

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Tuesday, 4 November 2014 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Ian Armstrong, Raymond Bartley, Brian Blakeley (Chair), Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Bill Cowie, Ann Davies, Meirick Davies, Richard Davies, Stuart Davies, Hugh Evans, Peter Evans, Bobby Feeley, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Holland, Colin Hughes, Alice Jones, Huw Jones, Pat Jones, Gwyneth Kensler (Vice-Chair), Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Margaret McCarroll, Barry Mellor, Win Mullen-James, Bob Murray, Peter Owen, Merfyn Parry, Paul Penlington, Arwel Roberts, Gareth Sandilands, David Simmons, Barbara Smith, David Smith, Bill Tasker, Julian Thompson-Hill, Joe Welch, Cefyn Williams, Eryl Williams and Huw Williams

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM); Corporate Director Economic and Community Ambition (RM); Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (GW); Head of Finance and Assets (PM); Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation (AS); Democratic Services Manager (SP) and Committee Administrator (KEJ).

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors James Davies, Carys Guy, Hugh Irving, Jason McLellan, Dewi Owens and Cheryl Williams

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declaration of personal or prejudicial interest had been raised.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised.

4 CHAIRMAN'S DIARY

The Chair referred to the civic engagements undertaken on behalf of the Council for the period 29 September – 24 October 2014 (details previously circulated).

RESOLVED that the events attended by the Chair and Vice Chair be noted.

5 MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 7 October 2014 were submitted.

Matters Arising – Page 15 Item No. 8 County Council Forward Work Programme – Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts applauded the Executive Team on the public engagement strategy launched in response to the budget cuts facing the authority.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Council's Forward Work Programme was submitted for consideration.

Members noted that –

- Council Briefing scheduled for 2.00 p.m. on 17 November had been replaced with a Special Council meeting to consider the proposals for a voluntary merger of Denbighshire and Conwy Councils
- items originally scheduled for Council Briefing on 17 November would be rescheduled to January or March – the item on Modernising Social Services had been renamed 'Supporting Independence in Denbighshire' and required a one hour slot
- a Members Budget Workshop had been scheduled for 12 December.

Councillor Joan Butterfield asked that 'Shoreline Management of Sea Defences' be added as an item on the work programme for future consideration.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, Council's Forward Work Programme be noted.

7 DENBIGHSHIRE'S WELLBEING PLAN 2014-18 - SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE AND RESILIENCE

Councillor Hugh Evans, Leader and Lead Member for Economic Development and the Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation presented Denbighshire's Wellbeing Plan 2014 – 18: Supporting Independence and Resilience (previously circulated) for Council's endorsement.

The Wellbeing Plan would replace the BIG Plan and reflected the commitment of the public sector to improve outcomes in Denbighshire by focusing on independence and resilience. Consideration had been given to ensure maximum impact taking into account both financial constraints and needs of residents. The Plan had been developed on behalf of the public sector as represented by the Joint Conwy and Denbighshire Local Service Board. Its delivery and success relied on partner involvement and as such endorsement was being sought from each partner.

Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Chair of Partnerships Scrutiny Committee outlined the scrutiny debate on the Plan. She was pleased to note that many of the issues raised by scrutiny had been addressed in the Plan which would be kept under close review. Councillor Eryl Williams reiterated his previous request that when matters had been subject to scrutiny, their findings be included in the report.

Members considered the report and took the opportunity to raise questions, querying how people needing support would be identified, particularly those living in more remote and rural areas. It was explained that recognising those in need, particularly those living in isolation, had been identified as a priority and partners would be expected to work collaboratively to meet that challenge. This also involved data collection to gain a better understanding of the situation in rural areas. The important role of scrutiny was acknowledged, both as part of the consultation and in monitoring, and scrutiny had also considered the evaluation and closure report on the BIG Plan 1. Councillor Bobby Feeley welcomed the report and was keen to emphasise that the Plan involved supporting both individuals and communities to improve the lives of all.

Members voted on the report recommendation as follows –

33 votes for, 0 against and 0 abstentions

RESOLVED that *Denbighshire's Wellbeing Plan 2014 – 18 be endorsed.*

8 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Finance and Assets presented the report (previously circulated) recommending Council approved amendments to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2014/15 as detailed within Appendix 2 to the report in light of changes to economic circumstances.

Council was advised of the economic indicators which pointed to a period of financial instability ahead. As a result of the increased risks it was recommended that a number of amendments be made to the TMSS covering Bank Deposits, Reverse Repurchase Agreements (REPOs) and Covered Bonds. Councillor Thompson-Hill elaborated upon the rationale behind each of the proposed amendments in order to further safeguard the Council's investments. The Head of Finance and Assets provided some further context to the financial changes illustrated within the report highlighting the need to mitigate the increased risks as much as possible.

Members voted on the report recommendation as follows –

35 votes for, 0 against and 0 abstentions

RESOLVED that *Council approves the amendments to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2014/15 as listed in Appendix 2 of the report.*

9 BUDGET PROTOCOL

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Finance and Assets and the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (HLHRDS) presented the report (previously circulated) recommending a protocol for the way proposed alternatives or amendments to the budget be put forward to Council.

The reasoning behind the budget protocol was to create a professional, open and transparent process for members to put forward alternative proposals which had been properly assessed and considered in advance. The process allowed sufficient time for costing, impact assessment and publication of the papers to enable members to consider all options that would come before them at Council on an equal footing. To bypass the protocol would run the risk of alternative proposals not being considered by Council on the same basis as the recommended budget proposals.

Members considered the merits of the protocol and raised questions regarding its implementation in practice and whether it would form part of the Council's constitution. Whilst there was support for the protocol there were also reservations that it may prevent members from moving an amendment at the meeting or proposing an additional saving over and above those being recommended. The HLHRDS provided assurances that endorsing the protocol would not prohibit the Council's standing order provisions for moving an amendment but would provide the benefit of equal standing for the amendment. The protocol had been prepared in response to the current budget situation but it could form part of the constitutional review if members wished. The general feeling was that, if endorsed, the protocol should not form part of the constitutional review at this time.

During general debate members discussed the difficult financial decisions to be made by the authority and their reluctance to vote for particular budget cuts whilst acknowledging the Council's requirement to provide a legal, balanced budget within a tight timescale. Members' rights to speak out and vote against budget proposals were also discussed and officers detailed the process to be followed in considering the budget proposals and setting a legal, balanced budget by February 2015. There was support for the suggestion put forward by Councillor Eryl Williams that, following the budget setting, Group Leaders be given an opportunity to make a statement to Council in that regard.

Members voted on the report recommendation as follows –

36 votes for, 2 against and 0 abstentions

***RESOLVED** that members endorse the process by which alternative budget proposals can be put forward for consideration at Council as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.*

10 LOCAL AUTHORITIES (STANDING ORDERS) (WALES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2014

Councillor Barbara Smith, Lead Member for Modernising and Performance and the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (HLHRDS) presented the report (previously circulated) advising Council of changes that were introduced by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

The changes set out in the report were required by law and as such it was necessary that the Council adopted them. In summary they related to –

- the appointment process and remuneration for senior officers
- how any investigation into alleged misconduct by a Head of Democratic Services should be conducted
- decisions about the dismissal or appointment of the Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services having to be taken by a committee
- removal of 'Mayor and Council Executive' and 'Alternative Arrangements' models as potential models of governance.

In response to a question from Councillor Meirick Davies the HLHRDS advised that the option of having an Executive Mayor was no longer available in Wales.

Members voted on the report recommendation as follows –

38 votes for, 1 against and 0 abstentions

RESOLVED that –

- Council notes the changes introduced by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 in relation to the process for appointing, dismissing and conducting disciplinary investigations of certain officers of local authorities and the new requirements for determining the level of remuneration paid to Chief Officers, and*
- that delegated authority be given to the Council's Monitoring Officer to make the necessary amendments to the Constitution.*

The meeting concluded at 11.20 a.m.