

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in via Video Conferencing on Tuesday, 8 December 2020 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Mabon ap Gwynfor, Brian Blakeley, Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Ellie Chard, Ann Davies, Gareth Davies, Meirick Davies (Chair), Hugh Evans, Peter Evans, Bobby Feeley, Rachel Flynn, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Holland, Hugh Irving, Alan James (Vice-Chair), Brian 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, Eryl Williams, Huw Williams, Emrys Wynne and Mark Young

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (JG), Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm (GB), Corporate Director: Communities (NS), Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (GW), Head of Planning and Public Protection (EJ), Head of Finance and Property (SG), Planning and Public Protection Manager (AL), Chief Internal Auditor (LL), HR Specialist – Pay and Rewards (SV), Lead Officer – Community Housing (GD), Service Manager – Community and Business Services (AH), Democratic Services Manager (SP), Zoom Host (RT-J) and Committee Administrator (SLW)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pat Jones

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Graham Timms declared a prejudicial interest in item 10, Notice of Motion, as he owns a holiday home.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

Full Council offered condolences to Councillor Barry Mellor whose wife Antoinette had recently passed away

Condolences were sent to the family of former Councillor Robert Eric Barton who had recently passed away.

Condolences were also sent to the AM, Ann Jones, whose husband had recently passed away.

A one minutes silence was held.

The Leader, Councillor Hugh Evans stated that recording of meetings has been raised and the Monitoring Officer had advised Group Leaders.

Councillor Paul Penlington questioned there had been occasions where one particular Councillor who had recorded and shared screenshots on social media, will it be addressed today?

Councillor Hugh Evans responded it will be addressed through protocol and will be shared but would not refer to any particular Councillor during Full Council.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of Full Council held on 13 October 2020 were submitted.

PROPOSED by Councillor Alan James to accept the minutes, SECONDED by Councillor Bob Murray.

A vote took place and it was unanimously agreed to accept the minutes.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 October 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

5 FINAL GROWTH DEAL

The Leader, Councillor Hugh Evans, introduced the Final Growth Deal report (previously circulated), for Council to reach Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal with the UK Government and Welsh Government.

In 2016, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) adopted a Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales. That vision was subsequently adopted by all 6 North Wales Councils. Based on the Growth Vision Strategy, a Growth Deal bid was prepared and agreed by all the partners, including Denbighshire County Council, working with both the UK and Welsh Government and the private sector in October 2018. In November 2019, the NWEAB and the Welsh and UK Governments agreed the Heads of Terms, for a Final Deal Agreement to be completed towards the end of 2020.

The NWEAB were committed to achieving Final Deal Agreement with both Governments before the end of December 2020.

On 24 November 2020, Cabinet considered the documents, attached to the report, and the recommendation of Partnerships Scrutiny Committee that Cabinet and Council should endorse and approve the documents required to complete the Final Growth Deal. Cabinet resolved to endorse the documents necessary to complete the Final Growth Deal and approved those parts of Governance Agreement 2 that related to executive functions. Cabinet recommended that Council formally approve the documents as set out in the report.

The Leader reiterated the aim of the Growth Deal to build a more sustainable and resilient economy in North Wales in partnership with public and private sectors, supported by £240m funding from the UK and Welsh Governments over the next 15 years. The Growth Deal aimed to deliver investment of up to £1.1bn in the North Wales economy to create 3,400 – 4,200 new jobs and generate £2 – £2.4bn in net additional GVA by 2036. The Leader delivered a joint presentation with the Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm; Head of Legal HR and Democratic Services and Head of Finance covering areas of the Growth Deal.

It was confirmed that Gwynedd County Council were the host and accountable body.

During discussions, the following points were raised:

- Councillor Paul Penlington expressed concerns regarding the percentage of nuclear power within the documentation. Officers confirmed that nuclear power was not a significant part of the projects. Wind power, hydrogen etc., were also power projects contained within the project. Officers stated they did not have any concerns regarding nuclear energy.
- There had been political commitment to the £240m government funding and discussions with both governments had been ongoing on matters of detail with no indication that the funding commitment would be withdrawn. However, there was no legal commitment to providing those funds until the Deal was signed.
- Officers explained the funding calculations for partner contributions confirming that region wide projects were equally funded but for individual projects for which specific partners would receive greater benefit (building/asset etc.) they would be expected to pay for the borrowing requirement associated with that project.
- Concerns regarding rural areas not being highlighted within the Growth deal were raised and the Leader and officers confirmed there were other funding stream available for rural areas. Rural areas will be invested in but not directly through the Growth Bid.
- All decisions made by the NWEAB would be published by each Local Authority. A Quarterly report would be produced and would attend twice a year at Scrutiny Committee.

Following discussions, the Leader proposed the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill and a vote took place.

A majority of members voted in favour of the report, 2 members abstained and 4 members voted against the report. Therefore, it was

RESOLVED:

- That Council approves the Overarching Business Plan as the document that sets out the arrangements to deliver the North Wales Growth Deal as the basis for entering into the Final Deal Agreement and acceptance of the Grant Funding Letter with the UK and Welsh Governments.
- That Council approves the provisions in Governance Agreement 2 relating to non-executive functions and specifically adopts the arrangements for Scrutiny set out in “Governance Agreement 2: Schedule 3” thereof as the basis for completing the Final Deal Agreement and acceptance of the Grant Funding Letter with the UK and Welsh Governments.

- That Council authorises the accountable body, Gwynedd Council, to sign the Grant Funding Offer letter on behalf of the Partners.
- That Council approves the method used to calculate the cost of borrowing notionally required to facilitate the negative cash flow for the Growth Deal, and to include a provision within the Council's budget to pay this contribution and the established core and supplementary contributions as set out in GA2 (and in paragraphs 5.5 - 5.7 of the template report attached as part of Appendix 1).
- That Council grants the Chief Executive delegated authority in consultation with the Leader, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer to agree minor changes to the documents with the Partners as necessary to complete the agreement.
- That Council confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the contents of the Denbighshire County Council Well-being Impact Assessment attached as Appendix 2 as part of its consideration.

**AT THIS JUNCTURE (11.40 A.M.) THERE WAS A 15 MINUTE BREAK
THE MEETING RECOVERED AT 11.55 A.M**

6 DENBIGHSHIRE'S HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The Lead Member for Housing and Communities, Councillor Tony Thomas, introduced the Denbighshire's Housing and Homelessness Report (previously circulated), to seek Members' approval to adopt the revised Denbighshire Housing and Homelessness Strategy and endorse the accompanying Action Plan.

Denbighshire's current Housing Strategy was approved by Council on 1 December 2015 and set out the Council's vision and aims for housing in the County for a five year period. Importantly it assisted in achieving a Corporate Plan priority by providing a framework and action plan for delivery (through working with partners) of all Council housing related functions (private & public). The Strategy also sat alongside the Local Development Plan.

The current Strategy identified 5 "Themes" to target priority areas for action:

- More homes to meet local need and demand
- Creating a supply of affordable homes
- Ensuring safe and healthy homes
- Homes and support for vulnerable people, and
- Promoting and supporting communities.

The existing Housing Strategy had a Steering Group made up of Lead Members, Heads of Service, Managers and Officer with a clear action plan and monitoring mechanisms. The Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group had been set up to develop a more co-ordinated approach. The Group agreed to amalgamate the Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategies into one revised and updated Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

The Group was jointly Chaired by the Lead Member for Housing and Communities, Councillor Tony Thomas and the Lead Member for Well-being and Independence, Councillor Bobby Feeley.

An immediate priority was to develop a corporate approach to tackling homelessness as the Covid-19 pandemic had caused far greater pressures on the service.

During discussions, the following points were raised:

- Issues utilising Westminster Hotel to provide homeless people with accommodation were raised. It was confirmed that all people who had been accommodated had a support worker and had received a health and well-being assessment and have care plans. Work was taking place with people to ensure people received support if they had alcohol and drug use issues.
- Anti-social behaviour had been reported in areas where homeless people had been provided accommodation. It was confirmed a Strategy was to be presented to Rhyl Member Area Group for discussion.
- Empty homes had been a problem and work was continuing to contact owners of empty homes to enable them to be brought back into the housing market with the support of Denbighshire County Council.
- Denbighshire County Council were working regionally with Conwy County Borough Council on an initiative – Housing First – which was a separately funded initiative.
- It was requested that the recommendation read “Council approves the Housing and Homelessness Strategy with accompanying Action Plan as the framework for taking forward housing and homelessness issues”. All agreed homelessness should be added.

At this juncture, Members offered thanks to the Homeless Team for all the work they had carried out during the pandemic.

Following discussions, Councillor Tony Thomas proposed the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Bobby Feeley and a vote took place.

Members unanimously voted in favour of the report.

RESOLVED that Council approves the Housing and Homelessness Strategy and accompanying Action Plan as the framework for taking forward housing and homelessness issues.

7 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020/2021

The Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, introduced the Pay Policy Statement Report (previously circulated).

The Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, introduced the report (previously circulated) to seek Council approval of the Pay Policy Statement which had been drafted in accordance with the requirements of 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 and incorporated all existing

pay arrangements for the workforce groups within the Council, including Chief Officers and the lowest paid employees.

It was confirmed that the report should have been presented to Full Council in March 2020 but due to the Covid pandemic it had been delayed. A report would be presented to Council in March 2021 for the following financial year.

The Real Living Wage was raised by members and it was confirmed that a report regarding the Real Living Wage would be presented to Full Council in either January or February 2021.

Following discussions, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill proposed the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Tony Thomas and a vote took place.

A majority of members voted in favour of the report, no-one abstained and 2 members voted against the report. Therefore, it was

RESOLVED that Council agree the recommendation from the Senior Leadership Remuneration Panel to the changes to the Pay Policy for 2020/21 (copy in Appendix A)

8 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Councillor Barry Mellor (Chair of Corporate Governance Committee) introduced the Annual Report of the Corporate Governance Committee (previously circulated) to inform all members of the work of the Committee for the municipal year 2019/20.

The Council was statutorily required under the provisions of the Local Government Wales Measure 2011 to have an Audit Committee. The Committee was the Council's designated committee for this purpose.

The Council's Constitution provided that the membership of the Committee was made up of six elected Members on a politically balanced basis. There was no requirement for the Committee to be politically balanced. There was a statutory requirement to have at least one independent lay member of the Committee and the current lay member was Mr Paul Whitham.

Each meeting was attended by the Council's s151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and Head of Internal Audit or their representatives. In addition, each meeting was attended by officers of the Wales Audit Office (WAO).

During the period covered by the report, the Committee had received a number of internal annual reports on matters relating to governance.

The Committee also undertook a self-assessment of its own performance compared to current best practice. The assessment was against a checklist from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA guidance "Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police 2018 Edition".

Councillor Barry Mellor took the opportunity to thank the representatives of the WAO and all officers who attend the Corporate Governance meetings. In particular, he recognised the amount of work undertaken by the Internal Audit team. Thanks were extended to each member of the Committee as the agendas were often lengthy but the Committee members were always well prepared for the meeting.

Lead Members were also thanked for their attendance at Committees and for their support.

Members expressed their gratitude to the Chair and Committee members of Corporate Governance for all their hard work.

A vote took place and it was unanimously agreed to note the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report.

RESOLVED that Members of Full Council noted the content of the Annual Report of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

9 NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Joan Butterfield put forward the following Notice of Motion on behalf of the Labour Group for consideration by Full Council.

“That Denbighshire County Council :

Write to all private sector delivers of Social Care in the county, that they should review their sickness absence policy’s,so that as a bare minimum they match the same sickness provision as Local Authorities employees, including full pay for staff on sick leave with coronavirus.

This will help contribute fully to fight this deadly virus.”

During discussions, Councillor Paul Penlington stated that the Notice of Motion had been dealt with by the Welsh Government and proposed an amendment that DCC write to private providers to make sure they are aware of the enhanced scheme.

Councillor Paul Penlington proposed an amendment to the Notice of Motion, seconded by Councillor Rhys Thomas.

A vote took place for the amendment. A majority of members voted in favour of the amendment, 9 members voted against and 1 member abstained from the vote. Therefore, the amendment to the Notice of Motion was moved.

A vote then took place for the substantive Motion as follows. A majority of members voted in favour, 0 voted against, and 1 member abstained.

Therefore, it was:

RESOLVED the Denbighshire County Council write to private providers to ensure they are aware of the enhanced scheme.

10 NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Mabon ap Gwynfor put forward the following Notice of Motion for consideration by Full Council.

That Denbighshire County Council calls on the Welsh Government to change the Planning Act in order that it is compulsory to have planning permission to convert a dwellinghouse into a holiday home/holiday unit, and adapts the policy framework to allow thresholds to be set regarding the maximum numbers of holiday homes in any area.

At this juncture, Councillor Graham Timms declared a prejudicial interest as he owns a holiday home and left the meeting for this item.

Councillor Mark Young proposed an amendment that the Notice of Motion be presented at Scrutiny Committee for further discussion. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Martyn Holland.

A vote took place for the amendment. Members unanimously voted in favour of the amendment. Therefore, the amendment to the Notice of Motion was moved.

A vote then took place for the substantive Motion as follows. Members unanimously voted for the Notice of Motion to be presented at Scrutiny for further discussion.

Therefore, it was:

RESOLVED that the Notice of Motion be presented at Scrutiny for further discussion.

11 NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Martyn Holland withdrew the Notice of Motion.

12 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services introduced the Council's forward work programme (previously circulated).

26 January 2021 – Real Living Wage to be added

23 February 2021 – Pay Policy Statement to be added

RESOLVED subject to the above, that the Council's forward work programme be approved and noted.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 2.15 P.M.