

## **APPENDIX 1**

**SUBJECT: Shape and Leadership Structure of Monmouthshire County Council  
A Paper for Key Officers**

**DATE: 12/06/2025**

**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

**1.1** You will recall that when the Chief Officer for Place and Infrastructure left the Council in September 2024, a decision was made to introduce an interim officer leadership structure to ensure continuity whilst giving the Leader and Chief Executive time to reflect on the best configuration going forward. This coincided with the short-term absence of the Chief Executive and subsequent departure of the Chief Officer Communities and Place in March 2025. This paper sets out the changes now proposed on a permanent basis.

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

**2.1** The organisation has a clear purpose and a clear strategy, both codified in the Community and Corporate Plan. The resource envelope within which the Council operates continues to be challenging and is not conducive to new activities that do not directly contribute to the agreed priorities of the organisation. The next period will be characterised by assessing progress on these priorities and their impact rather than adding to them. The leadership and shape of the organisation must align with this and remain affordable. The reintroduction of permanent leadership arrangements will bring with it a degree of certainty. The opportunity to realign directorates to contemporary challenges, without introducing unnecessary turbulence, is a timely one to take.

**2.2** Change usually brings with it disruption. Managed badly it can be demotivating and lead to a fall in performance levels. Research literatures are littered with examples of grand reforms that withered away and added little. The dividend derived from reform must be greater than the premium paid. Change for improvement should always be the goal, not change for change's sake. Pace, thoughtfulness and openness applied equally, introduce good conditions for change.

**2.3** The proposals that follow are not radical. They take account of the organisation's current context and set out opportunities to strengthen arrangements in a meaningful way, without compromising direction and without introducing unnecessary turmoil. Importantly they have regard for financial realities and suggest a material saving in budgetary terms of circa £100k in financial year 2025/26 that is recurrent.

### **3 HEADLINE CHANGES**

#### **3.1 Departmental Structure**

- (a) One new Directorate, Place and Community Wellbeing (interim leadership Craig O'Connor) will be created and a second, Infrastructure, (interim leadership Debra Hill-Howells) will be confirmed as permanent.
- (b) The Directorates of Communities and Place (Frances O'Brien) and Customer, Culture and Wellbeing (Ian Saunders) will be deleted.
- (c) A small Unit working directly to the Chief Executive incorporating Community Development, Communication, Engagement, Strategic Partnerships and whole authority change will be formed. This WILL NOT have Directorate status.

#### **3.2 Strategic Leadership Team**

- (a) It is proposed to retain the interim Strategic Leadership positions of Chief Officer Infrastructure and Chief Officer Place, with the latter redesignated Chief Officer Place and Community Wellbeing. They will both be advertised internally and available to all Heads of Service to put themselves forward. Both positions will interview before Full Council. In the event Council determines there not to be a candidate suitable for appointment, an external exercise will be run. Both positions are graded at Tier 4 within the senior leadership structure approved by Council at its meeting in April 2025.
- (b) The post of Chief Officer Communities and Place (Frances O'Brien) and the post of Chief Officer Customer, Culture and Wellbeing (Ian Saunders) will be deleted from the establishment.
- (c) Leadership savings of £170k were built into the 2025/26 Budget. It is expected that these permanent changes and associated consequential impacts, will free a further sum of circa £100k as a saving or to invest in front line delivery.

#### **3.3 Customer, Culture and Wellbeing**

- (a) It is intended to delete the Customer, Culture and Wellbeing Directorate (that encapsulated MONLIFE) and distribute the service areas into three main areas of the organisation as set out below.
- (b) MONLIFE was originally built as a service cluster to provide a necessary critical mass for the successful establishment of a TRUST model. Ultimately Council decided that the case for a TRUST model, specifically the value it created, was not made. The design principle is therefore no longer valid.

- (c) It is proposed, at least in the short-term, to continue with the brand MONLIFE, on public facing, income generating services. It does have recognition with customers. It does not feel like a good use of public money to be changing boards on the sides of buildings.

### **3.4 Disaggregation model**

- (a) The Youth Service will move to the Schools, Learning, Skills and Economy Directorate led by Will McLean. The Youth Service has a strong fit with our schooling and wider learning agenda. It is a straightforward move. The Service Head welcomes this move. Interim changes which saw Economy, Employment, Skills and Business Development move to this Directorate are now confirmed as permanent changes. The new directorate will be Children, Learning, Economy and Skills.
- (b) Leisure, Countryside and Culture will move to a new Directorate, Place and Community Wellbeing. Place-making, whilst a bit of a clumsy term is widely appreciated as an attempt to plan improvements and delivery with the individuals, neighbourhoods, and communities it is going to serve. This is starting to come to fruition through the ongoing development of 'Place Plans' for larger towns. Aligning many of the primary community service delivery areas (Leisure, Sports, Play, Environment, Arts, Culture, Community Hubs) enhances the opportunity for integrated thinking to be brought into play in what is done, not just what is planned to be done. The Service Heads welcome this move.
- (c) The Business Support Team previously embedded in MONLIFE will move to the Place and Community Wellbeing Directorate. The Service Head welcomes this move.
- (d) Active Travel will move to Infrastructure Directorate. Our recently appointed Head of Transport carried responsibility in this service area and will continue to do so. The Head of Service welcomes this move.
- (e) Community Development, Engagement and Communications will be led directly by the Chief Executive as part of a small newly formed Unit. Telling a clear story of what matters to the Council and amplifying this repeatedly through outstanding communication and public relations is always a challenge for complex organisations. Recognising and committing to a clear programme of building capability within partners and communities and sharing decision-making with others is now recognised by many political leaders, commentators, and practitioners as a key in building contemporary public service. It is not easy work. A county such as Monmouthshire with atypical social capital to draw on should be able to do this well. All 46 elected members need to be supported in this. Without a steady hand, it can be disruptive. Equally it is important Councillors in their Ward role feel that they have a route into the organisation that hears their local issues. The Service Heads welcome this move.

## **4 OTHER CHANGES**

### **4.1 Housing**

- (a) It is proposed that Housing will become part of the Social Care, Safeguarding and Health Directorate. The largest proportion of its work centres on assisting citizens when they are vulnerable either through ongoing personal need or through an event that places them into crises. The individuals involved tend to have multiple needs and often they cross service areas. This move should strengthen a more integrated response for many. In other areas of work, Housing works very closely with Environmental Health colleagues, who form part of the Public Protection Service within this Directorate. The Service Head welcomes this move.
- (b) The Head of Housing, Rural Development and Strategic Partnerships will move to the newly formed Chief Executives Unit. She will focus on providing direct support to the Chief Executive alongside high level whole authority coordination on partnerships such as Marches Forward and Cardiff Capital Region. In addition, she will offer leadership to a developing programme of whole authority change, beyond structural change. She will oversee the movement of all Housing functions to the Social Care Directorate and Rural Development to the new Place and Community Wellbeing Directorate. The pace of these movements will be carefully managed to avoid any performance dips.

### **4.2 School Catering**

Proposed to move from Place (as was) to the Infrastructure Directorate.

### **4.3 Flooding**

Proposed to move from Place (as was) to the Infrastructure Directorate.

### **4.4 Strategic Operations**

This small but important business support team will move from Community and Place (now deleted) to the Resources Directorate under the line management of the Deputy Chief Executive who will determine their subsequent deployment. Interim changes which saw whole authority procurement, building cleaning and Health and Safety move to the Resources Directorate are confirmed as permanent changes.

## 5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1** Most of the changes within this paper are in the gift of the Chief Executive to make within his delegated powers. However, they have been developed by the Leader and Chief Executive together.
- 5.2** Introducing two permanent Chief Officer level positions whilst formally deleting two others is a decision for Council. The appointment of two new Chief Officers, if agreed would be through established Council procedure, with Full Council being the appointing body.
- 5.3** The changes in aggregate do not introduce a budgetary pressure, indeed they suggest a recurrent saving of circa £100k
- 5.4** It is intended to introduce the changes as an Individual Officer Decision, brought forward by the Chief Executive, other than those set out in paragraph 3.2 (a) above. This full paper, under a covering report will be brought to Council on 26 June. The recommendation will be 'to note' the proposed changes, where they are in the delegated authority of the Chief Executive, and to agree the changes that are reserved to Council. Proposals in each category will be clearly highlighted.
- 5.5** The narrative above is clear that key conversations at an officer level have taken place. Members can take confidence that these changes will land well.
- 5.6** These changes do not place anyone at risk of redundancy or challenge existing terms and conditions. The direction of travel is understood and supported by key Heads of Service.
- 5.7** These changes will not change any of the political decision-making apparatus of the Council. They will not fetter the ability of the Leader to hold her Cabinet portfolios as they are or adjust them if she is minded to.

## **6 TIMING AND SEQUENCE**

**6.1** It is proposed to move with pace to implement these changes, with a view to having them in place, where possible, by the end of August this year, sooner if circumstances allow.

**6.2** This paper sets out clear proposals and is circulated to all Councillors.

**6.3** This paper will be circulated to officers within a few days of its release to Councillors.

**6.4** This paper will be shared with Trade Unions. It will be highlighted that neither redundancy or changes to terms and conditions are proposed.

**6.5** A period of two weeks will be set aside for the Leader and Chief Executive to receive and subsequently consider comments made.

**6.6** If this timetable is achieved, the Council will have achieved structural and leadership changes that align well with the purpose and priorities of the organisation. Importantly portfolio responsibilities across Strategic Directors and Chief Officers will be balanced.

**6.7** The Council will have a fully populated leadership structure across the top four tiers of the organisation as we enter the autumn months.

## **7 AUTHORS**

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