proposal has been forwarded appropriately and that Members receive a copy. The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that a written response would be issued to both Central Government and the campaign group.
- With regards to Zero Hour Contracts, the Chief Executive had not responded to an email from Councillor Blakebrough. The Deputy Chief Executive acknowledged this and explained that a comprehensive written response would be circulated to all Members by the end of the following working day.
- Councillor Eason awaited a response to his query regarding the allocation of 106 monies in Portskewett. This had been omitted from the Action List but assurance was provided that a written response would be provided by the end of the following working day.

7. To receive the minutes of Audit Committee:

7.1. 16th March 2017

We noted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 16th March 2017.

7.2. 25th May 2017

We noted the minutes of the meeting of Audit Committee held on 25th May 2017.

8. To receive the minutes of Democratic Services Committee:

We noted the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on the 3rd April 2017.

In doing so, Councillor S. Howarth queried if the actions on the Actions list had been carried forward. Councillor Evans confirmed that this had been the first meeting of the new committee and that any outstanding the actions would be addressed at the next meeting.

8.1. 3rd April 2017

We noted the minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held on 3rd April.

In doing so, it was agreed that the follow up of actions would be addressed at the next meeting.

9. Notices of Motion

9.1. Motion from County Councillor S. Jones

This council calls on the Welsh Government to accept the proposals in our response to their Open Market Review consultation which sought views on the data that will inform further work to extend the reach of Superfast Broadband across Wales. This council acknowledges the digital divide that is impacting both urban and rural communities, and recognises the growing frustration that is felt by many residents who have inadequate broadband provision. Given the fact that Monmouthshire is the second most competitive authority in Wales with the highest rate of business births, we ask that the Welsh Government prioritises Monmouthshire under the next deployment of Superfast Cymru 2 due to take place in early 2018.

Councillor Jones credited Cath Fallon and Mike Powell who have worked tirelessly on this issue, supporting communities. Councillor Jones assured Members, that should the motion be supported she would take this forward as a priority for our residents and would hope to see positive outcomes.

The motion was duly seconded.

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Debate ensued:

Councillor Blakebrough thanked the Cabinet Member for highlighting the devastating consequences for not only Monmouthshire, but also Wales, of not being included in the first round, and thanked her for the report highlighting the strong case for Monmouthshire being one of the first authorities in the phase 2 roll out. She expressed concern that Phase 1 had been political in that Monmouthshire were at the back of the queue.

Members recognised the problems for residents and businesses alike, and concerns were raised that there was difficulty in encouraging people into the area with no appropriate infrastructure in place.

Councillor Batrouni expressed support for the motion but highlighted concerns requesting assurance from the Cabinet Member that funding would not be squandered away as had been the case in the past, and for detail of the specific measures.

Councillor Jones responded that there were serious questions to be raised beyond the motion in terms of accountability for the first round of funding. She added there is no divide between rural and urban areas, other than a digital divide. In response to Councillor Batrouni's questions there are excellent examples of where we are delivering in this field, an example being the work undertaken by Mike Powell in terms of the TV white space project. In terms of KPIs we would work with a provider to ensure we get the digital infrastructure in place and to ensure that people access the provision.

Upon being put to the vote the motion was carried. Councillor Jones would submit a supplementary paper to UK Government highlighting the support of Council.

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Governance to present the following statement to Council:

You will have no doubt seen the announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government last week on the call for Councils in Wales to work more closely together and to share and pool resources and services. Emphasis in the Cabinet Secretary's speech, was placed on increasing integration of 'back office' functions with stated examples around revenues, payroll and legal services and also, the subject of wider electoral reforms. The position on the requirement for Councils to work more collaboratively and closely together has already been set out in the LG White Paper, giving life to an agenda around LG Reform. This Council submitted a full response to the consultation paper 'Renewed and Resilient' in April 2017 and LG Reform continues to be a matter debated and discussed ongoing by our Democratic Services Committee. The content of the White Paper is now expected to be rolled forward into a wider LG Bill in 2018. In the meantime, we can expect to see more of a focus on working together in areas of functional geography – economic development, strategic planning and transport – as we are for example through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. The Cabinet Secretary has maintained his commitment to 22 LAs as the 'front door' for local people, stating behind the door, the collaborative regional agenda needs to quickly develop.

The final detail of the Cabinet Secretary's proposals are awaited and Monmouthshire will have the opportunity to feed into and input into the process. With our Leader as vice-chair of the CCR City Deal Joint Cabinet and our leadership of regional economic programmes such as the Compound Semi-Conductor Project, strong representation on the Regional Transport Authority, Regional Planning Group, the Education Achievement Service and now, the Local Government Reform Task and Finish Group convened by WG – we can play a key role in shaping and informing what is to come. Our strong position remains alongside the focus on form and footprint, we must give real consideration to issues of the function and purpose of local

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government and the services it provides, in order that we remain viable; and legitimate and relevant to the communities we are so privileged to serve.

The Chairman accepted an emergency motion from County Councillor S. Howarth:

The motion is graded as an emergency motion (Human rights, health & safety, blight on people's lives, also Equalities act) after receiving late response from the Welsh Government/Costains engineering and Construction UK on a matter which is felt of significant importance for everyone using the Gateway to Wales the A465 Trunk Road. Would this council support that the chief executive and the leader of the council seek an urgent meeting, with reassurances from the Welsh Government and their contractor Costains UK, that all measures are put in place to inform every user travelling into Wales and also commuting in Wales, in respect of road closures on the A465 Gilwern to Brynmawr Trunk road. Its apparent now that some measures are in place but are not being used, we are seeking reassurances from the Welsh Government that in future that all the technology possible is used.

The motion was seconded and debate ensued:

Councillor Pratt agreed with the comments regarding signage, She had attended a meeting with the Community Council and the Head of Operations in June when better signage was suggested. An update from the Head of Operations was requested. She pressed for Elected Members to be invited to meetings between the Council, Welsh Government and Costain to avoid future communication issues.

Councillor Howard supported the motion, commenting that communication initially took local views into account but this has now deteriorated and there is no access to officer meetings, and many more closures than originally promised with lack of notice.

Councillor Williams supported the motion and expressed concern about Costain's traffic management, and referred to the company's unwillingness to engage in discussion.

Councillor Blakebrough observed that the A465 is the Gateway to Wales and the road closures are preventing tourism, and added that Welsh Government should listen to concerns from local residents.

Councillor Thomas supported the motion commenting that his understanding was that the signs were bi-lingual. There was agreement that road signs should not only be available in Welsh.

The Leader expressed his sympathy with local members having personally experienced the congestion in the area. He agreed that the voice of local residents must be heard and was pleased to hear that there is a meeting on Monday, and that there had been a meeting with the Head of Operations to look at possible solutions. He acknowledged that there was only one matrix sign available to warn of the closure, that it had insufficient space to be bi-lingual and had to be in Welsh. He stated that signage required urgent action and supported the motion, and suggested that the matter could be addressed at the meeting on Monday. He suggested that a letter could to be sent immediately to the Cabinet Minister.

The Head of Operations provided an update that there had been meetings including a public meeting with the Council, Costain and Welsh Government that resulted in a list of actions that will be raised by officers with Costain, and also at meetings with the Council, Costain and Welsh Government that Elected Members are able to attend.

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Councillor Howarth responded that he didn't feel the meeting on Monday would make a difference. He pressed for a meeting of the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council with Welsh Government and their Costain.

The Leader of the Council expressed his willingness to attend a meeting in September.

The motion was carried.

10. Reports of the Chief Officer, Social Care, Health and Housing

10.2. Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services

Council was presented with the statutory Annual Report of the Chief Officer, Social Care, Health and Housing.

- Referring to the statement that timescales for completing assessments for have not been good enough, a Member questioned if there are enough staff to compile Judiciary reports for looked after children. The Chief Officer highlighted the need for a constructive relationship with the judiciary commenting on the challenge for this, and other Councils in the region, to prepare reports to the required high standards, and the need to provide training and support for staff.
- A Member queried the budget for community care asking how services will be funded sustainably in Monmouthshire and Wales in the long term referring to the demands of an aging population and the removal of the Severn Bridge tolls. A further question was asked about standards of care which can seem variable and asked how services, especially for those with dementia, can be delivered with insufficient resources.

The Chief Officer assured that options can be explored to help people to lead better lives that are also more cost effective. The in house homecare service specialises in dementia care and provides relationship based support. The authority is working with the independent sector to introduce the same style of working by moving towards block contracts and supporting their training, development and recruitment. As Turning the World Upside Down proceeds there will be changed contracts, practice and financial rewards aligned to a single approach by in house, private and Health Board services. Regarding price, the authority will work with external providers to understand true costs and develop a cost recommendation. Preparations are also required for the challenges of registration with Social Care Wales.

A Member questioned what can be done to improve quality of life, to combat loneliness and isolation. The Chief Officer emphasised the importance of identifying resources in every community to link people together acknowledging that some parts of the county do this well and the aspiration to have the same level of connection and support in the whole county.

In response to questions from Councillor Batrouni, it was revisited that there had been an Area Co-Ordinators pilot that was evaluated which led to the current place based working in a co-ordinated way to connect people and support community development.

In terms of safeguarding, it was recognised that the authority had been found wanting in term of safe recruitment practice and reported that a Kerbcraft action plan is in place. To prevent similar situations, recruitment is monitored.

The Chief Officer explained the work with Legal Services to improve the quality of assessments and care plans.

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In terms of wellbeing, the Chief Officer confirmed her strong links with Leisure Services and provided examples such as exercise and referral, and work with the Youth Service.

The Cabinet Member, Social Care, Safeguarding and Health noted, regarding the Judiciary, that the comments are not unique to Monmouthshire and that all councils encounter the same problems which affects the morale of social workers. In terms of loneliness and isolation, it was suggested that Members visit Mardy Park to experience the good work there.

A Member requested consideration to help stroke survivors overcome travel difficulties referring to the restriction on Grassroutes services which are limited to 15 miles.

A Member questioned the role of Housing Associations and the need to ensure people are seen and looked after. The Chief Officer emphasised the importance of all partners working together to best meet the needs of communities and the availability to all of housing related support.

A Member asked how many children are on the edge of care and secondly, what the Council is doing to recruit new foster carers. The Chief Officer responded that whole family support provision has been reviewed which identified some gaps in early intervention and prevention, and preventative services at the edge of care. Work is in progress to better co-ordinate family support provision; some additional funding has been awarded to the Team around the Family (TAF) for this work. It was confirmed that that there are continuing low numbers of Monmouthshire CC foster carers which impacts financially and on the quality of outcomes. Recruitment campaigns, investment and better marketing have not increased numbers significantly. An option appraisal will be brought forward to decide on the approach going forward.

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer thanked the Chief Officer for her comprehensive, honest and plain speaking report and for highlighting that despite grave challenges, there are opportunities to make a significant contribution to the social justice agenda.

Council resolved to agree the recommendations in the report:

- That Council members consider and endorse the analysis in 2016/17 Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services concerning the performance, and impact, of adult and children's well-being social care and health services over the last financial year.
- That Cabinet members also consider and endorse the 2017/18 priorities for improvement set out in the report to address the critical risk and developmental issues in social care and health

10.1. Corporate Safeguarding Policy

Council were presented with the Corporate Safeguarding Policy by the Cabinet Member, Social Care, Safeguarding and Health.

Debate ensued:

Councillor Batrouni queried confidence to deliver transparency and effective scrutiny. The Cabinet Member responded that there had been a lack of adherence to policy initially referring to the voluntary audit of Kerbcraft which identified gaps, and confirmed that the new Corporate Safeguarding Policy and Volunteering policy will address the shortcomings. It was added that

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there is a new structure for safeguarding and every directorate has responsibility to collate data. A central, easily accessible register has been established.

Specifically, regarding Kerbcraft, it was reported that an internal audit was inconclusive and consequently, an independent audit investigation is in progress and will be reported on shortly. As part of the review, the Wales Audit Office has been asked to provide clarification and evidence relating to the comments made.

Secondly, a question was asked about a Wales Online survey into how many looked after children had gone missing since 2015 and noted that five councils, including Monmouthshire, had refused to provide the information. It was responded that this question will be looked into by the Chief Officer who explained that safeguarding will always be a work in progress, there will always be issues but they will be dealt with but in an open and transparent way. Elected Members who have not yet attended the safeguarding training were urged to attend the next session.

Council resolved to accept the recommendation and agreed and adopted the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

11. Report of the Chief Officer, Enterprise

11.1. Investment Proposal - Monmouth Pool and Leisure Provision

County Councillor R. J. Greenland presented a report to Council which to review proposals and seek a decision on the most suitable option for the provision of a Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre in Monmouth.

During debate we noted:

- A Member expressed concern that there had been an overspend on the development of the new school in the region of £11m and recalled that he had requested an updated schedule of works which had not been received. A breakdown of additional costs was requested with an indication of the source of the additional funding and also regular updates on the development of the two new schools.

The Leader couldn't recall the request and emphasised that the discussion was not about the school, which had been dealt with at a previous meeting, but was to further the Council's commitment to provide a swimming pool in Monmouth with an enhanced leisure facility that would generate income to pay for itself. He added that Option 2 was the best option, recognising that the first consideration was the need to not jeopardise young people's achievements and life chances. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People will be bringing a report to Council in the autumn to introduce the next phases of school builds in the county.

- A Member argued that the plans should be for a competition standard pool, with appropriate depth, lanes and viewing gallery, not a leisure pool. Assurance was sought that, during the changeover period, staff employment is safe, and, if not, what the effect would be. Regarding Option 2, an assessment of risks was requested of proceeding with the phases together. It was queried how long residents would be without the use of a gym and a timescale for the completion of the pool.

Councillor R. J. Greenland responded that the original indicative project price was £6.68m. Cost certainty was requested and confirmed as an additional £300,000. The specifications for the pool are in the report and it will be suitable for local competitions. The Head of Tourism Leisure Culture & Youth commented that this was an aspirational

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facility for Monmouth completely supported by Leisure Officers, that will add value to the old pool and confirmed that the depth meets Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) standards and suitable for teaching young people to swim.

A response was provided that there is no risk to staff and alternative work has been arranged for the duration of the project. It was confirmed that regular meetings will be held between stakeholders to ensure safe and smooth running of the two sites. Regarding timescales, the first phase (redesign of the fitness suite (gym), toning studio etc.) will be 32 weeks and the transformation from sports hall to pool will be up to 52 weeks. Options are under consideration to provide temporary alternative fitness facilities in the town.

It was explained that the additional £300,000 was due to changes to the depth of floor, a longer programme on site, securing the site for e.g. safe deliveries and following completion of surveys which indicated the need for e.g. deeper foundation piles.

- Councillor M. Feakins declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Member's Code of Conduct, in relation to this item, as a member of the Monmouth Leisure Centre gym. He declared that this was fantastic news for Monmouth. The vital need for continuity of service was emphasised for NHS exercise referral clients.
- Councillor Batrouni clarified the confusion regarding funding for the schools projects explaining that the projects wouldn't happen without the Welsh Government 21st Century School funding of approximately £2m. Considering borrowing to build the pool and noting the reliance on income to fund the borrowing, it was questioned if we are moving Leisure Centres to an Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) and if so, an explanation of how the income would be returned was requested.

The Head of Tourism Leisure Culture & Youth confirmed that whether there is an ADM or not, there will still be dependency on funding from the Council (grant or subsidy) and the assets will remain in the council's portfolio. The money from the income would pay for the grant (approximately £250,000 pa) according to the business plan. If there was an ADM the grant paid would be reduced by this amount.

A representative of Alliance Leisure explained that development generates new revenues which are used to fund the capital investment for all models whether in house, not for profit or commercial providers. A third party consultancy is used to model numbers and usually forecasted returns are exceeded.

- A Member questioned the quote for a temporary building and if it can be retained after the conclusion of the project. It was confirmed that the building is leased.
- A Member commented that this is a fantastic facility for Monmouth that sits well within the ADM and its scope for generating income. He questioned if the same consideration would be given to the other towns in the county. Councillor R.J. Greenland responded that the aspiration is to modernise all the leisure facilities but that it was too early to define the proposals for the school and leisure centre in Abergavenny. A Member commented that both King Henry VIII Comprehensive School and Abergavenny Leisure Centre are badly in need of refurbishment. Similarly improved school and leisure facilities in Chepstow are also sought.
- In response to a question, it was confirmed that the temporary structure will be utilised for other purposes e.g. clubs displaced from the sports hall.

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- A representative of Alliance Leisure commented that this will be an impressive and innovative facility that will feel like a new leisure centre and pool; a great facility for the community.

County Councillor R.J. Greenland summed up that the pool will meet current ASA standards, Sports Wales, curriculum and club requirements. The project will deliver a fantastic new facility for Monmouth and surrounding areas at an affordable cost with projections of income generation to pay for the project. The Officers and Alliance Leisure were thanked for their work.

Upon being put to the vote, Council resolved to agree the recommendations as presented:

- To approve the overall funding envelop of £7,404,539 to deliver the new pool and building re-design as indicated in the resources section. This includes the following:
 - Additional funding from the S106 agreement has been confirmed at £985,000 from the Wonastow Road Development.
 - There is also £1,928,000 that has been confirmed by Welsh Government, which is committed to the project.
 - The income assumptions from having new and different facilities is anticipated to be sufficient to support £3,580,000 of the capital expenditure necessary.
 - The council will borrow the remainder, appreciating an allowance was made by Members during budget setting process 2017-18 to create £500k headroom in Council's treasury budget, to support 5 particular policy commitments, of which this was one.
 - There could be potential of further funding depending on developments from section 106 in the local area (but this is not included in the calculations).

For this investment the community will be benefiting from a state of the art facility in response to the Well-being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 including:

- A 5 lane 25 metre swimming pool
- 50-60 station fitness facility and additional studios
- A large adventure play facility with café

Please refer to page 7 of the Final Business Case for further information on facilities included.

- To approve option 2 with the installation of a temporary structure of 700 metre squared to replace the existing sports hall whilst the works are being completed at a minimum cost of £287,595 and a maximum cost of £415,430 pending suitable planning and a flood consequences survey.

12. Members Questions

12.1. From County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor B. Jones

What discussions did the Council have with the Welsh Government regarding TrawsCymru?

Councillor Jones provided an explanation that TrawsCymru is a brand for a network of medium and long distance express bus routes in Wales sponsored by Welsh Government. The routes are usually 25 miles or more and connect key towns throughout Wales complementing rail services.

In response to the question, the authority has had numerous and ongoing discussions with Welsh Government on TrawsCymru. A study of a new route between Brecon and Chepstow via Abergavenny and Monmouth has been undertaken by Welsh Government. Discussions are

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ongoing as to how this may be introduced in the future. Both Monmouthshire and Powys have current contracts on various services that are part of this route and further meetings will take place. Any proposals will be reported to the Strategic Transport Group and Council.

As a supplementary, Councillor Batrouni asked for the response to be supplied in writing, and also if there was a timeframe when we will see those particular routes.

Councillor B agreed to provide this information to Councillor Batrouni in due course.

12.2. From County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor R. John

What indicators will be used to assess success or failure in relation to your first priority for education outlined at the last Council?

Councillor John responded that the first priority is to drive up standards across the board. Council was informed that students will be sitting new GCSE qualifications this year which are incomparable with previous years and so will provide a new baseline. It will therefore not be possible to identify indicators and measures until there has been an opportunity to review the latest performance in order to understand how we have performed compared to other similar authorities.

As a supplementary, it was commented that the response encompassed all Key Stages and it was queried if there were measures for all key stages. It was also asked how teaching standards are assessed.

Councillor John responded that he was proud of the standards delivered in recent years noting that Estyn inspections identified good schools in the county adding that good is not good enough. Even where there are excellent standards, we want to do better. He detailed that performance in Foundation Phase has been ranked first in Wales every year (except one) since 2012. In Key Stage 2, we have been first for three of the last five years. We were third in Key Stage 3 last year and first in Key Stage 4 for two of the last three years.

In recognition that we need to do better, indicators and proposals for the future will be brought forward.

12.3. From County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor R. John

What indicators will be used to assess success or failure in relation to your second priority for education outlined at the last Council?

Councillor John responded that the second priority was to promote children's wellbeing in schools noting that it can have a significant impact on their performance in school. We are developing a new structure to organise, integrate and measure activities relating to wellbeing working with Headteachers, colleagues and stakeholders. He stated that he would not be compromising discussions by making key announcements on measures today.

Councillor Batrouni asked a supplementary question: What discussions had taken place with members on ADM on achieving the measures of success of wellbeing.

In response, Councillor John confirmed that he will be bringing forward proposals and would be working closely with Headteachers and in discussion with students. He stated that it was not appropriate to make key policy announcements without discussions with stakeholders. He repeated his offer to work with any member who wishes to contribute to the debate.

12.4. From County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor R. John

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What indicators will be used to assess success or failure in relation to your third priority for education outlined at the last Council?

Councillor John responded that the third priority was to revise and update a number of key policy areas through consultation with stakeholders and also to improve the school estate. A number of consultations will be launched in the autumn and he was not going to prejudice the results by announcing specific indicators today.

The meeting ended at 4.55 pm

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