

THE EXECUTIVE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 25 January, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Llinos Medi (Chair)
Councillor Ieuan Williams (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Richard Dew, Carwyn Jones, R. Meirion Jones, Alun Mummery, R.G. Parry, OBE FRAGS, Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Robin Williams

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Function (Resources) & Section 151 Officer
Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer
Director of Education, Skills and Young People
Head of Housing Services
Head of Highways, Waste and Property Services
Head of Democratic Services
Interim Head of Service – Regulation and Economic Development
Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation
Planning Built and Natural Environment Manager (JIW)
Committee Officer (ATH)

APOLOGIES: None

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Glyn Haynes, Kenneth Hughes Trefor Lloyd Hughes, MBE, Aled Morris Jones, G.O Jones, R. Llewelyn Jones, Dafydd Roberts, Human Resources Manager (CW), Senior Transport Officer (IW), Communications Officer (GJ), Mr Gareth Wyn Williams (Local Democracy Reporter)

The Chair welcomed all those present to this virtual meeting of the Executive. She referred to the absence of Mr Fôn Roberts, the Interim Director of Social Services due to a family bereavement and she offered the Executive's condolences to Mr Roberts and to his family.

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was made.

2. URGENT MATTERS CERTIFIED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OR HIS APPOINTED OFFICER

None to report.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meetings of the Executive held on the following dates were presented for the Executive's approval:

30 November, 2020

14 December, 2020

17 December, 2020 (extraordinary)

It was resolved that the minutes of the previous meetings of the Executive held on the following dates be approved as correct –

- **30 November, 2020**
- **14 December, 2020**
- **17 December, 2020 (extraordinary)**

4. MINUTES – CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 8 December, 2020 were presented for the Executive's adoption.

The Chief Executive in her capacity as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel outlined the business of the Panel's meeting on 8 December stating that after a hiatus due to the onset of Covid 19, the Corporate Parenting Panel resumed its meetings in December, 2020 when it was provided with an update on the operations of the Children and Families' Services during the pandemic including the steps taken to meet statutory obligations and the creative approaches taken to maintain contact with the Authority's looked after children at a time of social constraints. The Panel was informed of the ongoing success of the drive to recruit and retain Foster Carers supported by the launch in January, 2019 of the Core Offer, a marketing incentive to attract new foster carers. The Panel was also updated on the educational attainment of the children and young people in the Authority's care. During the pandemic the Chief Executive, Interim Director of Social Services and Leader/Portfolio Member for Social Services took the opportunity to commission a review by Internal Audit of the governance, risk management and internal controls of the Panel, specifically whether it had in place appropriate arrangements to support and facilitate the Council in meeting its corporate parenting responsibilities. Whilst the Internal Audit review provided assurance that overall the Panel is operating effectively, it also identified improvements that could be made and these will be taken forward in an action plan agreed to by the Panel.

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 8 December, 2020 be adopted.

5. THE EXECUTIVE'S FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Head of Democratic Services incorporating the Executive's Forward Work Programme for the period from February, 2021 to September, 2021 was presented for consideration and the following changes were noted -

- New Items –
 - Item 21 – Licensing Policy Statement - for the 22 March, 2021 meeting
 - Item 22 – Service Asset Management Plan 2020 – 2030: Smallholdings Estate – for the 22 March, 2021 meeting
 - Items 33-36 – 2021/22 Quarterly Performance and Budget Monitoring reports – for the September, 2021 meeting
- Rescheduled Items
 - Item 3 – Housing Rent HRA and Housing Service Charges 2021/22 – brought forward to the 15 February, 2021 meeting

- Item 19 – Anglesey Further Education Trust Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 – rescheduled from 25 January, 2021 to the 22 March, 2021 meeting
- Item 20 – Llangefni Golf Course – rescheduled from 15 February, 2021 to the 22 March, 2021 meeting.

In addition, since the publication of the agenda the Housing Service has requested that item 2 on the Work Programme – Housing Support Grant Commissioning Plan - be rescheduled from 15 February, 2021 to the 22 March, 2021 meeting.

It was resolved to confirm the Executive’s updated Forward Work Programme for the period from February to September, 2021 with the additional change outlined at the meeting.

6. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION – RESTRUCTURING THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

The report of the Chief Executive with regard to restructuring the Senior Leadership Team was presented for the Executive’s consideration.

Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business introduced the report as dealing with a proposed restructure of the Senior Leadership Team and the consequential constitutional changes.

The Chief Executive referred to the changes to the Council’s Constitution approved by Council in March 2020 to reflect the internal restructuring of the senior management team by the former Chief Executive in 2019. Following the departure of the Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive was appointed Chief Executive and the Director of Place and Community Well-being was appointed Deputy Chief Executive. Since November, 2019 the role of Director of Place and Community Well-being has been vacant despite the post being subject to two external advertising campaigns. Following the first unsuccessful advertising campaign the duties of the Director post has been carried out by internal applicants appointed as Interim Head Of Service – Regulation and Economic Development and an officer appointed as a lead on place shaping. These appointments were initially made until April, 2020 but because of the pandemic and the need to ensure business continuity they were extended to December, 2020.

The Chief Executive advised that the pandemic emergency has shown that the Council must have suitably qualified officers within specific areas for the future; the coronavirus response has also clearly demonstrated the importance of appropriate competencies for this level of posts. In addition, the pandemic period has also proved the essential importance of working with partners and communities to build community resilience to deal with different challenges for which work officers need sufficient and reasonable time. Sufficient and equitable/ balanced capacity is needed across all services to ensure the Council’s future resilience within the higher tier of management and leadership. Although interim arrangements have worked well they are not effective in the long term. There is a requirement to make a decision in relation to the role of Director and the resultant interim posts created as a result of the failure to recruit to that role.

With this in mind a report was presented to the Appointments Committee in December, 2020 seeking its recommendation for the best way forwards in terms of filling the void in the Council’s senior management team. In that report the Chief Executive expressed her professional view that the best option would be to delete the Director’s post and appoint one Head of Service for Regulation and Economic Development thereby eliminating the workload associated with the senior Team; the Deputy Chief Executive would in practice lead on this

aspect of the post in the Senior Team. As such consideration would therefore need to be given to supporting some of the Deputy's duties and – under his supervision – linking them to the Place Shaping aspect from the Director's role. The simplest option would be to create an additional post on Grade 9/10 to provide capacity and resilience for the structure and support the Deputy Chief Executive and the newly created Head of Regulation and Economic Development. The Appointments Committee endorsed this approach and its formal resolutions to that effect are noted in the report.

Sections 5 and 6 of the report set out the implications from a constitutional perspective and the changes to be made to reflect the proposed amended SLT/Heads of Service structure (attached as Enclosure 2 of the report, but subject to the inclusion of the Head of Adults' Services post which has been inadvertently omitted from the structure as shown).

The Executive considered the report and affirmed its support for the approach taken in the recommendations of the Appointments Committee.

It was resolved to recommend to the Full Council that it –

- **Notes the recommendations of the Appointments Committee and confirms that –**
 - **The post of Director of Place and Community Wellbeing (also known as the Director of Regulation and Economic Development for the purpose of the recent recruitment attempts) be removed from the Council's Constitution.**
 - **A permanent role of Head of Regulation and Economic Development be created and for this role to be advertised externally.**
 - **A new post of Corporate Strategy Officer be established and advertised externally.**
- **Confirms its approval to the insertion of Enclosure 2 which reflects the above amendments to the Council's structure, in the Council's Constitution.**
- **Confirms its approval for the Chief Executive (following consultation), in accordance with the existing authority included in 3.5.2.11 of the Constitution, and as a result of the above structural alteration, to distribute the relevant areas of responsibility among the Senior Leadership Team and the Heads of Service, as required.**
- **Confirms its approval for the Monitoring Officer, in accordance with the existing authority included in 3.5.3.6.6 of the Constitution, to amend the Constitution (including the scheme of delegation to Officers) to reflect the decisions made by Council in relation to the above structural alteration and the distribution of responsibilities among the Senior Leadership Team and the Heads of Service made by the Chief Executive under the sixth bullet point above.**
- **Confirms its approval for such other consequential amendments to be made to the Constitution by the Monitoring Officer to reflect the above recommendations.**

7. INTERIM HOUSING STRATEGY 2020/21

The report of the Head of Housing Services incorporating an Interim Housing Strategy 2021 was presented for the Executive's consideration.

The report was introduced by Councillor Alun Mummery, Portfolio Member for Housing and Community Support who explained that the intention in presenting the Interim Housing Strategy is to put in place a strategic document that recognises the changes faced during the year, by prioritising what needs to happen during next year and providing information on how Housing Services and its partners are responding and continue to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. It provides a bridge to the development of the Housing Strategy which will include the requirements of the Housing Support Grant and Welsh Government's Homelessness Strategy by 2022. The priorities of the current Strategy have been used for the Interim Strategy which will inform the Service's priorities for 2022-2027 and these are set out in the report.

Referring to consultation and the Communication Plan, the Portfolio Member said that the Interim Strategy document was placed on the Council's website for consultation with the Service's main partners. The consultation period remained open for 3 weeks from the 27 November, 2020 to the 18 December, 2020. The consultation response (detailed in Appendix 1) demonstrates support for the Interim Housing Strategy 2021 and will form the basis for the development of the 5 year Housing Strategy from 2022 to 2027 the intention being to issue an initial draft by April, 2021 with the final draft for public consultation being available online from June to August, 2021. The proposed engagement/consultation schedule will see the final draft being presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in September, 2021 and thereafter to the Executive for approval in October, 2021.

The Portfolio Member in providing a foretaste of the Housing Service's objectives cited 93 housing units expected to be completed by the Service's Housing Association partners in 2021/22 compared to 23 units in 2019/20 and 49 units in 2020/21, 38 council housing units having commenced on site in 2020/21 with a further 40 units expected to commence by 2021/22. In addition, it is anticipated that up to 75 empty homes will have been brought back into use in 2020/21 and a minimum of 50 such properties in 2021/22. Significant activity was also undertaken under the previous Housing Strategy in effect from 2014 which saw the provision of 53 new housing units between 2015 and 2020 as well as the purchase of an additional 65 units. During this period also, Hafan Cefni a 63 flat extra care complex was completed and Llawr y Dref in Llangefni was remodelled to provide a more modern way of living.

In concluding his presentation of the report the Portfolio Member highlighted its positive aspect in terms of the vision for the future which it portrayed; he expressed his gratitude to the Housing Service's staff for their hard work and commitment during the past 10 months in facing the challenges that had arisen during this time especially in relation to homelessness and in adapting aims and objectives to embrace the emerging issues.

The Head of Housing Services confirmed that the Housing Service has a statutory responsibility to assess housing need and lead on partnership working to secure housing of quality which meets the needs of its citizens now and in the future and that the Strategy shows how this will be delivered in the interim period and beyond.

Individual members of the Executive spoke to thank the Housing Service for its response to the pandemic and also for being a progressive service in terms of its vision for the Council's housing stock and its work on maintaining, investing in and adding to that stock especially and where possible, in more rural areas recognising that the availability of social housing in rural communities is important to their long-term sustainability. Members of the Executive were also appreciative of the work of the Service with empty properties - which can be a blight on communities - in returning those properties into positive use thereby improving communities and helping to meet housing needs.

The Chair echoed those thanks observing that the six themes that will inform the priorities of the longer term 5 year Strategy also feed into the Council's Corporate Plan. Whilst the management of the Councils' housing stock should be a matter of pride to the Housing Service it is also a reflection of partnership working with the Service working alongside social housing bodies and the Island's communities to deliver on its housing commitments.

It was resolved to approve the following –

- **The Interim Housing Strategy 2021**
- **The communication plan for developing the Housing Strategy 2022-27 and work plan with partners, which leads to a consultation period and final approval.**

8. BIODIVERSITY PLAN

The report of the Interim Head of Service – Regulation and Economic Development incorporating the Biodiversity Plan was presented for the Executive's consideration.

Councillor Richard Dew, Portfolio Member for Planning and Public Protection introduced the report stating that this is the Isle of Anglesey County Council's first Biodiversity Plan and has been prepared in compliance with section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. In accordance with the requirements of Section 6 it sets out how the Council intends to maintain and enhance biodiversity and in doing so, promote the resilience of ecosystems thereby embedding biodiversity in its day to day decision making, plans and policies. The Plan has also been prepared to align with the objectives of the Council Plan, in particular Objective 3 (Work in partnership with our communities to ensure that they can cope effectively with change and developments whilst protecting our natural environment). It follows guidance received by Welsh Government and considers the objectives of the Nature Recovery Plan (NRAP) for Wales which identifies actions that can be delivered in the short-term and sets a course to deliver longer term commitments beyond 2020. The Biodiversity Plan's objectives have been written to be realistic, achievable and measurable within the timescales and its outputs will be reported annually to the Executive.

The Interim Head of Regulation and Economic Development highlighted that although the Regulation and Economic Development Service has led on developing the Plan it is expected that all the Council's services will contribute to and be part of realising its objectives. Additionally there is an expectation that external funding will be sought to bring to fruition some of the individual projects within the Plan which is a consideration over the next few years. The Planning Built and Natural Environment Manager referred to the Action Plan as an especially important element of the broader Plan stating that it needs the Council working as a corporate whole to implement the actions set out therein.

Members of the Executive welcomed the Plan recognising the importance of biodiversity and of integrating biodiversity throughout the work of the Council. Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas had concerns about the decline of ash trees because of ash dieback disease and the implications for ash trees on the Island as well as the potential for wider ecological impacts.

The Portfolio Member for Planning and Public Protection in acknowledging that this is a significant national problem, confirmed that the Council's Ash Die Back Co-coordinator is looking at the issue from the Island's perspective and that a panel comprising of the relevant Portfolio Members and Officers has also been established for the same purpose. Equally important is to work with landowners and community councils to identify those areas where there are diseased trees, and to develop replanting schemes where trees have been lost.

Councillor R. Meirion Jones, Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth sought clarification of the financial side and emphasised the need to keep an eye on progress.

The Planning Built and Natural Environment Manager clarified that Welsh Government runs a series of schemes under Local Nature Partnerships in Wales; these involve a range of organisations including the local authority and the Partnerships receive funding for local environment related projects. In the region of £80k has been made available for next year for such projects and a bid will be submitted shortly - an element of this funding is for making the Council estate greener and some projects are underway using last year's funding for this purpose with approximately £30k available for next year.

With regard to monitoring, the Portfolio Member for Planning and Public Protection confirmed that as part of the monitoring process an annual report will be presented to the Executive.

Councillor Ieuan Williams, Vice-Chair in expressing his support for the Plan said that he believed that the environmental protection policies within the Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP) need to be strengthened; he cited an example in his own electoral area where part of a designated local wildlife site could potentially be lost should an affordable housing development proposal be permitted under exception site policy in the JLDP which allows development outside defined boundaries which he felt conflicted with the Authority's responsibilities and aspirations under the Biodiversity Plan. Having scanned other authorities' Local Development Plans he had found that Section 5 of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's adopted LDP contains a policy provision with regard to exception sites for affordable housing in the countryside which stipulates that development proposals will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that *"the proposed development is not within a Green Wedge, Special Landscape Area or within, near or adjacent to an internationally, nationally or locally designated Nature Conservation Site."* He requested that consideration be given to incorporating a similar provision within the Anglesey and Gwynedd JLDP when the Plan is up for review in order to extend protection to the same such sites in Anglesey and Gwynedd.

The Portfolio Member for Planning and Public Protection noted Councillor Ieuan Williams's comments and confirmed that he would take the request back to the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Planning Policy Committee.

It was resolved to accept the report and to formally adopt the Biodiversity Plan.

9. BUS EMERGENCY SCHEME

The report of the Head of Highways, Waste and Property in respect of the Bus Emergency Scheme was presented for the Executive's consideration. The report set out the wider context, the background to and reasons for the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) and sought the Executive's agreement to sign up to the BES2 scheme.

Councillor R.G. Parry, OBE, FRAGS, Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property introduced the report and provided background information stating that Welsh Government (WG) and local authorities have been providing financial support for the bus services sector to help deal with reduced revenue and increased costs due to the impact of Covid-19. Prior to the pandemic WG had consulted on a range of proposed changes to the way bus services are delivered in Wales and had indicated that it wanted to see the public sector having greater influence over service networks, ticketing and integration with rail services; WG is also looking to link the short term survival of operators to the longer reform of the sector. In the short term the funding to keep operators afloat is therefore being provided with a number

of conditions attached. These are to incentivise operators to engage in planned changes that are in line with their longer term ambitions for reform. WG made £29m available from a Hardship Fund which operated from April, 2020 for three months, after which the Bus Emergency Scheme was introduced in July to provide ongoing support (BES1) with expectations that operators would contribute to a reshaping of bus services in Wales. BES 1.5 was introduced in August, 2020 administered by lead Authorities (Flintshire in the case of North Wales) and this provided £10m of ramp up funding to support the reopening of schools and economic activity. BE 1.5 was then extended to the end of March, 2021 following the announcement of a further support package in September, 2020 with operators being asked to sign up to a range of terms and conditions to access the funding.

WG working with Transport for Wales are now proposing to enter into a longer term BES2 agreement with operators and local authorities to protect services. The agreement will operate for an initial maximum term of up to 2 years from the date BES 1.5 commenced i.e. up until July 2022 unless market conditions recover sufficiently for an operator to no longer require BES support be that for commercial or contracted services. WG will be a co-signatory to the BES2 agreement with bus operators along with Transport for Wales. Local Authorities retain legal responsibilities for bus services and therefore remain central to determining which local services receive this support. They need to sign up to the principle of the agreement and the relationship with their Lead Authority in ensuring that the ongoing emergency funding meets their priorities and is delivered on their behalf. This will provide the legal basis for WG to make payment to the operators. Key features of BES2 are summarised in the report and the full proposed Agreement is set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

The Head of Highways, Waste and Property Services highlighted the importance of supporting the sector both in the interests of the Authority's key workers and for the recovery post-Covid and said that although the funding does not specifically cover education transport it is essential in terms of helping bus operators survive the current crisis and remain solvent thereby ensuring their availability for education transport in the future. He advised that signing up to BES2 will not commit the Authority to any management model in future as this will be subject to further discussions; neither does it mean extra funding for more buses – rather it is funding to help operators continue during the current crisis and with this in mind Welsh Government has been asked to clarify the arrangements for monitoring.

Councillor Carwyn Jones, Portfolio Member for Economic Development and Major Projects welcomed the scheme pointing out that bus services provide a lifeline for rural areas meaning that supporting those services is therefore essential. He referred to the Seiriol Alliance which runs a successful minibus service and is keen to provide a community service for the area's more rural villages ; he sought clarity regarding how such a service might be supported in future and in particular Welsh Government's perspective on community transport provision.

The Head of Highways, Waste and Property Services advised that the BES2 agreement is specifically aimed at supporting current operators through the pandemic crisis. However, as part of further intended reforms of how bus services are managed in Wales to which the report alludes, the Authority has already expressed an interest in trialling Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) in Holyhead and in the Seiriol area. Whilst the trial scheme in Holyhead is more likely to proceed first because of the way commercial contracts with operators work, the Authority remains mindful of the options in the Seiriol ward especially in areas beyond Beaumaris.

It was resolved –

- **To agree to the principles of the BES2 agreement (Appendix 2 to the report) to secure (conditional) financial support for the bus sector and to establish a**

relationship with their regional lead authority and signatory, that ensures that the ongoing emergency funding meets the authority's priorities and is delivered on its behalf.

- **To call for a further report on bus reform proposals relating to the future management of bus services in Wales.**

**Councillor Llinos Medi
Chair**

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