

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 17th January, 2012

- PRESENT:** Councillor G.O.Jones – Chairman
Councillor R.Ll.Jones - Vice-Chair
- Councillors W.J.Chorlton, C.Ll.Everett, R.Anthony Dew; B.Durkin; Jim Evans; Ff.M.Hughes, K.P.Hughes, R.Ll.Hughes T.Ll.Hughes W.I.Hughes; W.T.Hughes, Aled M Jones; Eric Jones; Raymond Jones; C.McGregor; Bryan Owen; R.L.Owen; J.V.Owen; G.O. Parry MBE; Eric Roberts, J.Arwel Roberts, P.S.Rogers, Ieuan Williams, J.P. Williams.
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive;
Head of Service (Policy)
Legal Services Manager
Committee Services Manager.
Communications Officer.
- ALSO PRESENT:** Commissioner Gareth Jones; Mr.Gareth Pritchard (Assistant Chief Constable), Mr.Tal Michael (Chief Executive), Mr.Douglas Wynne (Member), Mr. Keith Jones (Acting Chief Inspector), Mr.Mike Parkin (Director of Finance and Resources), Mr.Stephen Roberts (Head of Property).
- APOLOGIES:** Commissioners Alex Aldridge, Byron Davies, Margaret Foster and Mick Giannasi; Councillors E.G.Davies, Lewis Davies, K.Evans, D.R.Hughes, H.E.Jones, O.Glyn Jones, R.Dylan Jones, Tom Jones, Rhian Medi, R.G.Parry, OBE, G.Winston Roberts, OBE, E.Schofield, S.Williams.

The meeting was opened with a prayer offered by Councillor K.P.Hughes

The Chair extended a warm welcome to the representatives of the North Wales Police Authority.

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None to declare

2. TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

The Chair took the opportunity of thanking everyone for the warm welcome he and the Vice-Chair had received at the residential homes, day centres, Ysbyty Penrhos Stanley, Ysgol y Bont, etc as part of their pre-Christmas visit.

Special thanks were extended to the Vice-Chair, Councillor R.Ll.Jones, for his support during this busy period and for assistance in visiting Council staff to wish them a happy Christmas.

The Chair congratulated the following recipients in the Queen's New Year Honours list:-

Mrs.Margaret Thomas from Holyhead who had received the MBE in recognition of her work with charities in the community;

Mr. Robert James Owen, Ysgol Llanfawr Caretaker, Holyhead, who had received the OBE for his service to the community;

Dr.Carl Iwan Clowes who had received the OBE for his service to the community;

Mrs.Susan Pippa Bonner, Benllech, who had received the MBE for her voluntary work with the North Wales Nature Trust.

The Chair mentioned that he had forwarded a letter of congratulation to each of the above on behalf of the County Council.

The Chair referred to the indisposition of the wife of Councillor R.G.Parry,OBE, and on behalf of the Council expressed his wishes to Mrs.Parry for a full and speedy recovery.

The Chair also took the opportunity of reminding Members of his Annual charity dinner which would be convened at the Trearddur Bay Hotel on Friday 30th January, 2012 and hoped that they would all be able to attend.

The Chair extended the Council's sympathy to the family of Mr.Tudur Owen, Library Assistant, Llangefni Library who passed away recently. The Chair also sympathised with any Member or Officer who had suffered a bereavement. Members and Officers stood in silent tribute as a mark of their respect.

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The Chief Executive took the opportunity of reminding Members that an all Council Workshop would be convened Tuesday next between 9:30am – 12 noon to discuss the Budget options for savings and growth.

He also mentioned that he was in receipt of a letter from the Minister for Local Government and Communities dated 17 January, 2012 in which the Minister had decided to exercise his powers under S.87 of the Local Government Act 2000 to change the year in which the ordinary election of County Councillors and Town and Community Councillors on the Isle of Anglesey was to be held from May 2012 to May 2013.

The Minister's decision would enable the Boundary Commission to conclude their review of electoral arrangements in the County of Anglesey, for consideration to be given to their proposals and for any changes in Councillor numbers and distribution to be brought into effect should he so decide .It would also provide stability while the Council proceeded towards a wider recovery from the problems which the Auditor General described. An Order would now be prepared to give effect to his decision.

The Chief Executive went on to mention that in response to the Minister's letter, the Leader of the Council would be issuing a short press statement to the effect that this Council was opposed to not holding an election this May and that it was disappointed with the Minister's decision in this respect.

3. DRAFT ESTATES STRATEGY - NORTH WALES POLICE AUTHORITY

Submitted - A presentation by Mr. Mike Parkin and Mr. Stephen Roberts of the North Wales Police Authority on the financial background and upon the necessity to review the Police estate.

Reported – That as part of last year's consultation on the future of policing, the North Wales Police Authority stated that they would be scrutinising the use of police buildings and that there would be opportunities to realise some savings by selling off property, reducing revenue costs and changing how they delivered face-to-face services to the public.

This draft Consultation Strategy set out the impact on each of the six counties in North Wales, but many of the proposals contained within it were at an early stage. The strategy would be delivered over a period of five years, particularly in relation to some of the major projects and leased premises. Further consultation would take place where appropriate through the planning process.

The recommendations within the Strategy were based on the needs of the service, including the appropriateness of current buildings and their strategic and operational value. Views were requested by 1st February, 2012 to allow time for the responses to be analysed before the Authority formally considered the strategy on 17th February, 2012. The intention of the review was to have an efficient police estate which operated at a reduced cost and met the needs of the communities of North Wales and modern policing. The aim was to try and safeguard as many police officer and staff roles within the organisation and maintain the front line policing service as much as possible.

At present North Wales Police has 49 police stations, nine of which are response hubs. The review had identified that some of these buildings are, to a greater or lesser degree, no longer operationally required, or under-utilised, costly and generally not fit for purpose. This meant that the service to the public could be delivered more economically and efficiently from elsewhere. The consequences of reducing the cost of the policing estate could mean that it potentially saved North Wales Police from losing a further 30 police officers. Where it was decided to relocate police stations to a more cost effective or appropriate accommodation, the existing police stations would remain operational until appropriate replacement accommodation was found and commissioned for a seamless transition.

The review recommended that new builds were required for two of the response hubs. The redevelopment of these sites had been part of previous estates strategies which recognised the need to significantly improve the facilities available for the police service to be delivered from. The two response hubs that would be redeveloped were at Llangefni and Wrexham. Plans for a new build in Llangefni were at an advanced stage with the site acquired and the design and planning process underway. There were four police stations in North Wales where the Review recommended that stations be closed and the properties sold. Two of these were at Gaerwen and Valley.

The recommendation to close the police stations in these locations did not mean that the service would diminish or that officer numbers in those areas would be reduced. The review identified some 16 buildings which would need to be reviewed in the near future, again following an assessment of their operational importance, fitness for purpose and overall cost. Two of these were the Holyhead and Benllech police stations.

In addition to this overview, North Wales Police had prepared summaries outlining the impact of the draft Strategy on each county and those stations within each county in North Wales. The findings of the review were highlighted within a table for each police station and the narrative provided a summary of the reasons for those conclusions, including the current use of the building and the available front counter services. It also outlined areas where they would welcome suggestions and feedback from the public.

Members were provided with the opportunity for a question and answer session following the presentation.

Councillor C.LI.Everett queried as to what happened to the fines handed out by the NWPA with regard to drink driving. Did those moneys go to a central pot or were they kept in-house? He could not understand why the NWPA were spending some £2.4m on a new build at Llangefni when money had been spent on upgrading the Holyhead Police Station? Holyhead was the largest town on the Island with an international port to Ireland. He mentioned that the report did not provide figures as to what savings would accrue from releasing staff?

Mr.Mike Parkin in response stated that as regards speeding fines, the NWPA received a percentage back but were obliged to re-invest that money on road safety prevention in its area. As regards the staffing issue, savings of some £7m had been achieved from the officer side and some £3m from the police staff side.

Mr.Stephen Roberts went on to mention that the NWPA were fortunate in that they had a reasonable capital pot for new build but that they were finding it difficult from a revenue perspective. A response hub had been established at Llangefni on 4th May 2011, however, the building was far from adequate for this purpose. The building was in the ownership of the County Council and had proved to be a very difficult building to adapt. Llangefni would therefore be better served by a new build on the Llangefni Industrial Estate.

As regards Holyhead, this had been marked as amber and much work had been undertaken on the building over the years. The NWPA would probably be looking to downsize that station because it was far too big for their requirements and they would be looking to invest in a new building once the present building came to the end of its life.

Councillor W.J.Chorlton considered that the Joint Communications Centre at St.Asaph had not been a success and in his opinion the NWPA and the NWFA were carrying the burden of the North Wales Ambulance Service. This was meant to be a tripartite agreement with the three organisations sharing the costs. If the Ambulance Service was not contributing, did it make sense to enter into further partnerships with them? He foresaw more travelling time being spent by officers accompanying prisoners to cells at Caernarfon and St.Asaph with a resultant decrease in the number of beat officers. He could not understand this strategy and questioned as to whether the NWPA would be able to carry out their duties to protect the general public at large?

Mr.Mike Parkin in response stated that discussions were on-going with the Ambulance Service as regards the future of the control room and the implications for the three services. As regards partnerships, he mentioned that there was a good working relationship with Flintshire and likewise in delivering a joint facility with the Fire Service at Nefyn.

Chief Executive Tal Michael stated that both he and the Chief Constable attended many partnership meetings across North Wales and also other police force meetings across the North West of England. With any partnership you required a solid business case and solid agreements in place. There were no plans for Holyhead at the moment but they were thinking about what Holyhead might look like from a public service perspective in 4-5 years time and whether joint working might be feasible.

Assistant Chief Constable Gareth Pritchard stated that custody cells were now dealing with people under the influence of alcohol, drugs, the mentally ill, those who wanted to self-harm and those who were violent. In North Wales they employed custody sergeants, a large number of civilian detention officers, fifteen fully qualified nurses and a doctor on-call to discharge their duty to look after people safely. They had looked in detail at their custody provision across the force and from a safety perspective it had been found necessary to close Mold with all prisoners being

transferred to Wrexham. Years ago they had custody facilities at Rhyl, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno. These were now all centralised at St.Asaph.

There were custody facilities at Holyhead, Caernarfon and Dolgellau and a huge amount of resources was required in order to staff those safely. Caernarfon had been extended recently and would be operational from March of this year with 16 cells and 2 holding rooms. At present Caernarfon, Holyhead and Dolgellau were not used to maximum capacity but to staff them safely took officers off the streets. He was personally uncomfortable with closing custody units because it meant travelling further distances sometimes with violent prisoners to Caernarfon or St.Asaph. Staffing 3 custody units across Gwynedd and Anglesey was not sustainable in the long term. He was however, conscious of developments at Wylfa B and upon the need to establish a camp for 5,000+ workers when building the site. Closing the Holyhead cells was not something he wanted to do but he had to balance the resources that were available.

Councillor J.V.Owen expressed concern regarding the problem of drugs and to the fact that the elderly were fearful of the consequences. He accepted the safety of prisoners but questioned the cost of two policemen escorting a prisoner from Holyhead or Llangefni to a custody cell at Caernarfon. That only meant less police on the street to protect the general public. All the Government was doing was creating problems for the future and taking respect away from the uniform. He also referred to the plethora of illegal parking on our streets because the Police did not have the time to address it.

Councillor G.O.Parry,MBE, stated that retaining Valley Police Station was important not only for the village but was strategically close to Holyhead and to the surrounding countryside around Valley where there was little police presence.

Mr.Stephen Roberts in reply stated that as far as Valley was concerned, the police station was not being used that often and was too large for their requirements but they were looking to retain a police surgery at Valley.

Assistant Chief Constable Gareth Pritchard stated that NWPA would welcome further discussion with the County Council as regards the policing of a Wylfa B workcamp, where that camp was to be positioned and what improvements were required to the local highway network.

The Chief Executive in reply stated that it was the Council's intention to undertake discussions and to work closely with interested parties once there was a clear understanding of the direction of the Wylfa B project. There was mention of some 7,000 workers being employed during the construction period and this would of course impact upon our communities. The development if approved would be one of the largest across the UK and on the same scale as the Olympic Games in London. The offer made by Assistant Chief Constable Gareth Pritchard to collaborate on this project was most welcome.

Assistant Chief Constable Gareth Pritchard mentioned that according to the proposed timetable, the Civil Nuclear Constabulary at Wylfa would be leaving the site upon de-commissioning and re-commencing their duties once Wylfa B became operational. The NWPA were concerned as to the void created from a policing perspective and how that would impact upon them.

Councillor A.Morris Jones confirmed that the nuclear constabulary would leave Wylfa when the last fusion material left the site. The Wylfa Liaison Committee, of which he was Chair, were also concerned as to the resources available to police the site. Would the NWPA have to police the site during this gap period? He would welcome a meeting between the Liaison Committee and the NWPA to discuss that matter. The NWPA should be praised for their collaboration with the Fire Authority and he mentioned that the Joint Control Centre at St.Asaph was a flagship not just in Wales but throughout the UK.

Councillor B.Durkin queried how much the NWPA expected to save from its Anglesey strategy? In his own Ward, Benllech Police Station was relatively dormant over the winter period, but during the summer months its population was doubled by tourism. However, he felt it imperative that the station be kept, if not in its present form then by means of an alternative arrangement with either the Fire Service or the Library building.

Mr.Mike Parkin in response stated that the savings would be in the region of £40-£50k each year, the equivalent of one police officer.

Councillor T.LI.Hughes queried as to why the NWPA had originally made the decision to locate to the Shire Hall at Llangefni when it was now found to be unsuitable for their purposes? He also questioned the reasoning behind transferring prisoners to cells at Caernarfon with resultant costs? There was no mention within the consultation document of custody cells at the new build at Llangefni and did that therefore mean continuing the arrangement of taking prisoners to Caernarfon or further afield? Likewise, there was no mention whether police officers at Holyhead Port were paid from NWPA funding or from other sources?

Councillor Raymond Jones stated that the problems at Holyhead were pubs, drugs and anti-social behavior. There was under-age drinking and music from pubs in residential areas until the early hours of the morning. The role of the police was to make areas safe for the general public and unfortunately in his opinion that was not happening in Holyhead.

Mr.Keith Jones, Acting Chief Inspector in response stated that the cells were open over the weekend at Holyhead. As far as the drug situation was concerned, search warrants had been executed at Holyhead over the last fortnight.

Councillor Eric Jones as local member for Gaerwen, expressed disappointment at the intention to close Gaerwen police station. He accepted that Llangefni was the proper location for a hub but reminded the meeting that closing Gaerwen police station could cause problems since both bridges to Anglesey were in close proximity.

Mr.Stephen Roberts in reply stated that Gaerwen Police Station was primarily used for training purposes with some local police being stationed there as well. The intention was to move those training facilities to the new building at Llangefni and thus reduce the necessity to retain Gaerwen. Like Valley, the intention would be to convene police surgeries at a different location in Gaerwen.

Councillor K.P.Hughes questioned whether it was feasible to share facilities with other organisations, share costs and maintain police presence?

Mr.Stephen Roberts in reply stated that NWPA were more than willing to discuss such possibilities when the options provided themselves, subject to the proviso that shared facilities be jointly funded.

Councillor Eric Roberts stated that he was happy to see the NWPA consulting with the Town and Community Councils and holding surgeries at various localities. Looking at the map of the Island, Benllech, Menai Bridge and Amlwch looked quite safe but he had concerns with the lower side of the Island if Valley was closed. That area could only then be serviced from Llangefni. Anglesey was very busy from a tourism aspect over the summer months. It was during this time that incidents occurred and he sought assurance that cover would be provided during that period to ensure the safety of the general public.

Councillor C.McGregor stated that cutbacks were difficult to achieve because people's expectations were increased and was based on how they remembered policing when they were younger. Unfortunately, policing had changed dramatically over the years. Where there was limited use of police stations, sharing facilities with other organisations was in his opinion the way forward.

Councillor W.T.Hughes queried the cost of taking offenders off the Island to custody in Caernarfon. He remained concerned as regards drinking and anti-social behavior. One person in his village had been arrested 29 times over the year. He questioned whether the punishment handed out by Courts was sufficient at the end of the day?

The Leader of the Council thanked the NWPAs representatives for their presentation and for their vision for the future policing of the Island. It was important to convene such meetings and work together in future towards a common aim.

Mr.Tal Michael, Chief Executive, thanked the Council for the opportunity afforded to them of explaining the Estates Strategy. It was important to continue working together on any future schemes of mutual interest.

Assistant Chief Constable Gareth Pritchard stated that following today's meeting, he would write to this Council as regards joint working in respect of the proposed developments at Wylfa.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their presentation and for their replies to the questions received and looked forward to the joint working that was proposed between this Authority and North Wales Police with regard to the proposed new build at Wylfa.

The meeting concluded at 3:40 pm

COUNCILLOR G.O.JONES
CHAIRMAN