

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Tuesday, 7 July 2015 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Raymond Bartley, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Ann Davies (Vice-Chair), Richard Davies, Stuart Davies, Hugh Evans, Peter Evans, Bobby Feeley, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Holland, Colin Hughes, Rhys Hughes, Alice Jones, Huw Jones, Pat Jones, Gwyneth Kensler (Chair), Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Jason McLellan, Barry Mellor, Bob Murray, Peter Owen, Merfyn Parry, Paul Penlington, Pete Prendergast, Arwel Roberts, Gareth Sandilands, David Simmons, Barbara Smith, David Smith, Bill Tasker, Julian Thompson-Hill, Joe Welch, Cefyn Williams, Cheryl Williams, Eryl Williams and Huw Williams

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM), Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (GW), Chief Finance Officer, Head of Highways and Environmental Services (SP) and Committee Administrator (SLW)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brian Blakeley, Joan Butterfield, Bill Cowie, Meirick Lloyd Davies, Carys Guy, Hugh Irving, Win Mullen-James and Dewi Owens.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest.

At this juncture, the Chair informed members that following the Council meeting, an informal meeting would take place regarding School Transport.

The Chair offers congratulations to Plas Brondyffryn on their award and also thanked the Urdd in Denbighshire on their success in Caerphilly.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters.

At this juncture, Councillor Jason McLellan expressed his disappointment at the fact BCUHB had not been included on the Agenda as previously shown in the Forward Work Programme. Neither had the Local Government reform been included for discussion. Councillor McLellan also expressed his displeasure at the fact the

Budget item was to be discussed the day before the Government Budget announcement.

The Chair explained to Councillor McLellan that he could have raised the issues prior to the meeting with either the Chief Executive or the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services.

Councillors Stuart Davies and Arwel Roberts expressed their agreement with Councillor McLellan's statement.

The situation regarding BCUHB was clarified by both the Lead Member for Social Care, Adult and Children's Services and the Chief Executive. It was explained that the Chief Executive of BCUHB, Trevor Purt, had approached Denbighshire to attend a Council meeting but due to his recent suspension, the Acting Responsible Officer (ARO) had been unaware of this commitment. The CHC Board meeting had taken place this morning to which the ARO would be required to attend. A future date of 8 September 2015 had been suggested to the ARO but a response was yet to be received. Members agreed if the ARO was unable to attend on the 8 September then a Special meeting should be arranged on a date convenient for the ARO.

The Chief Executive confirmed the Green Paper published the day prior to Council would be discussed at the Group Leaders meeting taking place next week and the response would be brought back to full Council.

The discussion regarding the Local Government re-organisation would be discussed following the election in 2016 due to the fact it was speculation at the present time.

4 CHAIRMAN'S DIARY

A list of civic engagements undertaken by the Chair and Vice Chair for the period 14.05.2015 to 28.06.2015 had been circulated prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED that the list of civic engagements undertaken by the Chair and Vice Chair be received.

5 MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 May 2015 were submitted.

Item 5, Page 11 Councillor Huw Jones' name was spelt incorrectly. Apologies were extended to Councillor Jones.

Councillor Alice Jones commented that regarding item 7, Page 13 – Town Plans, within the minutes it had stated "it was clarified that there was a draft Bodelwyddan Town Plan which was receiving attention". The question had been asked "why was Bodelwyddan Town left out" and the answer given during the meeting, by the Chief Executive had been "the Town Plan had not been dealt with at the same time as the others in the county. It had felt it would be better to leave Bodelwyddan out until the

issue of the LDP had been sorted out". Councillor Jones requested that the minutes be amended.

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill confirmed that the sentence within the minutes had been said at the meeting by the Chief Executive, The Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation and himself but the statement read out by Councillor Jones had also been said during the meeting.

RESOLVED that subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May, 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 BUDGET 2016/17

The Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, introduced the Budget Report (previously circulated) to provide an update on the process to deliver the revenue budget for 2016/17 and set out the next phase of the budget proposals.

Members were aware of the ongoing budget process. 3 additional budget workshops had taken place. The first two workshops had dealt with items which had been deferred or held over for additional information. At the workshop which took place on 5 June 2015, members were informed of the key assumptions within the council's medium term plans – in particular, outlining the uncertainty around the level of future Revenue Support Grant settlements.

Further budget workshops had been arranged for 26 October and 14 December 2015. As the process for 2016/17 developed, it would likely be necessary to schedule more workshops in the autumn.

There had been a significant level of uncertainty around the likely Local Government Settlement for 2016/17 and this was likely to remain the case for the coming months. Until May 2013, Settlement values had been broadly consistent with the forward planning indications published nationally in 2011. Since then, there had been no multi-year settlements and indications had changed consistently between and within financial years. In the absence of more reliable Settlement information, budget plans needed to continue to develop proposals to cover a range of different scenarios. The Draft Settlement for local government in Wales would be published in early October.

Members had been asked to submit their own proposals as part of the process and a prescribed form had been issued for that purpose. A proposal put forward by members at the workshop on 5 June would be to cease payment of travelling expenses to members attending meetings as observers. It had been estimated that this proposal may save up to £900 per year.

The aim of the budget process was to ensure the council delivered a balanced budget. It remained a difficult process with some tough decisions to make along the way. The engagement and support of elected members in the decision making and scrutiny of the process was crucial.

In depth debate took place with the following points discussed:

- Councillor Colin Hughes expressed concern regarding prospective cuts. He raised the closure of Aberwheeler as an example. The Chief Executive explained he had not been aware of any individual service user who had not been placed following the closure of Aberwheeler. All the vulnerable people had been placed within new work environments. Councillor Richard Davies clarified that an in depth discussion lasting over 2 ½ hours had taken place at the Special Performance Scrutiny meeting which had taken place on 22 June 2015.
- The Chief Executive confirmed balanced budgets were set. 72% of cuts agreed for this year had already been put in place.
- Members requested a representative from the CHC (Community Health Council) attend the meeting together with the Acting Responsible Officer of BCUHB to enable questions raised by members to be responded to in detail, by the Health representatives present.

At this juncture (11.00 a.m.) there was a minutes silence held to remember the victims of the London bombings 10 years ago.

Debate continued with the following points discussed:

- Councillor Colin Hughes confirmed to members he did not intend to claim expenses for any meetings he attended in the future.
- Members requested minutes of the budget workshops to record results of discussions be made available. It was confirmed that Going Forward Action Points would be circulated to members following the Budget Workshops.
- A Scrutiny Task & Finish Group had recently been established to assess the impact of the budget cuts already agreed. A number of members requested residents contact them showing evidence of the impact of the budget cuts. Members, on receipt of the evidence, would submit the information to the Task & Finish Group for assessment.
- Waste management, changes to the work practice were asked to be clarified. The Head of Highways and Environmental Services explained there were operational changes which were due to the consequence of the green waste. It could mean a small percentage of households could have the days of their green waste collection changed. Compulsory redundancies had been avoided and waste operatives were being recruited. This would be a good news story.
- The Leader, Councillor Hugh Evans explained if a balanced budget had not been delivered by the Council, then it would have been delivered by the Welsh Audit Office on behalf of the Council. Residents needed to be assured that the council were taking a serious view of the budget situation and would take their concerns into consideration. Despite all the cuts and negativity, the council were on track to deliver the Corporate Plan. It has been agreed to invest £800million in the communities and to show support to the communities.

Councillor Stuart Davies moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Martyn Holland.

Members voted on the report recommendations – to note the Phase 4 savings proposals listed in Table 1 and approve the proposals listed in Table 2:

23 votes for, 9 against, 2 abstentions

Members also voted on the report recommendations – to approve the proposal put forward by members not to pay expenses to members attending meetings as observers:

26 votes for, 4 against, 1 abstention.

RESOLVED that Council agreed to:

- *Note the Phase 4 savings proposals listed in Table 1 and approve the proposals listed in Table 2;*
- *To approve the proposal put forward by members not to pay expenses to members attending meetings as observers.*

7 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services introduced the Council's Forward Work Programme (previously circulated).

The Chief Executive explained an invitation would be sent to the BCU Board to attend the Council meeting taking place on 8 September 2015. If BCU were unable to attend, the Chief Executive asked members if they would want the BCU item to be added to the Forward Work Programme for 8 September to enable discussion.

Members agreed it would be important for a member of BCU to attend on 8 September and if that date was inconvenient for them, then a special council meeting should be arranged on a date convenient for the Acting Responsible Officer.

RESOLVED that subject to the above, the Council Forward Work Programme be approved and noted.

The meeting concluded at 11.40 a.m.