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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of County Council held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Thursday, 14th December, 2017 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillor M. Powell (Chairman)
County Councillor J. Higginson (as Vice Chairman)

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Kellie Beirne	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Peter Davies	Chief Officer, Resources
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Robert Tranter	Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors P. Clarke, R. Edwards, G. Howard and L.Jones

2. Declarations of interest

3. Chairman's announcement and receipt of petitions

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Members for their donations to the Chairman's charities this year.

Councillor Thomas presented a petition on behalf of Bring Back Bailey Park Outdoor Swimming Pool Group who requested that MCC consider the needs of Monmouthshire residents in relation to Bailey Park and its facilities.

Councillor Howarth presented a petition on behalf of residents of Dan-Y-Coed, Clydach who requested a full investigation regarding the embankment being constructed behind Dan-Y-Coed bungalows, which had been constructed without consultation.

We noted the change in membership on the Board of Monmouthshire Housing Association. Councillor Batrouni confirmed his membership.

The Chair welcomed Charlie-Jade Atkins from Monmouthshire Youth Service who was in attendance to present to Council information regarding primary school competition, and asked that Members visited schools in their ward areas, along with a youth worker and explain what they do. The children would then be asked to draw them, which would then be entered into a competition. Members were keen to endorse the idea and were willing to get involved.

We welcomed Paul Sullivan, who presented to Council detail of the Primary School Playmaker programme. The Playmaker award is a six hour course focusing on communication, leadership, organisation and resilience, and is aimed at year 5 and 6 children. In response to questions we

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heard that the programme is 100% funded through Sport Wales, and is reviewed annually. The cost per annum £110,000. Where children did not wish to engage, the programme sought to identify ways to support in alternative ways with plenty of activity, finding areas they like, and building confidence. With regards to weather implications the team would consider the best use of space, whether that be school halls or classrooms. Members commended the team and recognised that achievement of being the authority first in the UK to carry out this scheme.

There is an even split of gender through the volunteer programme. In terms of ALN and free school meals children, successful examples were provided in terms of outcomes. The Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health recognised the measures of impact, and noted the connection with the upcoming item.

4. Public Open Forum

There were no matters for the public open forum.

5. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2017

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 9th November 2017 were confirmed for accuracy and signed by the Chair.

We noted a correction on page 8. The last sentence of 11.4 should read *However in all years there has been an underspend **in out of** county budget which has more than offset those figures.*

Members expressed frustration at the lack of action list on the agenda.

6. Reports of the Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

6.1. Safeguarding Presentation

Members received an awareness presentation emphasising the importance of safeguarding. The Chief Officer thanked those involved with the presentation, and stressed the importance of everyone within the Council to be aware.

6.2. Volunteering Policy

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the Volunteering Policy, the purpose of the report being to provide a robust Volunteering Policy position, applicable to all service/business areas including schools.

In response to a comment regarding insurance, Council was advised that this was currently being looked at by insurance officers in order to identify solutions. Volunteer DBS checks are free of charge, with no costs incurred.

The Chief Officer stated that she is confident that the systems are in place that ensure people accessing information are those that should be doing so.

The Leader welcomed the report and commended the Volunteering Lead on the robust and strong policy.

In terms of review, all policies are constantly monitored and updated. The suitability of the policy would be assessed annually, and refreshed every 3-5 years.

Upon being put to the vote, Council resolved to agree the recommendation:

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That the Volunteering Policy be adopted by Council and circulated to all service/business areas and commended to governing bodies for adoption as soon as possible.

6.3. Safeguarding evaluation report

The Cabinet Member for Social Care presented the Safeguarding Evaluative Report:

- To evaluate the progress of Monmouthshire County Council's key safeguarding priorities, in the period April – October 2017, using identified measures to highlight progress, identify risks and set out clear improvement actions and priorities for further development.
- 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.
- To inform Members about the progress made towards meeting the standards in the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy approved by Council in July 2017.

In response to questions we heard that the DBS exception report has been moved from quarterly to periodic due to the importance of the check in terms of the safer recruitment process and it being not appropriate to wait for a quarterly check, and to ensure immediate risks are managed.

In terms of addressing issues surrounding loneliness in adult social care, this would come under the preventative approach to safeguarding and the wellbeing workforce has been introduced who work with people who are lonely and isolated to connect them to certain services and social opportunities.

Councillor Batrouni sought assurance that the framework would identify weaknesses or breaches. The Chief Officer responded that the report aims to be an honest appraisal of where we are. A review report is expected April 2018

Councillor Pratt thanked the social services team, specifically for the work being undertaken in Llanelly Hill.

The External Reference Group had provided helpful point, the minutes could be forwarded to Members.

In response to a question regarding the Faithful and Gould asset survey of Chepstow School, The Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health advised that she would ask the Chief Officer for Children and Young People to provide a response.

There was concern that the Council had been commissioning services without a risk based management and quality assurance process across all providers. In response we heard that the majority of placements made in Children's Services go through the 'Four Cs', a commissioning consortium across South Wales here providers come onto a framework, and accreditation, quality and safeguarding checks are undertaken. In Children's Services a contracts officer does some of that work for the off contract provider. This is being moved in to the commissioning function in Social Care and Health.

In terms of the assessment of safe services having important weaknesses, it is recognised there are a vast array of services around safeguarding and analysis is showing that safeguarding is built in but we do not have a full picture as a Council. There is to be an internal audit of the whole programme to be undertaken in the new year.

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Council resolved to agree the recommendation:

To note the key safeguarding risks and approve the priority improvement actions as set out at Appendix 2 to this report.

To endorse the evaluation of safeguarding progress set out in Appendix 5 to this report.

7. Report of the Monitoring Officer:

7.1. Update to constitution

The Cabinet Member for Governance presented a report for Council to consider and adopt the proposed changes to the council's constitution. The proposed highlights were highlighted green in the attached report.

It was expressed that the decisions had been made previously and there was nothing that had not been seen before.

Members were reassured that the updated version would be accessible via the Hub, as well as a central hard copy available at County Hall.

Council resolved to agree the recommendation:

To adopt the attached document as the council's constitution.

8. Reports of the Head of Policy and Governance:

8.1. Bryn Y Cwm Area Committee Pilot

The Cabinet Member for Governance presented a report in order to seek approval of council to a temporary amendment of the constitution which will allow town and community council members voting rights on the Bryn y Cwm Area Committee.

Upon being put to the vote, Council agreed the recommendations:

That council agree to a temporary amendment to the constitution of the Bryn y Cwm Area Committee to allow town and community council members who sit on the Bryn y Cwm Area Committee voting rights for the duration of the area working pilot, ending in September 2018.

That the quorum of the Bryn y Cwm Area Committee is one quarter of the whole number of members being 23

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9. Reports of the Deputy Chief Executive:

9.1. City Deal

The Chief Executive presented a report, the purpose being to provide Council with an update on some key elements within the City Deal programme.

Since the formation of the City Deal programme MCC have been hosting the position of Interim Programme Director, performing a pay and rations role. The Joint Cabinet now want to solidify this role and are asking if MCC would be prepared to host the position. The funding will come from City Deal and not MCC. The report does not ask to commit to any financial contribution. As with any posts in excess of £100k there are processes to be put in place where councils are content to proceed, and this report looks to satisfy that requirement. The appointment panel would likely be the Leaders of the 10 councils, and the processes to be followed would largely be those of Cardiff City Council.

The Leader moved the recommendation and stated the importance of a significant person who would be fundamental in shaping the work programme for the City Deal.

Councillor Watts expressed concern that the salary should be based on performance and delivery. The Leader responded that there will be a joint scrutiny function, and outcomes will be expected to be delivered over the three year contract.

If MCC does host the position, it is not likely that the person would be based in Monmouthshire. Councillor Howarth requested that should an MCC officer be successful, that position should be replaced as soon as possible.

Council resolved to agree the recommendations:

To seek approval for Monmouthshire County Council to host the temporary/ fixed term contract of employment for the City Deal Programme Director post for a three- year period from 1 April 2018. The nature of the contract will be determined by the appointment of the successful candidate and will be via either a secondment basis or a fixed term appointment basis.

To report this role to Council and to ratify Council approval for the employment of a post which is in excess of £100,000 per annum.

Under The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (Wales) Regulations 2006, as amended in 2014, due to the fact that the proposed remuneration of the City Deal Programme Director will be in excess of £100,000 per annum, there is a necessity for the role to be reported to Council.

Due to the secondment / fixed term contract arrangements identified above, the current employer of the successful candidate will not be known until after the recruitment process has been completed, therefore the post needs to be ratified by whichever Council is the employer, and until this takes place only a conditional offer would be able to be made. An update report will be provided to Council following the recruitment & selection appointment process

10. Notices of Motion:

10.1. Motion from County Councillor K. Williams

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This council will look to invest in our operations department during the next round of budget talks. We will look to invest around £250,000 in our street scene and highways operations to increase the capacity to carry out highways and grounds maintenance to the level expected of us by council tax payers. The Labour group and Conservative administration will take part in meaningful discussion to achieve this.

Councillor Batrouni seconded the motion.

During debate the following points were noted:

The Cabinet Member welcomed suggestions from the Labour Group in how to find funds to increase the budget. He added that he would work with the Labour Group in doing so. He reminded that costed suggestions must be made before 31st January 2018.

The Leader recognised and sympathised with the issues and asked the opposition to come together and create an alternative budget.

The opposition leader stressed that alternative budgets had previously been ignored.

Independent Member Councillor Blakebrough thought it good for the two parties to work together particularly Westminster and Cardiff have taken the money that the community locally so desperately need. She agreed with the motion in principle and thanked Councillor Williams for raising the issue.

There were concerns amongst Members regarding the budget surrounding highways and infrastructure. Also the delay in implementing the alternative delivery model.

Councillor Webb commended the exemplary service within her ward

Upon being put to the vote the motion was defeated.

10.2. Motion from County Councillor D. Batrouni

Since raising the question about period poverty, the Labour group have received anecdotal information that it is an issue in Monmouthshire. Therefore, the Labour group requests that the Council works with local comprehensives and foodbanks in order to ascertain the scale of the need in Monmouthshire and to help, where appropriate, provide sanitary products for women and girls. The council should also consider the current strategy of providing vending machines for sanitary products at schools and the cost per unit that it charges.

Additionally, we ask that the council considers the use of sustainable products in the form of reusable and biodegradable products, as the UK produces 200,000 tonnes of oil based waste in the form of discarded sanitary products each year. Finally, that the Council resolutely determines, as a matter of policy and on a cross-party basis, to eradicate period poverty in Monmouthshire.

Councillor Batrouni presented the motion thanking the Cabinet Member for the response at the previous Council meeting, and stated that following the meeting there had been many messages from the community confirming this to be an issue. He added that he had been told that nurses in secondary schools are handing out sanitary products and have been doing so for

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years, some paying for them from their own pocket. He questioned if the Council should think about the costs and margins of vending machines in the secondary schools.

Councillor D. Evans seconded the motion

In response, Cabinet Member, Councillor S Jones confirmed that she is absolutely committed to eradicating period poverty and proposed an amended motion:

This Council will continue to work with schools, foodbanks and all relevant agencies to ascertain the scale of the need in Monmouthshire and through working in partnership we will identify how we can support those who are affected by period poverty. As part of this approach we will consider the use of sustainable products in the form of re-useable and biodegradable products and this Council remains committed to working with all of our partners towards eradicating period poverty in Monmouthshire.

Councillor S. Jones explained that she had included 'all agencies' in her amended motion referring to primary schools and their growing up programme, housing associations and other charities. She confirmed that she has been in touch with the organisation Wings and hoped to provide confidence that she is following up on this issue. It was explained that reference to vending machines had been removed as that is a Welsh Government Policy and not our strategy to consider. We heard that only one comprehensive school in Monmouthshire has a vending machine, yet all schools offer free sanitary products as part of the welfare rooms. Councillor Jones added she would continue to work on this agenda on behalf of women and girls of Monmouthshire.

Council debated the amended motion:

Councillor Batrouni expressed concern at dropping the terms 'provide' and 'policy' as this would be seen as enabling but not acting ourselves.

Members were keen to support the motion and welcomed hard data on period poverty.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the suggestion that Members form a sub group to advance work on this issue.

Upon being put to vote, Council carried the amended motion.

11. Members Questions:

11.1. From County Councillor S. Woodhouse to County Councillor R. John

What assessment has the Cabinet Member made of the implications for schools in Monmouthshire of the Welsh Government's cuts to the Education Improvement Grant?

Cabinet Member Councillor R. John thanked Councillor Woodhouse for the question and responded that the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) is distributed to schools through the education consortia, EAS, and that money is used for a wide variety of valuable school improvement activities such as teacher training and foundation stage staffing. WG has announced cuts to the fund and have not provided any clarity on which aspects of the EIG are to be cut and there is considerable concern among headteachers in Monmouthshire about the impact of these cuts, particularly on our most vulnerable learners. He added that he had met with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and had expressed the concern, and she had explained that the EIG and a number of grants are to be moved into the revenue support grant, which is also being cut here in Monmouthshire. Councillor John has written to the Cabinet Secretary to reiterate his concerns and request that WG reconsider. Cllr John recognised that

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public money is in short supply but noted that WG have reserves totalling over £300m, and have also received just over £1.2b from the Chancellor's budget and just a fraction of that could protect the EIG, support teachers in delivering the new curriculum, and help support them in their work to drive up standards in schools in Monmouthshire.

As a supplementary Cllr Woodhouse asked that Members are informed of the response from WG and are kept up to date on this item.

12. From County Councillor A. Webb to County Councillor S. Jones

Has the Cabinet Member received a response to the motion approved at the September full Council meeting which supported Monmouthshire being prioritised for broadband deployment in the next round of Welsh Government funding?

Cabinet Member Councillor S. Jones thanked Councillor Webb for the question and responded that in terms of consultation there had been no formal reply but WG had provided a summary of responses from all those consulted. As part of our consultation response we asked that some of the £80m funding be drawn down to this Council. To date there has been no response from WG but we will keep pushing on that. We do know that there will be over 10% of households that won't have access to Superfast Broadband which is below the Welsh average. We don't know if those 1600 properties that were in the AB project will be included in the next round. In terms of whether we will be prioritised we know that we have £80m going forward as part of the WG funding for the whole of Wales. Monmouthshire is in a bid area with Powys, Flintshire, Wrexham, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff and Newport and are at level 3 of 5 levels, so not high priority at this stage. Councillor Jones is keen to work cross party to solve this issue.

13. Report of the Head of Operations:

13.1. To resolve to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, on the grounds that it involves the information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act [Proper Officer's view attached].

13.2. HoV Food Waste Procurement - Evaluation Of Invitation To Submit Initial Tenders & Identification Of Preferred Bidder

Council were presented with a report the purpose being to brief Council on the process for tender and contract award for the provision of food waste treatment services on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council, Blaenau Gwent CBC and Torfaen CBC and seek approval to identify the preferred bidder and proceed to the final stages of contract award.

Following discussion Council resolved to agree the recommendations:

That Council receive a report from officers on the tender process to date and what the next steps are to arrive at the contract award.

That Council support the identification of the preferred bidder and that officers proceed to negotiation and contract award subject to .Blaenau Gwent CBC and Torfaen CBC also approving the identification of the preferred bidder.

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The meeting ended at 1.50 pm

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