

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN via Video Conference on Tuesday, 9 July 2024 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Michelle Blakeley-Walker, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Ellie Chard, Kelly Clewett, Ann Davies, Karen Edwards, Pauline Edwards, Gwyneth Ellis, James Elson, Chris Evans, Hugh Evans, Justine Evans, Bobby Feeley, Jon Harland, Elen Heaton, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Hogg, Carol Holliday, Alan Hughes, Hugh Irving, Alan James, Brian Jones, Diane King (Vice-Chair), Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Julie Matthews, James May, Jason McLellan, Barry Mellor, Terry Mendies, Merfyn Parry, Arwel Roberts, Gareth Sandilands, Peter Scott (Chair), Rhys Thomas, Andrea Tomlin, Cheryl Williams, David Williams, Elfed Williams, Huw Williams, Emrys Wynne and Mark Young

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (GB); Corporate Director: Governance and Business (GW); Head of Corporate Support Service: People (CR); Head of Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital and Assets (HV-E); Planning and Performance Officer (EH); Climate Change Manager (JH); Scrutiny Co-ordinators (RE and KE); Zoom Hosts and Webcast (RT-J and ED); and Committee Administrator (SLW)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joan Butterfield, Delyth Jones and Raj Metri

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters.

At this juncture, the Leader, Councillor Jason McLellan, congratulated Councillor Gill German on becoming an MP at the recent general election.

Councillor McLellan also congratulated fellow Councillor Martyn Hogg on his campaign at the general election.

Congratulations were also extended to the four MPs who were successful at the general election for Clwyd North, Clwyd East, Bangor Aberconwy and Dwyfor Meirionnydd.

Councillor Kelly Clewett congratulated Councillor Gill German and wished her well in her role as MP for Clwyd North.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of Full Council held on 14 May were submitted.

Page 11 – Councillor Jon Harland asked whether a written response had been sent to Mr Gonzalez, who had put forward a question at the meeting.

Councillor Julie Matthews confirmed she had sent a written response and she would share the letter with councillors.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed there was a policy on what flags were flown and on what days different flags were flown. There was provision in the Constitution for the council to depart from the policy in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Leader, but the advice was usually not to depart from the policy.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the minutes of Full Council held on 14 May 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

5 DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CLIMATE AND NATURE STRATEGY 2021/22 - 2029/30 - YEAR 3 REVIEW AND REFRESH

The Lead Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor Barry Mellor, introduced the Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Nature Strategy (2021/22 – 2029/30) – Year 3 review and refresh report (previously circulated).

Councillor Mellor thanked Cabinet for unanimous support all the way through the hard work of the review of the Strategy which needed to be carried out every three years. A cross party group had been formed and Councillor Mellor thanked all members of the group for their contribution. He particularly thanked the two members of the Green Party for their input.

Councillor Mellor also took the opportunity to welcome Jane Hodgson, the Climate Change Manager back to Denbighshire County Council.

The Council had declared a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency in July 2019 which committed the Council to become Net Carbon Zero by 2030 at the latest and to improve biodiversity across the County.

The Climate and Ecological Change Strategy (2021/22 – 2029/30) had been adopted in February 2021. As well as becoming Net Carbon Zero by 2030, the Council were to reduce the carbon emissions from the goods and services purchased (the Council's supply chain) by 35% by 2030. The Council also changed the Constitution in October 2020 so all decisions made by the Council must have regard to tackling Climate and Ecological Change.

The Strategy was to be reviewed and refreshed every three years and the first official review and refresh of the Strategy was 2023/24 and a thorough process had been completed as part of that review and refresh.

The Corporate Director – Governance and Business and Climate and Ecological Change Programme Senior Responsible Owner – Gary Williams, also thanked the Interim Climate Change Programme Manager, Liz Wilcox-Jones, all officers, and the Cross Party Group for the work carried out on the review and refresh.

The activity undertaken as part of the Review and Refresh was contained within Appendix 3 of the report.

Revised and updated areas of the Strategy of particular note included –

- Change of name to Denbighshire County Council’s Climate and Nature Strategy (2021/22 – 2029/30) from Denbighshire County Council’s Climate and Ecological Change Strategy (2021/22 – 2029/30).
- Addition of three new sections –
 - Reducing emissions and increasing absorption across Denbighshire
 - Increasing our resilience across the county, and
 - Nature Recovery across Denbighshire.
- There was also the introduction of a technical appendix which included further information on areas where achieving the required target was experiencing challenge.

An online public consultation had taken place from 25 March until 20 May. 336 responses had been received with 88% of the residents who had responded, agreeing that the Council should adopt the revised Strategy document.

To allow easier understanding of the substantial document, an Executive summary of the Strategy had been produced together with a Youth version.

Councillor Martyn Hogg stated that the process and level of engagement had been good. Achieving net zero would be difficult and everyone would need to do more.

Members stated that to be carbon net zero by 2030 would be a challenge and unaffordable. The question was raised as to why the date was not 2050 which could be achievable and was the date the Welsh Government were working towards. The Head of Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital & Assets confirmed the WG ambition had not changed and it had always been net zero Wales by 2050 but there had been targets for the public sector of 2040. It was confirmed that the ambition of 2030 would remain to ensure as much as possible could be attained, restraints permitting.

The Audit Wales report had stated that the public sector needed to be bold and to make robust decisions and the Strategy report had been an honest and bold report of the way forward.

During discussions the financial aspect of achieving net zero had been raised. £48 million would be the cost of achieving net zero over the next six years. As DCC and other Local Authorities were facing a financial crisis, it was queried how this was to be funded.

The Head of Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital and Assets responded that the financial appraisal had been based on the carbon saved in the

first three years, how much that had cost and then extrapolated for what was needed going forward. It did not include the statutory requirements around decarbonising DCC's housing stock. The work to be carried out on housing stock would be financed from the Housing Revenue Account.

It was important to note that the funding for the schemes which needed to be delivered were not expected to come from DCC's budget alone. The projects completed so far, under the strategy, had been funded 36% from external grant funding – a percentage level which the Council sought to increase in future years. Within the medium term financial plan there was a provision of £250k to fund prudential borrowing.

It was confirmed there were a number of funding streams not labelled as climate grants but which could be included and applied for within this agenda.

Farmland owned by DCC but rented out to tenant farmers would not be included within the statistics.

It had been stated in the report that there would be an increase in the forestry and woodland the council operated. Cost figures were requested and officers confirmed they would circulate the figures following the meeting.

The issue of cutting but not clearing the grass cuttings had been raised. It was confirmed that contractors were currently cutting but they would clear the cuttings as soon as possible. Work was taking place with Comms to communicate that message and the contractors would be doing more cuts at the end of the season.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) Council adopted the Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Nature Strategy 2021/22 – 2029/30) (Appendix 1);
- (ii) Council confirmed it had read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment as part of its consideration (Appendix 2)

6 COUNCIL PERFORMANCE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2023/24

The Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets, Councillor Gwyneth Ellis, introduced the Council Performance Self-Assessment 2023/24 report (previously circulated).

At this juncture, Councillor Ellis offered thanks to the Head of Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital and Assets, Helen Vaughan-Evans, Iolo McGregor who had recently left the local authority, and the team for all their hard work.

The report contained the Council's Performance Self-Assessment for 2023/24, provided the end of year analysis of progress and challenges with the key performance objectives ie: Corporate Plan themes.

Performance was regularly monitored, taking six monthly reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet meetings.

Appendix 1 presented the Executive Summary which sought to draw out the highlights of the Council's performance against the objectives (ie: Corporate Plan themes which were also Well-being and Equality objectives) and the seven governance areas prescribed in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Appendix 2 was the quarterly Performance Update report which was the process for ongoing self-assessment and embodied all the evidence and analysis. This appendix presented the latest information covering October 2023 to March 2024 and was the first performance report of the revised Corporate Plan.

The Performance Update Report together with the Executive Summary and the two preceding Update Reports made up the self-assessment for 2023/24.

Appendix 3 summarised the actions which arose from all the Service Performance Challenges which had taken place during the year.

Appendix 4 – Scope: Panel Performance Assessment 2024, outlined the agreed parameters of the Panel Performance Assessment of DCC, taking place between 9 September and 12 September 2024 (to be confirmed on appointment of the Panel). Facilitated by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the arrangements complied with the council's duty to arrange a panel performance assessment under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Within the Performance Self-Assessment 2023/24, six improvements had been identified –

- (i) To provide an update on the reasons for poor performance relating to the percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time.
- (ii) The new Economic Strategy to take into account the county's cultural offer and how it contributed to wider economic and well-being outcomes.
- (iii) Following agreement and to allow the council to focus on the development of the Regional Transport Plan, to close the Sustainable Transport Plan project and amend the commitment within the Corporate Plan.
- (iv) To consider the Stakeholder Survey 2023-2024 responses.
- (v) To consider the findings and recommendations of the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner's New Ways of Working Journey Checker.
- (vi) To keep Corporate Plan commitments and performance expectations under continual review in the context of the present difficult financial environment.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) County Council approve the Performance Self-Assessment 2023-24
- (ii) County Council approve the draft Scope for the Panel Performance Assessment (Appendix IV).

7 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Hugh Irving introduced the Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committees 2023/24 (previously circulated).

The report was presented to County Council to comply with Section 7.4.4 of the Council's Constitution which stipulated that the Authority's Scrutiny Committees must report annually to Full Council on their work and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

The report detailed the pre and post-decision scrutiny work undertaken, along with performance monitoring, risk management and examination of partnership working arrangements. All of which were aimed at delivering quality services in an efficient manner for the benefit of local residents, businesses and the county's communities.

There had been a number of scrutiny requests received during the year from various sources. There had been a decrease last year in the number of requests received from elected members, although the numbers had increased since the start of the new Council year, which was encouraging.

Members were requested to encourage residents to submit requests for items of concern to them so they could be scrutinised. Proposals of areas of concern could be made to councillors as their representatives, or directly to officers on the 'paper' proposal form contained in the report or electronically via the website

These are challenging times and all were conscious of the tough decisions faced by public services in attempting to finance the delivery of essential services. With a view to supporting the Council to undertake this work the Scrutiny Committees would, for the foreseeable future, be focussing some considerable proportion of their time to budget setting and monitoring work, as well as examining the proposals that would form part of the Council's Transformation Programme.

The report was currently in draft form but when approved, it would then be translated and be made available on the Council's website.

At this juncture, members offered their thanks to the Scrutiny Co-ordinators, Rhian Evans and Karen Evans for all their support and hard work.

Following a vote by a show of hands, it was unanimously agreed to approve the report.

RESOLVED that Council having considered the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committees for 2023/24, approve its publication.

8 COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2025

The Head of Corporate Support Service: People, Catrin Roberts, introduced the Committee Timetable 2025 report (previously circulated).

It was necessary for Council to approve a timetable for 2025 to enable meeting arrangements and resources to be confirmed, to publicise the timetable and to populate the members' diaries.

The Head of Corporate Support Service: People, took the opportunity to thank Kath Jones, Senior Committee Administrator for preparing the Schedule and liaising with officers, as it required extremely careful organisation.

RESOLVED that Council unanimously approved the draft Committee timetable 2025.

9 APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF DENBIGHSHIRE LEISURE LIMITED

The Corporate Director: Governance and Business introduced the Appointment of Director of Denbighshire Leisure Limited report (previously circulated).

It was confirmed that Nicola Stubbins, Corporate Director: Social Services and Education, had stepped down from the Board and, therefore, it was necessary for the Council to appoint a new Director to fill the vacancy.

Members of SLT had been canvassed for their interest in taking up the role and had agreed to nominate Tony Ward, Corporate Director: Environment and Economy for the role.

It was queried whether Tony Ward would have the capacity in his workload to take on the additional role. It was confirmed Tony Ward had agreed to take up the role if approved by Council. He would undertake training and not take up the role until September 2024.

A majority of members present voted to approve the appointment, therefore it was –

RESOLVED that Council appoint Tony Ward, Corporate Director: Environment and Economy to be a Director of Denbighshire Leisure Limited (DLL).

10 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Corporate Director: Governance and Business, Gary Williams, introduced the Council's Forward Work Programme and the Council Workshop Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the Council's Forward Work Programme and the Council Workshop Forward Work Programme be noted.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 11.20 A.M.