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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of County Council held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Thursday, 24th June, 2021 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor M.Feakins (Chairman)
County Councillor A. Webb (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: P. Clarke, D. Batrouni, D. Blakebrough, L.Brown, A.Davies, L.Dymock, A. Easson, R. Edwards, D. Evans, P.A. Fox, M.Groucutt, L. Guppy, R. Harris, J. Higginson, G. Howard, S. Howarth, R.John, D. Jones, L.Jones, P. Jones, S. Jones, P. Jordan, M.Lane, P. Murphy, P.Pavia, M. Powell, J.Pratt, R.Roden, V. Smith, B. Strong, F. Taylor, T.Thomas, J.Treharne, J.Watkins, A. Watts and S. Woodhouse

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Matt Phillips	Chief Officer People and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Peter Davies	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer, Resources
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Frances O'Brien	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Julie Boothroyd	Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance
Mark Hand	Head of Place-making, Housing, Highways and Flood
Ian Saunders	Chief Operating Officer, MonLife
Hazel Clatworthy	Sustainability Policy Officer
Matthew Lewis (Countryside)	Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead for MonLife
Rachel Lewis	Planning Policy Manager

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors R.J.W. Greenland, S.B. Jones and K. Williams

1. Declarations of interest

County Councillor Peter Fox declared a prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 5.4 as a farm tenant with land identified in the RLDP.

County Councillor Peter Fox declared a prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 6.3 as a relative is a Lave Net Fisherman.

2. Public Questions

None.

3. Chairman's announcement and receipts of petitions

The Chairman confirmed he was in receipt of a petition from County Councillor Louise Brown. County Councillor Brown presented the petition on behalf of local residents to introduce a

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20mph speed limit in the residential areas of Shirenewton and Mynyddbach Village, together with an indicative map. The petition had been signed by over 200 people, 85% from the local area.

The Chairman confirmed that the petition would be passed to relevant directorate.

4. Reports for Council:

5. CHIEF OFFICER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ANNUAL REPORT

The Chief Officer for Children and Young People presented his annual report, following which Members were invited to comment.

In response to concerns around an increase in vulnerable learners post Covid the Chief Officer explained how there has been continued reflection on how the pandemic will affect people in many different ways. It was recognised that those who have become newly vulnerable due to the pandemic may not yet have the resilience within them and is something to be cautious of. Our schools are supporting our children on a child-by-child basis to ensure they understand what the children need.

It was recognised that some staff had concerns regarding the return to school and measures have been put in place for support, a former headteacher has been recruited to act as a touchpoint for our leaders.

The majority of schools have dealt with the transitioning of primary to secondary school on a virtual basis and have used technology to a positive extent.

Officers work closely with EAS colleagues to plot and understand where schools are spending their resources and there is a sharp focus on making sure the grant funding is spent on interventions and support for disadvantaged learners that will make the most significant difference.

In response to concerns around the FSM gap, a draft strategy has been to Children and Young People Select Committee and officers will continue to develop that. Officers continue to work closely with EAS Vulnerable Learners Team to understand the key interventions. The final strategy with associated plans is expected in Autumn 2021.

With regards to discrimination, colleagues within the Education Welfare Team have worked closely with schools to ensure that our reporting mechanisms are effective and appropriate.

The Cabinet Member for Education thanked the Chief Officer for his report on behalf on Council, and commended the work of the entire CYP directorate.

5.1. SHIRE HALL / MONMOUTH MUSEUM

The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and Social Justice presented the report to inform members of progress on the feasibility study to establish a new cultural destination at the Shire Hall Monmouth including the relocation of the current Monmouth Museum and the review of museum collection storage. The report proposed a phased approach to the new provision.

It was intended that Shire Hall open at the start of the summer holidays with an initial visitor offer in place and slowly expand as is possible. It was hoped that fixed timetables would be ready in the next week.

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With reference to previous feasibility studies it was confirmed that this is a new piece of work and external consultants had been commissioned to carry out the feasibility study. The focus on Monmouth was a result of an Individual Cabinet Member Decision made in December 2020.

In terms of the feasibility study, the cost to date of hiring private consultants stands at £25,000.

In terms of the levelling up funding, the £250,000 requested in the report from capital receipts would be used as match funding for the levelling bid if that was successful.

With regards to proposals for attractions across Monmouthshire, officers are working on a MonLife Heritage Strategy, funded from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, due for completion towards the end of this year

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

To note the progress in undertaking a feasibility study to establish a new cultural offer at Shire Hall incorporating the Monmouth Museum and the review of museum collection storage.

To approve the establishment of an initial phase within Shire Hall and to confirm that Monmouth Museum will not reopen in Market Hall.

To reopen key areas of Shire Hall for public use, subject to Covid regulations and any restrictions required to allow the completion of the phase 1 provision incorporating temporary museum displays.

To approve a £250,000 contribution from capital receipts to facilitate the initial phase of works, as recommended by Cabinet on 9 June 2021. That in turn will also provide a match funding contribution to the Levelling Up Fund bid for Monmouth that would if successful enable the longer-term vision to be achieved.

Future reports be presented to members as the long-term proposals for Shire Hall, Monmouth and for museum collection storage are further developed.

6. CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY UPDATE

The Cabinet member for Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure presented a report to set out progress towards Monmouthshire's Climate Emergency action plan which outlined how the council plans to reduce its carbon emissions to net zero by 2030, as committed to in the Climate Emergency declaration by Council in May 2019.

County Councillor Groucutt commended the work of Hazel Clatworthy, Sustainability Policy Officer. He asked if Council are acknowledging the climate emergency when the leading officer is part-time. The Cabinet Member thanked him for the positive comments, and acknowledged his concerns adding that this is being addressed.

It was requested that we make faster progress to move to electric vehicles. The Cabinet Member responded that we also need the capacity to charge vehicles and there are future plans for a new depot in the south of the County.

Issues around grass cutting and visibility were highlighted.

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Comment was made on the disconnect between the climate strategy and the development of new roads. The Cabinet Member agreed to provide data relating to idling traffic vs the increased amounts of traffic.

Reference was made to Magor Station and how it is now absorbed into WG policy and how it should be reflected in the action plan and subsequent progress.

Flooding and flood risk was suggested as an addition to the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The Cabinet Member referred to fast charging points and highlighted that a Central Government strategy is in place to make improvements UK wide. She added that with regards to refuse collection we are still looking for suitable vehicles.

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

That Council receives a progress update on actions being taken to reduce the authority's carbon emissions in line with its agreed policy commitment.

That the Climate Emergency Working Group is tasked with updating the action plan to reflect the latest evidence and potential solutions to deliver the council's agreed policy position.

7. MONMOUTHSHIRE REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PREFERRED STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Economy presented the report to inform Council of the preparation of the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Preferred Strategy and to seek Council's endorsement of the Preferred Strategy to be issued for statutory consultation/engagement and stakeholder involvement.

Following the stakeholder involvement, engagement and consultation on the Preferred Strategy, responses will be collated and carefully considered. A consultation report will be prepared and published containing details of the representations and the Council's response to them. This consultation report and the Preferred Strategy with any necessary amendments will be reported to Council in approximately November 2021 to seek approval of the Preferred Strategy. The Deposit Plan will then be prepared and considered by Council prior to a statutory six-week consultation and engagement period in Summer 2022

In doing so she raised an amendment to the recommendation to read:

2.1 That Council endorses the RLDP Preferred Strategy for statutory consultation/engagement and stakeholder involvement for an eight-week period.

The Head of Placemaking, Housing, Highways and Flooding addressed an earlier comment regarding electric vehicle charging. He explained that the RLDP has been drafted with the climate emergency very much in mind. Officers intend to include electric vehicle charging as a policy in the Deposit Plan.

A question was raised around housing targets and how local industry does not command the salaries to achieve house purchases. It was confirmed that the RLDP did not set out who builds the homes but there was a separate discussion taking place about whether the Council becomes a developer or supports affordable housing in different ways.

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County Councillor Dimitri Batrouni declared a non-prejudicial interest as a board member of Monmouthshire Housing Association. He referred to the phosphate issue being a significant problem. The officer that explained that they are making good progress with proactive discussions with stakeholders.

County Councillor Davies left at 16:57

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

2.1 That Council endorses the RLDP Preferred Strategy for statutory consultation/engagement and stakeholder involvement for an eight-week period.

8. Notices of Motion:

9. Submitted by County Councillor Richard John, Leader of the Council

This Council: Recognises that a more representative council is better equipped to reflect the views and experiences of the residents of our county. Regrets that in Wales only 28% of councillors are women and no local authority has ever achieved a 50:50 gender balance. Welcomes the improvement in female representation amongst Monmouthshire councillors to 35% in 2017. Resolves that all four political groups will take steps to help Monmouthshire County Council become the first local authority in Wales to achieve gender parity in 2022.

Seconded by County Councillor Jane Pratt.

County Councillor Dimitri Batrouni supported the sentiment of the motion and proposed an amendment. To add: *and to increase the representation of other protected characteristics.*

County Councillor Martyn Groucutt seconded the amendment.

Upon being put to the vote the amended motion became the substantive motion.

This Council: Recognises that a more representative council is better equipped to reflect the views and experiences of the residents of our county. Regrets that in Wales only 28% of councillors are women and no local authority has ever achieved a 50:50 gender balance. Welcomes the improvement in female representation amongst Monmouthshire councillors to 35% in 2017. Resolves that all four political groups will take steps to help Monmouthshire County Council become the first local authority in Wales to achieve gender parity in 2022 and to increase the representation of other protected characteristics.

Following discussion Council resolved to accept the substantive motion.

10. Submitted by County Councillor Paul Jordan

Monmouthshire County Council calls upon the Football Association of Wales to publish the review of their decision to relegate Abergavenny women's football club to tier 2. Abergavenny woman's football club have been in the top league for nine years and are the fourth most successful in the competition's history. The club strongly champions the development of local women's football. FAW have substituted Abergavenny for Aberystwyth in tier one who did not win one match last season. Gwent now has no representation despite being one of the most populous areas in Wales. This action of FAW flies in the face of fair play. Abergavenny WFC

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consistently upholds the true value of sport and we call upon the Football association of Wales to do likewise.

Seconded by County Councillor Sheila Woodhouse.

Members were keen to support the motion and upon being put to the vote Council resolved to accept the motion.

10.1. Submitted by County Councillor Tony Easson

This motion seeks Council's support in persuading National Resources Wales to withdraw their intention to restrict traditional Lave Net fishing methods to a "catch and release" policy across the Severn Estuary. I would seek an endorsement, and that my attached comments are sent to Natural Resources Wales, the Cabinet Member of Senedd for Rural Affairs, and copied to all MS's representing Newport East, Monmouth and S East Wales, plus the sole MS representing the Liberal Democrats.

Seconded by County Councillor Jim Higginson.

County Councillor Debby Blakebrough left the meeting at 17:37

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure stated that she had not been notified of any consultation regarding this and thanked Councillor Easson for bringing the motion to Council.

Members were keen to support the motion and upon being put to the vote Council resolved to accept the motion.

11. Submitted by County Councillor Kevin Williams

Withdrawn and deferred to July Council.

12. Submitted by County Councillor Armand Watts

Although the Settlement Scheme deadline is 30th June 2021 this council continues to reach out to EU citizens across Monmouthshire to ensure their rights as citizens are upheld and respected. This Council notes that EU children whose parents did not themselves apply may not realise that their children need to apply, or mistakenly believe that their UK born children are automatically UK citizens apply for settled status. Accordingly, this council will ensure that it informs its schools of this potential gap and focuses communication on those families and communities most likely to be affected.

Seconded by County Councillor Dimitri Batrouni. County Councillor Batrouni declared a non-prejudicial interest as he works in this area. He added that it is prudent for the Council to remain conscious of the different ramifications of the 1st July 2021 deadline.

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The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and Social Justice welcome the motion recognising the importance of encouraging EU citizens to apply for settled status. She urged Members to share communication with their information networks.

Upon being put to the vote the motion was carried.

County Councillor Joanne Watkins left the meeting at 17:42

13. Submitted by County Councillor Tudor Thomas

This council agrees that lessons need to be learnt from the recent campaign of Abergavenny county councillors to resurface the Hereford Road in Abergavenny. This council calls on the cabinet member responsible for highways to review:

- *Policies and procedures of MCC Highways for the repair and maintenance of highways across the authority to ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose.*
- *The length of time in getting highways repaired to ensure safety.*
- *Communication with residents when they complain about unsafe highways.*

Seconded by County Councillor Martyn Groucutt.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure thanked County Councillor Thomas for bringing the motion and took the opportunity to commend the hard work and efforts of the Highways Team. In doing so she proposed an amendment to the motion:

This Council calls on the cabinet member responsible for highways to continue to review policies and procedures of MCC Highways for the repair and maintenance of highways across the authority to ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose, and to continue to work to improve communication with customers.

This Council agrees to a cross-party lobby to the Welsh Government to review its approach to funding, requiring both multiple year funding proposals to provide certainty for large scale projects that stretch beyond one financial year, and a fair funding mechanism that recognises the importance of the road network in rural areas, not just to cars but to walkers, cyclists and public transport users.

Seconded by County Councillor Ann Webb.

There were frustrations that the amended motion did not address the points raised within the original motion.

The Chair of Strong Communities welcomed the suggestion that a new approach be presented to the Select Committee in the coming months.

Upon being put to the vote the amended motion was carried. Debate ensued.

County Councillor Dimitri Batrouni proposed an amendment, to remove point 2 of the amended motion. He did not consider point 2 to be an amendment to the original motion. Seconded by County Councillor Armand Watts.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment was defeated.

Discussion returned to the substantive motion and upon being put the vote this was carried.

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14. Submitted by County Councillor Dimitri Batrouni

For the Council to create a Bulwark and Thornwell taskforce consisting of members of the community, local businesses, the town council, and representatives from Monmouthshire Housing Association to explore options to regenerate this specific area of Chepstow.

Seconded by County Councillor Armand Watts.

The Cabinet Member for Economy proposed an amendment:

For the Council to work with the local members to explore the optimum approach to develop a Bulwark and Thornwell taskforce consisting of members of the community, local businesses, the town council and representatives from Monmouthshire Housing Association to explore options to regenerate this specific area of Chepstow.

Seconded by County Councillor Maureen Powell.

Members were in support of the amended motion and upon being put to the vote this became the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was carried.

15. Members Questions:

16. From County Councillor Paul Jordan to County Councillor Paul Pavia, Cabinet Member for Education

The Monmouthshire County Council Climate Emergency and Decarbonisation Strategy includes an action that all new Council buildings will operate with net zero carbon emission, and the existing King Henty VIII School site is one of the largest buildings in the Authorities estate. What design approach and technologies are being included to ensure that the new school in Abergavenny will actually operate with net zero carbon emissions, and what commitments being made to ensure these low carbon features are protected from any budget saving measures taken before construction?

Councillor G. Howard left the meeting at 18:55

Councillor D. Jones left the meeting at 18:56

The Cabinet Member responded by thanking County Councillor Jordan for the question. He explained we are not at a stage of the design process to give this level of detail. We are currently out on consultation on the functioning government architecture for the proposed new school. He continued to explain that we had to separate consulting and agreeing on the function of the new school as opposed to what it might look like. However, net zero carbon is very much on the agenda for the 21st Century Schools Project and officers have produced performance and briefing documents for the contract and design teams which align to WG and Council's commitment to decarbonisation. He assured the Member that the project has been specified as being net zero carbon operational energy and during the next stages of the project a feasibility study will evaluate appropriate low and zero carbon technologies.

As a supplementary question County Councillor Jordan asked if we would take the opportunity of the exciting new school development to engage our pupils across Abergavenny in understanding the effects of climate change and how we can mitigate them?

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The Cabinet Member responded in the positive adding that the pupil voice is extremely important and has been through the current consultation process. With the roll out of the new curriculum he believed all schools are focused on the importance of the environment. As the development of the school takes place there will be opportunities for real-time learning with the contractors.

17. From County Councillor Martyn Groucutt to County Councillor Paul Pavia, Cabinet Member for Education

The consultation document around the establishment of an all-through 4-19 school in Abergavenny says that one benefit of this arrangement is 'more effective transition between key phases of learning'. In that case why is the Nursery provision currently seen as such an important feature of the provision in Deri View Primary not a part of the proposals for the new school, to be replaced by provision made by the private sector over which the leadership and management of the school would have no direct control? What will happen to the current school staff who provide Nursery education if this preferred option is adopted?

The Cabinet Member thanked County Councillor Groucutt for the question. He recognised that we advocate a mixed economy of early years education provision in Monmouthshire which provides a combination of local authority-maintained nursery classes and non-maintained settings. It was decided that in this development of the band B school project, to test the option of providing early education in a non-maintained setting rather than a school nursery class through the consultation process. The consultation process end on 25th June 2021, so no final decision has been made. The Cabinet Member provided assurance that when the final decision is made all responses received during consultation will be taken into account. With regards to the last part of the question no decisions have been taken. However, the Authority has a job protection scheme and any decision that affects staff will ensure there is full engagement with staff, HR and unions.

As a supplementary County Councillor Groucutt asked if the Cabinet Member is aware of the opposition to the loss of maintained nursery provision at the new school among the local community.

The Cabinet Member stated that consultation sessions, particularly with Deri View parents and staff, have advocated strongly to maintain the nursery provision as part of the school. This will be reflected in the report to Cabinet for final decision

18. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2021 were confirmed as accurate.

The meeting ended at 7.05 pm

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