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## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held  
on Thursday, 18th May, 2023 at 2.00 pm

**PRESENT:** County Councillor Meirion Howells (Chair)  
County Councillor Su McConnel (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: Rachel Buckler, Laura Wright, Tony Kear, Catrin Maby, Jan Butler, Ian Chandler, Sara Burch, Alistair Neill, Mary Ann Brocklesby, Fay Bromfield, Jane Lucas, Emma Bryn, Peter Strong, Paul Griffiths, Jackie Strong, Rachel Garrick, Maria Stevens, Steven Garratt, Angela Sandles, Ben Callard, John Crook, Tomos Davies, Catherine Fookes, Sue Riley, Jayne McKenna, Jill Bond, Louise Brown, Lisa Dymock, Tony Easson, Christopher Edwards, Martyn Groucutt, Simon Howarth, Richard John, David Jones, Penny Jones, Malcolm Lane, Phil Murphy, Paul Pavia, Maureen Powell, Frances Taylor, Tudor Thomas, Ann Webb and Armand Watts

### 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
Jane Rodgers	Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Frances O'Brien	Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy, Performance and Scrutiny
Ian Saunders	Chief Operating Officer, MonLife
Diane Corrister	Head of Children's Services
Charlotte Drury	Service Manager - Well-being and Family Support

### APOLOGIES:

County Councillors Dale Rooke

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

None.

#### **2. Declarations of interest**

None.

#### **3. To elect a Chair of Council for the Civic Year 2023/24**

The Chair of Council, County Councillor Laura Wright opened the meeting and took the opportunity to thank Council for the opportunity of representing the Council and highlighted several functions attended which included reading the King's Proclamation and the Royal Garden Party.

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The Leader addressed Council and thanked County Councillor Wright for her year in office as Chair and reflected on the work and achievements of the past year. Group Leaders echoed the sentiments of the Leader.

It was proposed by County Councillor Ian Chandler, and seconded by County Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby, that County Councillor Meirion Howells be elected as Chair of Monmouthshire County Council for the Civic Year 2023/24. Upon being put to the vote it was agreed to elect County Councillor Meirion Howells as Chair.

County Councillor Meirion Howells made and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked Members for their support. He thanked Council for the opportunity and introduced his wife Sarah, and on occasion, his mother Mrs Iris Howells as his consorts for the year in office.

### **4. To appoint a Vice-Chair of Council for the Civic Year 2023/24**

The Chair welcomed nominations for Vice-Chair of Council.

It was proposed by County Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby and seconded by County Councillor Ian Chandler that County Councillor Su McConnel be appointed as Vice Chair of the County Council for the Civic Year 2023/24.

Upon being put to the vote it was resolved that County Councillor Su McConnel be appointed as Vice Chair. County Councillor McConnel made and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. She thanked Council for their support and introduced Roger Harris as her consort for the year.

### **5. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

### **6. To elect a Leader of the County Council and to receive notification of Leader delegations (appointments to Cabinet)**

County Councillor Angela Sandles nominated County Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby as Leader of the Council for the year 2023/24. This was seconded by County Councillor Sara Burch.

There were no further nominations and upon being put to a vote County Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby was appointed Leader.

Councillor Brocklesby took the opportunity to highlight achievements and announced that the Welsh Labour Party had agreed a coalition arrangement with the Green Party.

The Leader expressed thanks to County Councillors Tudor Thomas and Catherine Fookes for their work during the past year.

Cabinet Appointments were announced as:

- County Councillor Paul Griffiths - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Sustainable Livelihoods.
- County Councillor Rachel Garrick – Cabinet Member for Resources. County

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- Councillor Martyn Groucutt – Cabinet Member for Education.
- County Councillor Ian Chandler – Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services.
- County Councillor Sara Burch – Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities.
- County Councillor Catrin Maby – Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment.
- County Councillor Angela Sandles – Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement.

### **7. Representation of Political Groups**

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement presented the report for Council to review the representation of different political groups on the bodies to which the Council makes appointments. The Council now comprises 4 groups with the creation of the Green Independent Group and the concurrent change in membership of the Independent Group from 6 to 4 Members.

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

**That the Council decides to accept the report (and appendices) as a review under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and to initially allocate ordinary committees with the numbers as indicated below as a fair representation:**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Welsh Labour</b>	<b>Welsh Conservatives</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>	<b>Green Independent Group</b>
Scrutiny (x4) (9)	16	15	3	2
Licensing & Regulatory (12)	6	5	1	0
Planning (16)	8	6	1	1
Democratic Services (12)	6	4	1	1
Audit (8) note – there are also 4 lay members	4	3	1	0
Aggregate Entitlement (84)	40	33	7	4

### **8. Appointments to Committees**

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement presented the report in order for Council to appoint committees together with their membership and terms of reference in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

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

**That committees be appointed together with their membership as set out in the report, and their terms of reference attached as appendices.**

**Upon being put to a vote County Councillor Ann Webb was elected as Chair of Democratic Services Committee.**

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#### **9. Appointments to Outside Bodies**

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement presented the report in order for Council to appoint representatives to serve on outside bodies.

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

**The Council notes the appointments made at its 2023 AGM for the term of Council and confirms or amends the appointments that require annual renewal.**

#### **10. Constitution Review**

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement presented the report for Council consider to the updated MCC Constitution.

Concerns were raised that there had been no officer feedback regarding scrutiny issues raised at the Democratic Services Committee. The concern related to SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) and SAC (Standing Advisory Council) being covered by one committee known as SACRE/SAC. The recent meeting of SACRE had been inquorate and, therefore, there had been no consultation with the current committee regarding changing the title and the current constitution suggests the committee be known as SAC.

There was concern around the use of the term *gender* in that female members could not complain about sex discrimination from male members as a breach of the Code of Conduct, or vice versa. This had been raised at the Democratic Services Committee, but no feedback had been received.

Suggestion was made that the item be deferred until the matters raised had been addressed.

The Chair of SACRE/SAC explained that the matters relating to the arrangements of SAC is the responsibility of the County Council and it was therefore proper for Council to make the decision.

The Monitoring Officer recognised that the SACRE meeting had been inquorate, but a subsequent email correspondence had received no responses. He was satisfied that the changes in the Constitution reflected legislation correctly.

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

**Council approve the reviewed and updated Constitution.**

#### **11. Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-25**

The Leader presented the report in relation to responsibilities of the Council regarding the performance against the previous Corporate Parenting strategy 2017-2022 and the Action Plan which will address the needs of Children Looked After and Care Experienced young people.

County Councillor Penny Jones endorsed the policy and thanked County Councillor Tudor Thomas for his contribution as Vice Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel, recognising his key role in supporting young people with care and compassion.

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A comment was made regarding the overall wellbeing and health equalities and officers were asked if there had been consultation with the health board. Officers agreed to respond in writing.

County Councillor Paul Pavia declared a non-prejudicial interest as an Associate Consultant with Practice Solutions and asked a question regarding the effect of Foster Carers Fortnight, and progress in terms of 'sign up'. Officers explained that there is an ongoing recruitment campaign, and following a successful campaign prior to Christmas, there were 6 ongoing assessments. The turnover of fosterers was not particularly concerning, and there is a stable population of foster carers, who tend to be very loyal. There is an older profile but the average age of people coming into foster caring is 45 to 55.

The fostering strategy focuses on skills and strengths and how best to support foster carers.

Officers explained that members of the health board sit on the Corporate Parenting Panel, and health are key players in all work devising the strategy, and partnership work.

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

**That members consider and endorse the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Action Plan for 2022-2025.**

**12. Members Questions:**

**13. From County Councillor Paul Pavia to the Cabinet Member responsible for street care and public spaces**

*Will the Cabinet Member responsible for street care and public spaces make a statement on what the Council is doing to improve the character of the county's urban spaces?*

County Councillor Paul Griffiths, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Sustainable Livelihoods explained that the contributions we are making to the quality of our towns include

- The progress we are making on our local development plan, which will create the growth in jobs and people necessary to sustain our towns.
- The progress on our local transport plan which will allow the required movement of people in and out of our towns.
- Our contributions must include the further development of our relationships with town councils, who are pivotal in taking our towns forward.
- The progress we are making with the place making plans which is a joint exercise with each of our town councils.

Councillor Griffiths highlighted that the partnerships with town councils has led to the establishment of town teams, which are taking responsibility for our street care, and referred to the support we must provide to businesses and community organisations who work to create the reasons for us to be in towns.

*County Councillor Lisa Dymock left the meeting at 16:38*

As a supplementary Councillor Pavia stated that a number of local residents have been raised the issue of the proliferation of street and road signs and asked what steps are being taken to monitor the number of signs being installed and what effect they are having on streetscape, and how are Council looking to streamline signage to reduce public confusion.

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County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment explained that in relation to the new speed limits there is a specific requirement around repeater signs, but this will change with the full rollout. There is a register of illuminated signs, but not for non-illuminated signs. Councillor Maby appreciated the concerns and thought collaboration with town councils would be useful.

**14. Date of next meeting - 22nd June 2023**

Noted.

**The meeting ended at 4.40 pm**