

**ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on  
4 December 2014 (10.00 am)**

- PRESENT:** Councillor Vaughan Hughes (Chair)  
Councillor Jim Evans (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Lewis Davies, R Dew, Ann Griffith, John Griffith,  
D R Hughes, K P Hughes, Victor Hughes, W T Hughes,  
Llinos Medi Huws, A M Jones, Carwyn Jones, G O Jones,  
H E Jones, R .Meirion Jones, Alun W Mummery, R G Parry OBE,  
Dylan Rees, J A Roberts, Nicola Roberts, Alwyn Rowlands,  
Dafydd Rhys Thomas and Ieuan Williams
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive,  
Deputy Chief Executive,  
Corporate Director (Community),  
Corporate Director (Lifelong Learning),  
Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer,  
Interim Head of Function (Resources) & Section 151 Officer,  
Interim Head of Democratic Services,  
Corporate Assets Transformation Manager (CS),  
Acting ICT Services Manager (NS),  
Committee Officer (MEH).
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Jeff M. Evans, T. Ll. Hughes, Raymond Jones,  
Richard O. Jones.

**1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No declaration of interest received.

**2. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chief Executive stated that it is usual when an item is commercially sensitive or affect staff, a process is followed to consider whether those matters should be discussed in an open or closed meeting. In this particular instance as Officers it was decided that this matter should be discussed in private but relevant parts of the Smarter Working Project could be released into the public domain. He further stated that as Officers it was considered that the Smarter Working Project should not be discussed in full at a public meeting as information is included that is commercially sensitive i.e. value of Councils assets before being placed on the open market.

The Monitoring Officer stated that the Public Interest Test attached to the report sets out the reasons for having the debate in private or in public. The balance of the Public Interest Test considers that the debate should be in private session in

the first instance in order to enable Members to have a free and frank exchange of views. The particular legal concerns are that there is sensitive commercial information within the report. The information falls into 3 categories:-

- Sale of assets to help fund this project which identifies in detail what the expected receipts are from the sale of the assets.
- Information in detail about the procurement required in order to realise the project i.e. supplies and services the Council will need to purchase.
- References to opinions of Officers about certain characteristics of named contractors.

Therefore the legal advice still remains that the debate should take place in a private forum. However, the Monitoring Officer stated that if the Council is minded not to follow that advice as the Corporate Scrutiny Committee intended to at its meeting held on 4 November, she asked that the Council should limit the risk as follows :-

- To avoid reference to the commercially sensitive information in the debate by the Council;
- To give authority to the Monitoring Officer, if the Council decides to have the debate in public, to release the papers and to redact the commercially sensitive information after the meeting. There are 12 sets of redactions within the document.

The Leader of the Council stated that following the detailed advice by the Monitoring Officer, that if the commercially sensitive information is not discussed in public, he proposed that the Smarter Working Project report be discussed in public and to redact the commercially sensitive information within the report thereafter. Councillor Alwyn Rowlands seconded the proposal.

The Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee stated that the Executive held on 20 October, 2014 approved the Smarter Working project and thereafter the item was 'Called-In' to be further discussed by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and that Committee requested that it be discussed in public. That meeting was deferred and it is emanating from that decision that the matter has come before the full Council. He further stated that briefing session on the Smarter Working Project should have taken place before the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 15 October, 2014 to allow for discussions.

Members unanimously **RESOLVED that the matter be discussed in public with the redactions as outlined by the Monitoring Officer.**

### **3. SMARTER WORKING PROJECT**

A request for an Extraordinary meeting of the Council had been made by Councillors Lewis Davies, Ann Griffith, John Griffith, Trevor Ll. Hughes, Vaughan Hughes, Llinos M. Huws, Carwyn E. Jones, R. Meirion Jones, Alun W. Mummery, Bob Parry OBE, Dylan Rees and Nicola Roberts in accordance with Section 4.1.3.1 of the Constitution, to revisit the Executive's decision made on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2014 in relation to the Smarter Working Project and to consider the matter in public. A

copy of the reasons for the request was attached within the Agenda for the meeting.

The Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee raised a Question that the Executive resolved to approve the Smarter Working project on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2014 subject to capital and revenue resources being available. He referred to the Council's Constitution 4.3.2.3 – Decisions outside the budget and questioned if the decision of the Executive was within the Council's regulations as Appendix 6 within the report states that the project would be implemented immediately in December. Questions were raised to how this project was to be funded.

The Monitoring Officer responded that the Executive can only make spending decisions where the funding to underpin that spending has already been allocated. As the project is multi-layered, some funding may be already in place in the budget. Some elements of the project may not require funding e.g. disposal of assets; these will be issues for the Executive. Anything else will be a Council decision.

The Interim Head of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer stated that any activity that has taken place this year in respect of the Smarter Working may have not required any budget i.e. Officers time or funding from departmental budgets already in place. However, if any funding is required during the course of this financial year, the Council does have earmarked reserves which can be deployed through the proper processes to release funding. He further stated that there is currently no capital provision in place for this project and the Executive has recognised that by only agreeing to the principle of the project. The Officer stated that he considered that the Executive at its meeting held on 20 October, 2014 made a legitimate decision under the constitutional provision.

The Chair of the Council invited Councillor Bob Parry OBE, as the Leader of the Opposition Group to address the meeting. Councillor Parry expressed that the main concerns of the Opposition Group to the Smarter Working Project was the expenditure of this project. The project is dependent on selling the Council's assets on the open market together and selling these assets quickly. He further stated that whilst he appreciated that elements of the Smarter Working project are acceptable he specified that spending over £1m on the Headquarters would not be acceptable to the residents of the Island when the Authority considers increasing the Council Tax. The issue of local government reorganisation is also a factor that needs to be considered.

Main issues raised by the Opposition Group :-

- Possible redundancies of administrative posts;
- Spending over £1.5m on the County Council's Headquarters was unacceptable ;
- Enhancement of the ICT is needed to modernise the Authority with more resources being imputed into the ICT budget from the Smarter Working Project;
- The need to investigate fully the energy efficiencies savings of the headquarters i.e. LED lighting, solar panels;
- The project is dependent on selling the Council's assets and selling these assets quickly;

- Parking and health and safety issues with bringing more staff into the headquarters.

The Portfolio Holder (Transformation) gave a detailed background to the Smarter Working Project and reported on the briefing session conducted with staff. The Smarter Working Project is delivered as a range of savings which is outlined within the report. Information Technology needs to be enhanced to encourage and promote agile working within the authority. Based on advice received by the Section 151 Officer, savings are unlikely to materialise by adopting a piecemeal approach. A number of the aspects within the report have been ideas put forward by staff and management can now work to modernise facilities, service delivery and working practices within the Council. Capital receipts will be used to contribute to capital investment linked to the project which will lead to improvements within the authority. The savings of £730k per annum will materialise from this project. The Portfolio Holder emphasised that this project is an 'invest to save' project.

He referred to the issue of possible redundancies of administrative posts raised by the Opposition Group. He explained that it is envisaged that these posts will be lost through natural wastage i.e. voluntary redundancies and retirement. The Leader of the Opposition Group stated that the decision regarding Smarter Working Project should be reviewed and should proceed in stages. A recorded vote was taken under the provisions of 4.1.18.5 of the Constitution

The recorded vote was as follows :-

**That the Smarter Working Project decision be reviewed and to consider proceeding with the project on a stage by stage process:-**

Councillors Lewis Davies, Ann Griffith, John Griffith, Vaughan Hughes, Llinos M. Huws, Carwyn E. Jones, R. Meirion Jones, Alun W. Mummery, Bob Parry OBE, Dylan Rees, Nicola Roberts. **TOTAL 11**

**Against the motion :-**

Councillors Jim Evans, R.A. Dew, D.R. Hughes, K.P. Hughes, T.V. Hughes, W.T. Hughes, A.M. Jones, G.O. Jones, H.E. Jones, J. Arwel Roberts, Alwyn Rowlands, D.R. Thomas, Ieuan Williams. **TOTAL 13**

**Abstentions :** **NIL**

**RESOLVED that the Chair declared that the motion was not carried.**

The meeting concluded at 1.00 pm

**COUNCILLOR VAUGHAN HUGHES  
CHAIR**