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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of County Council held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Thursday, 17th January, 2019 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor P. Clarke (Chairman)
County Councillor S. Woodhouse (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Batrouni, D. Blakebrough, M. Powell, V. Smith, D. Dovey, 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.B. Jones, P. Jordan, P. Murphy, B. Strong, F. Taylor, A. Watts, A. Webb, L. Brown, A. Davies, M. Feakins, M. Groucutt, R. John, L. Jones, M. Lane, J. Pratt, R. Roden, T. Thomas, J. Treharne and J. Watkins

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Matthew 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 Williams	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Julie Boothroyd	Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Gareth King	Management Surveyor

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors A. Easson, S. Jones, K. Williams, J. Becker, L. Dymock and P. Pavia

2. Declarations of interest

No declarations were made by Members.

3. Public Open Forum

There were no matters for the public open forum.

4. Chairman's announcement and receipt of petitions

There were no petitions presented.

The Chairman advised of an additional agenda item and welcomed Youth Worker, Charlie Jade Atkins who was in attendance with two members of the Youth Council to advise Members of the success of Engage to Change. The Acting Chair of the Youth Council, explained the priorities of the Youth Council which included mental health, homelessness, and put an end to knife crime. A Youth Conference had taken place in December 2018 which gave an opportunity to hear young people's views on the issues raised. The Youth Conference was attended by a wide range of students and took place in a relaxed, informal atmosphere, and had proved successful. Young People recognised there are services around the issues raised, but felt these should be improved and made more accessible, with increased services available within schools.

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Members commended the Youth Council representatives and their presentation to Council. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People explained we have officers and agencies working on the issues raised and Council will ensure these matters are taken forward.

5. Notices of motion:

The Chair advised that he had agreed to accept the following emergency motion:

“This Council notes that the funding for the Community Connections are set to run out at the end of March ; the council recognises the incredible work this scheme delivers enhancing the lives of many local people across the county and believes their work should continue. That the council raises this with PSB partners , who are all supporters/sponsors of the projects , to seek short term funding for the project, in order to give the schemes time to find longer term funding”.

Councillor Higginson seconded the motion.

The Leader expressed support of the motion, and agreed that a recommendation should be forwarded to the Public Service Board to find a sustainable way forward in the longer term.

There was shock at the gap of funding which could result in the loss of the innovative service, and Council were urged to take timely action to ensure the service is not lost.

Upon being put to the vote Council resolved to accept the motion.

5.1. From County Councillor D. Batrouni

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Harris.

During discussion Members recognised the unrealistic timescales involved and disappointment was expressed that Group Leaders had not met to push this forward. The Leader thanked Councillor Watts for the initiative to meet with Bristol City Council to look at work they are undertaking.

The Leader assured that a meeting will be set up with Bristol City Council, and officers have been meeting with the managing director of an affordable housing company developed by Carmarthen County Council.

Members agreed this does need to move forward and bringing it back to the agenda is useful, and a cross-party meeting should take place as soon as possible.

Councillor Batrouni withdrew the motion with the understanding that a report will be presented to Full Council in April 2019.

5.2. From County Councillor D. Batrouni

The motion was seconded by Councillor Watts.

Councillor Taylor stated that she had written to Councillor John and had been assured that the system would be monitored as there were concerns that the increase would affect, disproportionately, working families who use the childcare element and some of those who are on low incomes but not eligible for any other benefit. She expressed dismay that this monitoring had not taken place. Further information, including an impact assessment was welcomed.

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Councillor Thomas referred to Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni highlighting concerns around the negative effect on families on low incomes, and the importance of the childcare element to allow these parents to work.

We heard Welsh Government have reduced the funding to local authorities hence the situation, and WG should review this.

The Cabinet Member responded that the charge had been introduced 12 months ago, and introduction had been delayed until September 2018 to allow as much time as possible to work with schools about how the charge would be implemented. There was no proposals to double the cost. The £1 charge has been in place for one term, and a drop in attendance had been anticipated but this had exceeded expectations. There is no profit made from breakfast clubs.

Monitoring continues with detailed assessments, but there is no evidence to say that the children no longer attending are those who are either eligible for free school meals or those just above the threshold. Evidence obtained so far is that children eligible for free school meals continue to attend breakfast clubs in great numbers. More quality data is required on the impact on low income families.

Upon being put to the vote the motion was defeated.

5.3. From County Councillor P. Fox

The motion was seconded.

A Member stressed that although he understood objections it was important to recognise the impact of the traffic between the Severn Bridge and the other side of Newport.

There was support for the motion, recognising that the gateway to Wales has been neglected for many years. There will be opportunities to expand the Welsh economy and create more jobs, improving life chances for future generations in South East Wales, but the full potential will not be met unless problems at Brynglas Tunnels are resolved.

Opposition stated that this was not sustainable, nor an effective and efficient use of public money, and takes priority over better solutions.

Councillor Giles Howard stated that he could not support the motion due to the wording of "the proposed M4 relief road" and "the proposed road is the preferred black route". He agreed with other members to the need to see the results of the enquiry. An urgent solution is required for travel across Newport but what is proposed, doesn't resolve the situation but would speed up traffic to the next available bottleneck.

The effect on the environment was highlighted.

An Opposition Member stated that the party line from the Welsh Conservatives is that 'the Welsh Government are yet to confirm the date, nature or detail of any potential vote but you can rest assured that the Welsh Conservatives will not support a solution that has an unacceptable cost to the tax payer or the local environment.' She added concerns around the M4 tolls as an

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ill thought out political knee-jerk reaction. This has already had significant consequences. Concerns around costs were referred to, and the effect on outstanding issues. Funds could go towards the Metro, being public over private transport solutions, which could bring greater economic benefits.

Councillor Howard moved that a vote be taken, which was duly supported.

Upon being put to the vote the motion was carried.

6. Members questions:

6.1. From County Councillor D. Batrouni to County Councillor P. Murphy

How many staff were suspended in 2018 and what was the average length of suspension?

Councillor Murphy responded that corporately there were 11 cases in 2018. School based there were 3 cases. The average suspension time corporately was 4.7 months, and 3 months in respect of schools.

As a supplementary, Councillor Batrouni asked if this is consistent with neighbouring local authorities. The Cabinet Member agreed to look in to this and provide an answer.

6.2. From County Councillor B. Strong to County Councillor R. John

Would the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People explain the impact of proposed changes to school catchment areas on families in Usk?

The Cabinet Member responded that in the 2017-2022 Corporate Plan there is a commitment to undertake a review of catchment areas and admissions policies. There are a number of anomalies where catchment areas between primary and secondary schools do not align and instances. Like Usk, where we are inadvertently forcing children to study out of County. The Administration believes in you live in, and pay Council Tax, in Monmouthshire you should have a right for your children to be educated in Monmouthshire. It is proposed to extend the catchment area of Monmouth Comprehensive School to take in the whole Usk Primary School catchment area. Consultation begins 18th January 2019 until 1st March 2019. The Cabinet Member urged all parents in the Usk area, and other affected areas in Monmouthshire, to have their say on the proposals.

As a supplementary Councillor Strong asked if children who currently go to Caerleon Comprehensive from Usk would still get free transport until they take their place in Monmouth. The Cabinet Member clarified that children get free transport if they live more than 2 miles from their catchment school, and these arrangements would be honoured for the duration they attend that school.

7. Reports of the Head of Policy and Governance:

7.1. DIARY OF MEETINGS 2019/2020

Council were presented with the draft diary of meetings for 2019/2020.

During discussion disappointment was expressed to see meetings set in school term times. The Cabinet Member for Governance suggested that Audit Committee and Full Council be transposed so that Council avoids school holiday.

Members also expressed frustration that the meeting times continue to remain the same.

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

That the diary of meetings for 2019/2020, as attached, be approved.

7.2. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES - COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

Council received this report in order to appoint a representative to serve on the Community Health Council due to the resignation of Councillor K. Williams.

Council resolved that Councillor J. Pratt be appointed.

8. Reports of the Chief Officer, Resources:

8.1. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2019/20

Council were presented with a report to:

- Present arrangements for the implementation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and to approve it for 2019/20.
- Affirm that, in the absence of any revisions or amendments, annual uprating amendments will be carried out each year without a requirement to adopt the whole Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

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

To note the making of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations ("the Prescribed Requirements Regulations") 2013 by the Welsh Government on 26 November 2013.

To adopt the provisions within the Regulations above ("the Prescribed Requirements Regulations") and any 'annual uprating regulations' in respect of its Scheme for the financial year 2019/20 including the discretionary elements previously approved as the Council's local scheme from 1st April 2019.

8.2. PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF THE FORMER MOD RAILWAY LINE, CRICK TO CAERWENT

Council received a report in order to seek approval to acquire the former MOD railway line between Crick and Caerwent to facilitate a cycle and walk way and to enable an easement to service the Crick Road LDP development site.

Members' support with of the venture was welcomed in order to bring the railway line into a useful, safe route function, for the promotion of health, wellbeing and tourism and the potential for Caldicot Castle to benefit financially also.

A question was raised regarding the environmental impact and the additional at a time of deep austerity. In response it was mentioned that a sympathetic approach would be taken, plus the financial issue of an easement would be met by capital monies rather than revenue monies funded out of the receipt of the Crick Road Development.

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

To agree to the acquisition of the former railway line as shown for identification purposes on the plan included at Appendix 2.

That the acquisition costs will be met from the sale proceeds of the Crick Road site.

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That authority is delegated to the Head of Commercial and Integrated Landlord Services to negotiate the acquisition in accordance with the independent valuation dated 31st July 2018.

9. Reports of the Chief Officer, Enterprise:

9.1. TRANSFER OF LAND AT FORMER IRONWORKS AT CLYDACH GORGE FROM COSTAIN TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Council received a report to seek Council consent for the transfer of ownership from Costain to the Council, the land known as the former Cemex Cement Plant at Clydach Gorge, Clydach, near Abergavenny.

Benefits will provide operational access and allow implementation of comprehensive improvement schemes for visitors and local residents to access the eastern end of the gorge including the historically important Ironworks site.

A question was raised regarding the funding of this long term project, taking into consideration the CPO agreement on the caravan site and any potential compensation that should be re-invested into this community, the Countryside Manager reported that a compensation figure had been agreed but had yet to be received as a capital receipt. However, in the longer term MCC would be looking for partnership support in the form of an external grant.

It was also reported that a precautionary approach regarding risks relating to archaeological remains had been taken and Estates officers, in communication with the Insurance Officer, have established that any additional risk is minimal.

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

That the former Cemex Site at Clydach Gorge (hatched blue on the attached plan) be transferred by Costain to Monmouthshire County Council for the sum of £1.

That following transfer to County Council that site be incorporated into the portfolio of land and property managed and operated by the Council's Countryside Service.

10. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of County Council held on 20th December 2018

The minutes of the meeting of County Council held on 20th December 2018 were approved and signed by the Chair.

11. To note the County Council Action List

Councillor John advised of correspondence regarding SENCOM and discussions with neighbouring authorities continue.

Councillor Howarth referred to a petition relating to Dan Y Coed, Clydach presented on 10th May 2018, and how the matter is still to be resolved.

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The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

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