

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in via VIDEO CONFERENCE on Tuesday, 23 February 2021 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Brian Blakeley, Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Ellie Chard, Ann Davies, Gareth Davies, Meirick Davies (Chair), Hugh Evans, Peter Evans, Bobby Feeley, Rachel Flynn, Tony Flynn, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Holland, Hugh Irving, Alan James (Vice-Chair), Brian Jones, Pat Jones, Tina Jones, Christine Marston, Barry Mellor, Melvyn Mile, Bob Murray, Merfyn Parry, Paul Penlington, Pete Prendergast, Arwel Roberts, Anton Sampson, Peter Scott, Glenn Swingler, 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

Corporate Director: Communities (NS), Corporate Director – Economy and Public Realm (GB), Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (GW), Head of Finance, and Property (SG), Head of Highways and Environmental Services (TW), Strategic Planning & Performance Officer (HB-P), Climate Change Programme Manager (HV-E), Democratic Services Manager (SP), Zoom Host and Webcaster (SJ), and Committee Administrator (SLW)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mabon ap Gwynfor, Gwyneth Kensler, Geraint Lloyd-Williams and Richard Mainon

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bobby Feeley declared a personal interest in item 5 (Avoidance and Reduction of Plastics in Denbighshire County Council) as she is a Board Member of Denbighshire Leisure.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters.

Question put forward by Councillor Arwel Roberts on behalf of Plaid Group –

“What changes are being considered to the services offered at present by DCC to visually impaired citizens?”

Councillor Roberts confirmed he had received a response from Councillor Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Well-being and Independence, which he would circulate to all Members for information.

Question put forward by Councillor Glenn Swingler on behalf of Plaid Group –

“DCC support many centres providing work opportunities for people with learning difficulties. At the moment, they are closed due to Covid, my question is as follows–

When the easing of restrictions allow, will all the facilities that provide work and training opportunities for people with learning difficulties be re-opening as before?”

Response by Councillor Bobby Feeley –

“A review of internal work ops services was carried out in 2019/20 and the actions were being implemented in 2020 as we went into the first lockdown. Although services have been closed, we have continued to work towards the recommendations within the review, as well as this, we need to consider Covid and ongoing requirements to ensure any services are delivered safely in the future. Therefore, it is unlikely that services will be the same as they were before, however, we remain committed to delivering against the review and ensuring the users of these services access high quality support in the future. Any necessary changes will be consulted with people who use the services and their families to ensure individuals' agreed outcomes can be met at least as well as before.

In terms of the contracted out LD day services, Co-options have remained open but for a very limited number of individuals. Attendance is decided on a case by case basis subject to risk assessments etc, and currently only individuals where it has been assessed as essential for their mental well-being are attending. Similar for the Glyndwr Centre. When easing of restrictions allow, both centres will probably go back to operating in a way similar to how they were prior to the pre-Christmas lockdown. Numbers have been reduced to comply with risk assessments and due to the changes made within the different establishments to comply with Covid guidance and ensure space for social distancing etc.”

Councillor Glenn Swingler asked a supplemental question –

“out of existing ones currently closed, if we were to come out of lockdown, are these facilities ready to open straight away?”

Further response by Councillor Bobby Feeley –

“Some are ready to go, hopefully, they will be sorted and ready. I can send a list out to you of where we are.”

4 MINUTES

The minutes of Full Council held on 26 January 2021 were submitted.

Matters Arising – Item 3, Urgent Items. Councillor Peter Scott asked for any update regarding flooding.

Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment, Councillor Brian Jones responded that a communication had recently been received from NRW regarding the floods in February 2020 which would be available within the next two weeks. NRW had carried out interim works in Ruthin at the point where the river broke its banks and they had confirmed a permanent solution would be in place in Autumn.

The Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm, Graham Boase confirmed NRW were working in partnership with DCC and both local members and local residents were being kept informed.

PROPOSED by Councillor Cheryl Williams and SECONDED by Councillor Alan James to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021.

A vote took place and it was unanimously agreed the minutes were correct.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 January 2021 be confirmed as correct record.

5 AVOIDANCE AND REDUCTION OF PLASTICS IN DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Councillor Arwel Roberts introduced the Avoidance and Reduction of Plastics in Denbighshire County Council report (previously circulated).

On 22 December 2020 a Special Meeting of Performance Scrutiny Committee took place and recommendations were supported as to how Council could reduce plastics.

The Task and Finish Group, chaired by Councillor Emrys Wynne, put forward an action plan to reduce the use of plastics.

Full Council, at the end of January 2020, approved the recommendations included in the Task and Finish Group's initial action plan to reduce the use of plastics in civic offices (Phase 1). Full Council also agreed to the Group's request to continue its work for a further 12 months with a view to devising methods for reducing the use of plastics in two specific areas, namely school catering and procurement (Phase 2). Within a matter of weeks of the above decision being taken the COVID-19 pandemic struck and the country went into lockdown.

The report outlined the proposed recommendations following the recent meeting of the Use of Plastics Members' Task & Finish Group where the group acknowledged the achievement of Phase 1 in reducing the use of plastics in civic offices and considered a way forward in relation to the work it had been tasked to undertake, but were unable to progress Phase 2 (School Catering and Procurement) due to the pandemic.

Members expressed their gratitude to the Strategic Planning and Performance Officer, Heidi Barton-Price, for her work with the Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Arwel Roberts proposed the report, seconded by Councillor Emrys Wynne.

A vote took place and a majority agreed to accept the report. Councillor Ann Davies abstained from the vote as she was not present for all the discussion.

RESOLVED that Council considers and comments on the Task and Finish Group's work thus far and endorses the recommendations by the Performance Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) given the current circumstances due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, that Phase 2 of the Group's work should not proceed and that the Task and Finish Group be disbanded;
- (ii) opportunities to reduce the use of plastics in school catering and procurement, along with any future work on the avoidance and reduction of plastics in Denbighshire County Council (including its Alternative Delivery Models (ADMs) such as Denbighshire Leisure Limited (DLL) be co-ordinated under the proposed Climate and Ecological Change Strategy;
- (iii) the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) be requested to determine the most effective forum for monitoring the implementation and delivery of reducing the use of plastics within Denbighshire County Council and the Council's wider Ecological and Climate Change Strategy.

6 DCC'S CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL CHANGE STRATEGY

The Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment, Councillor Brian Jones, introduced the Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Ecological Change Strategy (2021-2029) report (previously circulated).

The Council declared a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency on 9th July 2019 which contained a set of actions for DCC including the goal for the Council to become net carbon zero by 2030 at the latest, to enhance biodiversity in Denbighshire and to draw up a clear plan to achieve this.

Some of changes and actions set out in the Strategy would require capital investment, others revenue funding, and some delivered at no additional cost. Many of the changes and actions would save the Council money over the long time. To deliver this strategy over the next 3 years there would be a cost in the region of £9 million pounds to deliver the projects needed to achieve all objectives.

The Lead Member for Housing and Communities, Councillor Tony Thomas, gave an update to members as follows:

- Tree planting was progressing well. There was now a full time tree officer in post and two further officers had been employed for 12 months.
- A Moorland Officer was also now in post which was supported 50% by NRW.
- Ash die back continued to be an issue

The Climate Change Programme Manager referred to the Welsh Government's target for Wales to be carbon zero by 2050 and the Climate Change Committee's advice on carbon reduction and absorption to cap global warming temperatures and

limit the impact on climate change and biodiversity. The Strategy represented the Council's contribution in tackling the climate and nature crisis and help Wales meet its carbon zero ambitions and deliver on biodiversity duties. It had been produced collaboratively across the Council and with members of the public, and provided the Council's vision for 2030 together with a route map of how it would be achieved, banking benefit of reduced carbon, increased carbon absorption and improved species together with co-benefits in economy, health and wellbeing.

Councillor Brian Jones proposed the DCC's Climate and Ecological Change Strategy report, seconded by Councillor Christine Marston.

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

RESOLVED that:

- Council approve to adopt the Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Ecological Change Strategy (2021/22 – 2029/30).
- Council confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix A) as part of its consideration.

7 COUNCIL TAX 2021/22 AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

The Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, introduced the Council Tax 2021/22 and Associated Matters Report (previously circulated) to set the levels of Council Tax for 2021/2022.

Councillor Thompson-Hill particularly referred to:

- The main features of the budget which had been approved at full Council on 26 January 2021
- Observations of the Head of Finance and Property on the robustness of budget estimates and adequacy of reserves
- A breakdown of the precepts from City, Town and Community Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales
- Recommendations for the levels of Council Tax 2021/2022
- A positive settlement of +3.6% in the Council's Local Government revenue from Welsh Government.

During discussions, Members of Plaid Group stated that they had voted against the Budget 2021/2022 Final Proposals report at the Council meeting on 26 January 2021. The Lead Member, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill confirmed that the majority of members had voted in favour of the report and, therefore, the result was binding.

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill proposed to accept the Council Tax 2021/2022 and Associated Matters report, seconded by Councillor Hugh Evans.

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

RESOLVED that:

- (i) *It is necessary for the County Council, as the Billing Authority, to consider the precepts received from the Police & Crime Commissioner for North*

Wales and the Town/Community Councils and declare the Council Tax levels for the 2021/22 financial year.

- (ii) It is recommended that the amounts calculated by the Council for the 2021/22 financial year, in accordance with Sections 32 to 34 (1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (the Act) and Alteration of Requisite Calculations (Wales) Regulations 2008 be as Appendix A section 3.*
- (iii) It is recommended that the amounts calculated by the Council for the 2021/22 financial year, in accordance with Sections 34 (2) to 36 (1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (the Act) be as Appendix A section 4.*
- (iv) That the amounts of Council Tax for the 2021/22 financial year for each of the categories of dwellings be as shown in Appendix C.*
- (v) That the level of discount for Class A, B, and C as prescribed under the Council Tax (Prescribed Class of Dwellings) (Wales) Regulations 2004 be set at zero for the financial year 2021/22 with the caveat that this is dependent on no changes to legislation or local conditions.*

8 CAPITAL PLAN 2020/21 - 2023/24 AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT GROUP

The Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, introduced Capital Plan 2020/2021 – 2023/2024 Report (previously circulated) to provide members with an updated Capital Plan including an update on major projects and the Corporate Plan.

The full Capital Plan was last reported to Council in February 2020. Monthly updates had been presented to Cabinet. The Estimated Capital Plan was now £42.36m. The plan had been updated since being reported to Cabinet on 16 February 2021.

Councillor Thompson-Hill guided members through the report.

Both Councillor Thompson-Hill and the Head of Finance and Property responded to questions regarding various aspects of the Capital Plan. Main areas of discussion focused on the following:

- The issue of flooding and members asked whether there would be finance available for the projects required to aid flooded areas. It was confirmed that for severe flooding there were Welsh Government funding streams which could be accessed. Some of the defence works around rivers were the responsibility of NRW. The flooding in Ruthin was the responsibility of NRW and not DCC. Both NRW and DCC work together to alleviate issues. Scrutiny had set up a Task and Finish Group to deal with all aspects of flooding.
- Bridge repair works was raised and it was confirmed that there was an allocation of £403,000 for routine work to bridges. The relevant team would prioritise the bridge works which could be delivered. Bridge work was planned and approved on an annual basis.
- The Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment, Councillor Brian Jones, informed members that Welsh Government were putting

initiatives in place for funding. The Head of Service was collating a business case to obtain a commitment of up to £4million per year.

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill proposed to accept the Capital Plan 2020/21 - 2023/24 and recommendations of the Strategic Investment group report, seconded by Councillor Hugh Evans.

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

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Members note the latest position on the 2020/21 element of the Capital Plan and the update on major projects.
- (ii) Members support the approval of Cabinet and the recommendation of the Strategic Investment Group as detailed in Appendix 5 and summarised in Appendix 6.
- (iii) Members approve the 2021/22 Capital Plan.
- (iv) Members approve the Capital Strategy Report for 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix 7.

9 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2021/22 AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2020/21 TO 2022/23

The Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, introduced Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22 and Prudential Indicators 2020/21 to 2022/23 Report (previously circulated) to seek Council's approval of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) 2021/22 and Prudential Indicators

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice on Treasury Management required the council to approve the TMSS and Prudential Indicators annually.

When investing, the Council's priorities were to:

- keep money safe (security);
- make sure that the money comes back when it is needed (liquidity);
- make sure a decent rate of return is achieved (yield).

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill proposed to accept the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22 and Prudential Indicators 2020/21 to 2022/23 report, seconded by Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones.

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

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Council approves the TMSS for 2021/22 (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Council approves the setting of Prudential Indicators for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 (Appendix 1 Annex A).
- (iii) Council approves the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement (Appendix 1 Section 6).

(iv) Council confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 2) as part of its consideration.

10 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

RESOLVED *that the Council and Council Briefing Forward Work Programmes be approved and noted.*

The meeting concluded at 1.15 p.m.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mabon ap Gwynfor, Gwyneth Kensler, Geraint Lloyd-Williams and Richard Mainon