

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in via VIDEO CONFERENCE on Tuesday, 6 July 2021 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, Peter Evans, Bobby Feeley, Rachel Flynn, Tony Flynn, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Alan Hughes, Hugh Irving, Alan James (Chair), Brian Jones, Pat Jones, Tina Jones, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Richard Mainon, Christine Marston (Vice-Chair), Barry Mellor, Melvyn Mile, Bob Murray, 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, 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 Planning and Public Protection (EJ); Strategic Planning Team Manager (NK); Strategic Planning and Performance Team Leader (IMcG); Democratic Services Manager (SP); Zoom Host and Webcast (RTJ); and Committee Administrator (SLW).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Martyn Holland, Gwyneth Kensler, Merfyn Parry, David Williams and Eryl Williams

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cheryl Williams declared a personal interest in Item 5 – Annual Performance Review – as she rents a council property.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent items.

(a) Question put forward by Councillor Paul Penlington:

We were asked to come up with proposals to submit to the Westminster Government led Levelling Up Fund on 25 June, the deadline being Friday 2 July. As the deadline has now passed, can you tell us how many proposals have been received from Members, who submitted them, the details of each proposal, and what will the process now be for considering which proposals will be developed for submission to the Local Fund allocation?

Response by the Leader, Councillor Hugh Evans:

An email was sent to the Member Area Groups (MAGs) which fell under the MPs Constituency of Vale of Clwyd and Clwyd West. These were the Elwy, Rhyl, Prestatyn, Denbigh and Ruthin MAGs.

Members were asked to complete a form setting out some initial project ideas to be discussed with the MP for that constituency that could potentially be considered for inclusion in the Levelling-Up bid.

Responses were received from 5 Members suggesting a variety of projects including redevelopment of Town Centre buildings and rural community buildings.

The project ideas will be discussed with the MP and there will be an opportunity to discuss the member project ideas as well as suggestions from the MP and officers in more detail in the future Member Area Group meetings which will be held in July.

Any future bids, including all the projects, require the support of the MP.

Councillor Paul Penlington asked a Supplementary Question –

The promised £20million must be allocated to projects which can be delivered by March 2024, just before the next general election. Continued longevity of this funding is unknown as it has not been set out yet, making proper Local Authority planning for it very difficult. The timescale for bids is shockingly tight and any funding bids put forward will eventually be approved or not by the Local MP and not County Councillors. As there is no knowing what the future will bring and democracy has been subsumed by Westminster, DCC Services and local Members are now being forced to scramble over short term localised funding decisions for their own areas.

Will this levelling up fund support the future Corporate Plan now under discussion and the wider North Wales Growth Deal?

Further response by the Leader, Councillor Hugh Evans:

The £20m is per constituency so the Vale of Clwyd is the constituency of one MP, Clwyd West is between Conwy and Denbighshire.

This is a new way of working for us in Denbighshire. It is a challenge meeting the deadlines as they are very tight. The deadlines are very tight, as you highlighted, and the experience we had in Clwyd South proved to be a challenge for us to get that bid in by June. That said, whether we agree with it or not, there is a potential for investment in our authority here and the only way we can use the Levelling-Up Fund is by embracing the opportunity, working with the two MPs involved and trying to come up with projects that fit our communities.

That is why I think it is important we have created an engagement process with the two MPs and Members to come up with projects that accommodate their aspiration but more importantly, accommodate our aspiration in the locality as well.

The key is we will create a process where the MP's will engage with Councillors in developing projects which appease the MP but also ourselves. That is really important and both MPs have agreed to come to the MAGs to discuss in July.

The potential for improving our communities is substantial with the Levelling-Up fund. It is not an ideal way of working and I accept that, but this is only the starting point for the shared prosperity fund which will come down the line in a few years.

It is important that we, as an Authority, not only embrace it, but also give confidence to funders that we can deliver and that was the key point that came out in the Clwyd South, that the projects have to be deliverable.

Are they aligned to the existing Corporate Plan? Not necessarily, but we have not really discussed the projects in detail. Could they be aligned to the Corporate Plan of the next Council, yes, of course they could, and the new Members would be better placed to test that out with the next Corporate Plan.

It is an opportunity for investment and it is an opportunity we should seize and make it happen for Denbighshire.

(b) Petition from Councillor Ann Davies:

On behalf of the residents of Nant Close, Rhuddlan, I would like to present this petition against the planting of wild flowers in residential areas, feet from their homes. Whilst we are in favour of biodiversity and understand Denbighshire County Council have a duty to deliver this plan and the Denbighshire County Council Bee Friendly certificate clearly states, involve the community. Residents are disappointed that they were not consulted and feel they have lost their green space, somewhere for the children to play, their security and are calling for the grass to be cut.

The Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services, Gary Williams clarified that in ordinary circumstances, the petition would be handed in personally but as the meeting is being held remotely, it will be sent in to County Hall and forwarded to the relevant Department for a response within 14 days.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of Full Council held on 18 May 2021 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of Full Council held on 18 May 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

5 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2020/2021

The Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, presented the report (previously circulated) to provide the quarterly and end of year analysis, and highlighting specific projects and action for delivery in 2021 to 2022.

Information had been provided regarding the Council's progress in delivering Corporate Plan outcomes as at quarter 4, 2020 to 2021, meeting the statutory obligation to publish the annual report on performance by October 31 under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

The Annual Performance Review (APR) had been expanded to combine a number of previously separate reports into one document, meeting the Council's requirements under a number of pieces of legislation including the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The APR included for the first time a new 'pilot' chapter to satisfy the need to self-assess under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. It focused on seven key governance areas. Drawing on available published evidence from internal and external sources, and looked at data agreed by Senior Managers, the chapter painted a wider picture about the context in which the council was operating when delivering its performance objectives. It also sought to draw out any key actions to improve performance going forward.

The Strategic Planning Team Manager provided a summary of progress against priorities and the Strategic Planning and Performance Team Leader provided an overview of the new corporate health section of the report in order to satisfy the need to self-assess under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Council considered the APR and main areas of debate focused on the following:-

- Universal Credit – there had been an increase in the number of people going on to Universal Credit during the previous 12 months and as the furlough situation came to an end, the impact was to be monitored. DCC, CAB and DWP were all being proactive to ensure assistance would be available, especially to assist children and families. Officers informed Members that the new Corporate Plan would prioritise child poverty.
- Youth Unemployment – Denbighshire were working on TRAC and ADTRAC regarding youth unemployment. To obtain grants, detailed reports containing information had to be provided to obtain grants. Support was being offered to assist youth unemployment. It was confirmed quarterly reports could be provided to Members or alternatively, could be submitted to Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise in more detail.
- During Covid, work within Denbighshire had been adapted and new rules and legislation were in place. Things would probably not return to as they were pre-pandemic. There is a detailed recovery plan and looking to

improve the delivery of services. The communities had shown incredible resilience during the difficulty of the pandemic.

- Digital issues were raised but it was confirmed that the overall responsibility for those issues were with BT Openreach with whom DCC were liaising.

PROPOSED by Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill to approve the report, SECONDED by Councillor Bobby Feeley.

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

RESOLVED that subject to any agreed changes, Council approve the Annual Performance Review 2020 to 2021.

6 COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2022

The Democratic Services Manager, Steve Price, introduced the report (previously circulated) to enable Members to approve the draft Committee Timetable for 2022.

It was necessary for the Council to approve a timetable for 2022 to enable meeting arrangements and resources to be confirmed, to publicise the timetable and to populate the Members' diaries.

The Democratic Services Manager expressed his thanks to Kath Jones, Committee Officer, for preparing the schedule and liaising with officers, as it had required extremely careful organisation.

PROPOSED by Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies, SECONDED by Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain Jones.

A vote took place and it was unanimously agreed to approve the Committee Timetable 2022.

RESOLVED that Council approves the draft Committee Timetable 2022.

7 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).

A Special Council meeting was scheduled for 22 July 2021 for the recruitment of a new Chief Executive.

Workshops were being arranged for Budget and Real Living Wage.

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

The meeting concluded at 11.51 a.m.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Martyn Holland, Gwyneth Kensler, Merfyn Parry, David Williams and Eryl Williams