

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Tuesday, 30 January 2018 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Mabon ap Gwynfor, Brian Blakeley, Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Ellie Chard, Ann Davies, Gareth Davies, Meirick Davies, Hugh Evans, Bobby Feeley, Rachel Flynn, Tony Flynn, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Holland, Alan James, Brian Jones, Huw Jones, Pat Jones, Tina Jones, Gwyneth Kensler, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Richard Mainon, Christine Marston, Barry Mellor, Melvyn Mile, Bob Murray, Merfyn Parry, Paul Penlington, Pete Prendergast (Chair), Arwel Roberts, Anton Sampson, Peter Scott, Glenn Swingler, Andrew Thomas, Rhys Thomas, Tony Thomas, Julian Thompson-Hill, Graham Timms, Joe Welch, Cheryl Williams, David Williams, Eryl Williams, Huw Williams, Emrys Wynne and Mark Young

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM), Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services (GW), Chief Finance Officer / Section 151 Officer (RW), Democratic Services Manager (SP), and Committee Administrator (SLW)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Evans and Hugh Irving

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mabon ap Gwynfor, Brian Blakeley, Ellie Chard, Gareth Davies, Meirick Lloyd Davies, Bobby Feeley, Tony Flynn, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Holland, Tina Jones, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Barry Mellor, Merfyn Parry, Paul Penlington, Arwel Roberts, Anton Sampson, Peter Scott, Glenn Swingler, Rhys Thomas, Julian Thompson-Hill, Graham Timms, Cheryl Williams, Huw Williams, Emrys Wynne, and Mark Young all declared a personal interest in Item 6 – Budget 2018/19 – Final Proposals.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters.

4 CHAIRMAN'S DIARY

A list of civic engagements undertaken by the Chair and Vice-Chair for the period 28 November 2017 – 19 January 2018 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 Full Council held on 5 December 2017 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of Full Council held on 5 December 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 BUDGET 2018/19 - FINAL PROPOSALS

The Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets introduced the report (previously circulated) to set out the implications of the Local Government Settlement 2018/19 and proposals to finalise the budget for 2018/19.

The Council was legally required to set a balanced and deliverable budget before the start of each financial year and to set the resulting level of Council Tax to allow bills to be sent to residents.

The Final Local Government Settlement for 2018/19 had been received on 20 December 2017 and had resulted in a cash reduction of -0.2% (the Welsh average being +0.2%). The Provisional Settlement received in October 2017 indicated a reduction of -0.9% (Welsh average 0.5%).

The change between the two settlement figures reflected an additional £20million allocated to local government as part of the Welsh Government's final budget proposals. This followed additional funding allocated to Wales as a consequence of the UK Government budget in November and mitigated the impact of the latest employers' pay gap offer, which was higher than planned and reflected a move away from the policy of a 1% pay cap.

It was unsustainable to manage the ongoing pressures without permanently increasing the council's funding base. As the financial support from the Welsh Government reduced annually, the burden had to be met locally. Therefore, a higher than originally planned Council Tax rise had been proposed.

The rise in Council Tax by 4.75% would raise an additional £945k to be used as part of the overall package, which included an additional allocation to social care of £1.5million.

During discussions, the following items were raised:

- It was confirmed to Members that the Waste element of the Single Environmental Grant had been cut by 10% in total. Due to the cut in the amount of grant, two members of staff had been redeployed into alternative positions of employment.
- The imminent retirement of the County Archaeologist had been confirmed and Members were informed that the post would not be replaced. This would be in line with the other five North Wales Local Authorities. If special archaeological advice was to be sought, it would need to be bought in on an ad-hoc basis.
- The civic budget was no longer to sponsor the evening concerts at Llangollen Eistedfodd.

- Due to a change in the Data Protection Law, it was queried whether there would be any cost implications. The Head of Finance confirmed he would enquire as to whether that would be the case and feedback to Members.
- There had been significant change since the budget workshops held in November 2017 in relation to the overall pay deal. A 1% pay cap had been accounted for within the budget, however the final offer had been 2.4%.
- There was a need to explore how the county would deal with the issues within social services, education and also child poverty.

Both the Chief Executive and the Leader paid tribute to the officers who had put together the budget report. It was confirmed that the budget was a positive document in the current circumstances.

Councillor Arwel Roberts proposed an amendment to the recommendation that £500,000 from reserves could be passed to the education department due to the fact that there were a number of schools in difficulty and under extreme pressure. Councillor Eryl Williams seconded the proposal. At this juncture it was clarified by Councillor Roberts that the additional £500,000 be transferred from balances to education to be the subject of bids by schools for additional funding to support pupils with additional learning needs.

A vote took place for the amendment as follows:

In favour of the amendment – 13

Abstain – 1

Against the amendment – 31

Therefore the Amendment was not approved.

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill proposed the recommendations as set out in the report, seconded by the Leader, Councillor Hugh Evans and it was:

RESOLVED that Council:

- (i) *Notes the impact of the Local Government Settlement 2018/19*
- (ii) *Approve the budget as outlined in Appendix 1, which is in line with the assumptions presented to Members at budget briefings held in November 2017*
- (iii) *Approve the savings totalling £411k listed in Appendix 2 of the report as part of the budget package*
- (iv) *Approve the average Council Tax rise of 4.75%, which recognises the increasing cost pressures in adults and children's social care and supports the allocation of £1.5m of additional funding to across the two services*
- (v) *Confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessments submitted as part of the budget process.*

At this juncture (11.55 a.m.) there was a 20 minute break.

The meeting reconvened at 12.15 p.m.

7 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2018/19

The Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets introduced the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19 report (previously circulated).

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 contained provisions to abolish council tax benefit in its current form across the UK. From 31 March 2013, council tax benefit ceased and the responsibility for providing support for council tax and the funding associated with it, had been passed to the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government in partnership with Local Authorities in Wales, introduced a new scheme to provide council tax support which was adopted by the Council in January 2013.

The Welsh Government had finalised both sets of regulations on 9th January 2018 and the new Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 and amendments Regulations 2018 were required to be adopted by 31 January 2018.

RESOLVED that:

- *Members adopt the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 and the Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Amendments Regulations 2018, in respect of the 2018/19 financial year*
- *Members approve the 3 discretionary elements of the scheme, shown in section 4.2 of the report for 2018/19*

8 NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Joan Butterfield put forward the following Notice of Motion for the consideration of Full Council:

“Denbighshire County Council aspires to become a Real Living Wage employer by April 2020. The Council instructs officers to prepare a paper to be discussed by Full Council on 11 September 2018 outlining how this could be implemented”.

Councillor Graham Timms gave an outline of the establishment of the Real Living Wage Foundation which has been set up in 2001. The campaign for a living wage had cross party political support and a movement of independent businesses, organisations and citizens who believed a fair day’s work deserved a fair day’s pay.

It was stated that 29% of Denbighshire County Councils staff were paid below the real living wage.

Councillor Mark Young proposed an amendment that the Council agrees to consider all the financial and HR implications of implementing the real living wage and the relevant officers to bring a paper on the subject to Full Council by the end of 2018 and that this paper include all financial costs and HR implications and available options. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill.

At this juncture, it was clarified by the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services that the vote on the amendment would take place initially.

VOTE:

In favour of the amendment – 23

Abstain – 1

Against the amendment – 21

Therefore the amendment was carried and a vote would then take place on the amended resolution and the amendment became the substantive motion.

Councillor Joan Butterfield had requested a recorded vote to which the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services stated that within the Constitution, it was required that one sixth of Members had to be in favour of the Recorded Vote to which a majority of Members agreed.

A recorded vote took place as follows:

In Favour – Councillors, Mabon ap Gwynfor, Brian Blakeley, Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Ellie Chard, Ann Davies, Gareth Davies, Meirick Lloyd Davies, Hugh Evans, Bobby Feeley, Rachel Flynn, Tony Flynn, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Holland, Alan James, Brian Jones, Huw Jones, Pat Jones, Tina Jones, Gwyneth Kensler, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Richard Mainon, Christine Marston, Barry Mellor, Melvyn Mile, Bob Murray, Merfyn Parry, Paul Penlington, Pete Prendergast, Arwel Roberts, Anton Sampson, Peter Scott, Glenn Swingler, Andrew Thomas, Rhys Thomas, Tony Thomas, Julian Thompson-Hill, Graham Timms, Joe Welch, Cheryl Williams, David Williams, Eryl Williams, Huw Williams, Emrys Wynne and Mark Young

Abstain – 0

Against – 0

Therefore, it was:

RESOLVED that the Council agreed to consider all the financial and HR implications of implementing the real living wage and the relevant officers to bring a paper on the subject to Full Council by the end of 2018 and that this paper include all financial costs and HR implications and available option.

9 NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Rhys Thomas put forward the following Notice of Motion for consideration of Full Council:

“This Council calls:

- (i) On the UK Government to pause the roll-out of Universal Credit
- (ii) On Welsh Government to demand devolution powers to vary how Universal Credit is paid in Wales.”

Members expressed concerns regarding the Universal Credit system which would be introduced as it could adversely affect the poorest citizens of the county.

It was recommended that a letter be sent to the UK Government expressing concerns and also a letter to be sent to the Welsh Government in Cardiff demanding the same power for Wales as are currently in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Rhys Thomas, seconded by Councillor Huw Jones, and it was.

RESOLVED that in accordance with the Notice of Motion put forward by the Plaid Cymru Group, a letter be sent to both the UK Government and the Welsh Government expressing concerns regarding Universal Credit and demanding Wales have the same powers as Scotland and Northern Ireland.

10 MEMBER CHAMPIONS

The Monitoring Officer introduced the Member Champions report (previously circulated) to re-appoint Councillors to four “member champion” roles and requested expressions of interest.

The previous Council had set out the framework for member champions and appointed a Councillor to each role. Only two of the Councillors appointed were still members of the County Council and following the Council elections held in May 2017, it was considered appropriate to seek the Council’s views on member champions.

Councillor Ellie Chard was nominated as the Older People’s Champion.
Councillor Ann Davies was nominated as the Carers’ Champion.
Councillor Arwel Roberts was nominated as the Learning Disabilities Champion.

Councillors Brian Blakeley and Tony Thomas were both nominated as the Homelessness Champion to which a vote took place as follows:

- In favour of Brian Blakeley – 27
- Abstain – 1
- In favour of Tony Thomas – 9

Therefore, Councillor Brian Blakeley was voted as the Homelessness Champion.

RESOLVED that the nominated Councillors become the Member Champions:

- *Older People’s Champion – Ellie Chard*
- *Homelessness Champion – Brian Blakeley*
- *Carers’ Champion – Ann Davies, and*
- *Learning Disabilities Champion – Arwel Roberts.*

11 APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT LAY MEMBER TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer introduced Appointment of an Independent Lay Member to Standards Committee report (previously circulated).

The Regulations required that the Council published an advertisement for the post of independent lay member and a Panel of no more than five members to consider each application received and make recommendations to the Council on the appointment. At the Panel meeting on 17 October, Council appointed Councillors Gareth Davies, Richard Mainon and Mark Young to the Panel.

There were two applicants for the post of independent lay member who were interviewed by the Panel on 19 January 2018. Mr Peter Lamb had been considered to be the most suitable candidate, by the Panel, and was, therefore recommended to Full Council for appointment.

RESOLVED that Mr Peter Lamb be appointed to the Standards Committee for a term of office to expire on the date of the next Local Government Elections in 2022.

12 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

Council Briefing – 12 March 2018 – Regional Growth Bid to be added to the Agenda.

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

The meeting concluded at 1.25 p.m.