

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Robert Llewelyn Jones (Chair)
Mr E G Davies (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Lewis Davies, R Dew, Jeffrey M.Evans, Jim Evans, Ann Griffith, John Griffith, D R Hughes, K P Hughes, T LI Hughes, Vaughan Hughes, W T Hughes, Victor Hughes, Llinos Medi Huws, A M Jones, Carwyn Jones, G O Jones, H E Jones, R.Meirion Jones, Raymond Jones, Alun W Mummery, R G Parry OBE, Dylan Rees, J A Roberts, Nicola Roberts, P S Rogers, Alwyn Rowlands, Dafydd Rhys Thomas and Ieuan Williams

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Lifelong Learning
Head of Function (Resources) and Section 151 Officer
Head of Function (Legal and Administration)
Corporate (ET)
Head of Service (Policy)
Head of Service (Highways and Waste Management)
Head of Service (Adult Services)
Head of Service (Children's Services)
Head of Service (Provider Unit)
Head of Service (Housing)
Head of Profession (Human Resources)
Committee Services Manager

ALSO PRESENT: Lesley Griffiths, AM (Minister for Local Government and Government Business), Commissioner Alex Aldridge OBE, Commissioner Byron Davies OBE, Commissioner Mick Giannasi, Gareth Jones (Commissioner), Mr Steve Pomeroy (Head of Local Government Improvement), Ms Lisa Hughes (Intervention Policy Manager), Ms Sioned Rees (Deputy Director - External Partnerships), Mr Gareth Chestney (Improvement Programmes Officer), Huw Lloyd Jones (Wales Audit Office), Andy Bruce (Wales Audit Office), Marc Roberts (CSSIW), Michael Wilson, Islwyn Jones, Dilys Shaw, Councillor Raymond Evans, Mr Richard Barker (Lay Member of the Audit Committee) and Mrs Sharon Warnes (Lay Member of the Audit Committee)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Richard Owain Jones

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None to declare.

2 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chair extended a warm welcome to the Minister for Local Government and Government Business and her staff to today's meeting. A welcome was also extended to the Commissioners, the members of the Standards Committee, the Lay members of the Audit Committee and the representatives of the Wales Audit Office and the CSSIW.

3 ADDRESS TO COUNCIL BY THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

The Minister for Local Government and Government Business addressed the Council on the future of the Council post May 2013. The following is the text of the Minister's address:-

"We are all well aware of the history of the problems which plagued this Council. Problems that were both serious and long-running. They related, in the main, to poor member behaviour and a lack of strategic direction. The situation within the Council was dire and could no longer be tolerated. It demanded vigorous and sustainable action to restore the Council's standing and its ability to meet the needs of the people of Anglesey.

In 2009, the Auditor General for Wales produced a highly critical inspection report which the Welsh Government could not and did not ignore. As a result, in 2009 a Ministerial Recovery Board was established to help the Council address its problems.

In early 2011, the Recovery Board concluded the Council was unlikely to achieve a sustainable recovery in the foreseeable future. This prompted a special re-inspection by the Auditor General. Again, his findings and recommendations were damning. The concerns and difficulties were played out over many months. My predecessor as Local Government Minister, Carl Sargeant, was left with no choice other than to appoint in March 2011, five Commissioners to run the Council on his behalf.

I know it was not an easy decision for him to make. It was totally unprecedented. No other Local Authority in the UK has ever had all of its powers withdrawn. However, it was the right choice given the seriousness of the Council's problems. Such drastic action was essential in order to protect the future of the Council and most importantly the citizens of Anglesey.

However, that brave decision proved to be a turning point. Since the appointment of the Commissioners, the Council has completely turned itself around and made remarkable progress. It is clear everyone involved in the recovery programme has benefitted greatly from the Commissioners' oversight and expertise.

In recognition of this, last October the number of Commissioners was reduced from five to three and also their presence in the Council. And most importantly day to day running was handed back to you, the Council.

Since then you have continued to do well. You have demonstrated you have matured as a Council taking considered and appropriate decisions and have the capacity to operate effectively without external control. For instance:

- (i) You appointed a new senior leadership team which is progressing well on your transformation programme;*
- (ii) You became the first Local Authority in North Wales, and only the second in Wales, to achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard;*
- (iii) In March, you approved your budget for 2013-14 in a mature and effective manner; and*
- (iv) You recently secured highly commended for the Management Consulting Association's Public Sector Change Management Project of the year.*

These are just some of your recent achievements, which are all the more significant for a Council that was so damaged only four short years ago.

As you know my decision about the future of the Council was deferred until after your election earlier this month.

I think everyone will agree the election went extremely well. Each seat was well-contested, with a 106 candidates standing in 30 seats. The 50.5% turnout was also significantly higher than any other election which took place in the UK on the same day.

I believe this level of turnout says something powerful about the strength of democracy on the Island. And how much its people care about who represents them. The people of Ynys Mon have spoken and have placed their trust and their hopes in you.

The election left no party or group with an overall majority. Who forms the administration is not a matter for me. What does matter to me is that the Council continues to perform well and build on the good work done in recent months under the stewardship and guidance of the Commissioners. Whoever forms the new administration this afternoon, I am confident a stable and effective administration will follow.

This afternoon you will vote for a new Leader and a fresh start. You have an opportunity to move forward and embark on a new chapter for the Council. A new beginning which allows you to leave your previous deep-seated problems truly in the past. You can move forward with confidence and a sense of achievement.

While ongoing support will be given as you move forward under your own direction, you have clearly demonstrated to me, my predecessor and the Commissioners, you are more than capable of delivering a sustainable recovery and continuing improvement. Taking all of this into account, I am now convinced you can manage your own affairs without external intervention. I am very pleased the Commissioners and the Auditor General for Wales share my view.

I am therefore delighted to announce my Ministerial intervention will formally end on Friday 31st May.

Congratulations to everyone who has been involved in the recovery process. It has been a huge achievement. It is a testament to all involved: Council Officers and Members, Commissioners and, of course, my colleague Carl Sargeant.

I am confident for you as a Council and about what the future holds. I am convinced you can become an exemplar within the Local Government family and others can learn from your successes.

However, you still face tough challenges as all Local Authorities do, particularly in this unprecedented financial climate. I urge you to liaise closely with the Welsh Local Government Association to establish the level of support you will require after today. I also encourage you to build on the effective relationship you have developed with the Wales Audit Office during the recovery process. My officials and I as Minister stand ready to help, advise and support you as you complete the good work you have begun.

I very much look forward to hearing about your developments over the coming months and wish you all good luck.”

Group Leaders together with Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Welsh Liberal Democrats) each thanked the Minister for bringing the intervention to an end and paid tribute to the

Commissioners for their much valued input. Tributes in this respect were also paid to the Regulators and to the Council staff.

The Chief Executive welcomed the Minister's announcement and stated that since democratic control was restored in October 2012, Anglesey had clearly demonstrated an appetite and commitment to change. He was confident that the Authority was now more than capable of managing its own affairs. Good progress was being made in delivering service improvements and the Authority had responded positively to the guidance provided by Commissioners and our regulators.

The Authority now had an ambitious transformation programme in place which would provide a catalyst for significant service improvements on behalf of the people of Anglesey.

He also took the opportunity of expressing his thanks to the Commissioners, Members, Regulators and staff of the Council.

On behalf of all those present, the Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the way he had led the Authority through this very difficult time. He presented the Commissioners with a memento of their stay on Anglesey and extended a warm welcome to them and to the Minister should they visit the Island at any time in the future.

The meeting concluded at 10.30 am

**COUNCILLOR R LL JONES
CHAIR**