

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the special meeting held on 7 June 2018

- PRESENT:** Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)
- Councillors Lewis Davies, R Dew, John Griffith, Glyn Haynes, K P Hughes, Vaughan Hughes, Llinos Medi Huws, A M Jones, Carwyn Jones, Eric Wyn Jones, G O Jones, R LI Jones, R.Meirion Jones, Alun W Mummery, Bryan Owen, R G Parry OBE FRAGS, Dafydd Roberts, Nicola Roberts, Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Ieuan Williams, Robin Williams.
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive,
Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer,
Head of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer,
Head of Democratic Services,
Committee Officer (MEH).
- ALSO PRESENT:** None
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Richard Owain Jones, T LI Hughes MBE, Shaun James Redmond, Alun Roberts, J A Roberts, Margaret Murley Roberts and P S Rogers.

Councillor G O Jones was elected Vice-Chair for this meeting due to an apology received by the Vice-Chair of the County Council.

Announcements received by the Chairperson of the County Council

The Chair extended his congratulations to Mr Gruffydd Wyn Roberts from Amlwch who reached the final of the Britain's Got Talent television competition held recently.

Condolences was extended to the family of Mr. Gareth Wyn Roberts who was tragically killed during an accident recently in Trearddur Bay. Mr. Roberts was a Support Worker at Canolfan Addysg y Bont, Llangefni and was a popular member of staff with the pupils and staff.

Condolences were extended to any Member of the Council or staff who had suffered bereavement.

Members and Officers stood in silent tribute as a mark of their respect and sympathy.

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2. GREEN PAPER CONSULTATION DOCUMENT - STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT: DELIVERING FOR PEOPLE

The report of the Chief Executive incorporating the Council's position on local government reorganisation and response to specific questions was presented to the Council for consideration.

The Chief Executive reported that the Green Paper sets out the Welsh Governments' intent for a 'Stronger, more empowered local government in Wales'. The Green Paper advocates reorganisation of local government which is different to the position in the 2017 White Paper which focused on greater collaboration between authorities. He noted that there are 3 options within the Green Paper as follows :-

Option 1 – voluntary merger between local authorities

Option 2 – phased approach

Option 3 – single comprehensive merger by 2022

He noted that the Group Leaders established a Local Government Reorganisation Panel to consider the Council's draft response which is enclosed as Appendix 2 to the report. The Chief Executive wished to thank the Members and the Head of Democratic Services for their work as regard to this matter.

He said that both the Panel and Group Leaders concluded that these proposals would not be supported and strongly opposes any future reorganisation of the authority based on the facts proposed. The Council's position is shaped on the principles set out in page 1 of the draft response namely :-

- 1) *The need to provide effective and efficient services for the residents of Anglesey. It is acknowledged that this could involve regional and sub-regional collaboration in order to ensure that the required specialism and resilience is in place and that an arrangement needs to be established to ensure direct local accountability for the quality of services. In this context, an understanding is required of the services which will be provided regionally, sub-regionally and locally, broadly aligned to the findings of the Williams Commission but also suggesting that local government needs to make decisions on collaboration structures.*
- 2) *Any collaboration arrangement should be based on the likely benefits to the residents of Anglesey or on the presumption that services of the same quality can be provided at a lower cost.*
- 3) *The Council is of the opinion that leadership based on local knowledge is more important than size. The Council is of the opinion that WG's expectations could be met through a combination of collaboration and local provision, i.e. a natural extension of the current position. In addition, it is acknowledged that detailed consideration needs to be given to any possibilities to provide services in a more cost-effective manner, e.g. reducing the costs of management or support services.*

These key matters should be central to any debate on reforming local government rather than lines on maps.

The Leader of the Council said that merging with a neighbouring authority would have a detrimental effect on the Island's residents in terms of service provision; local democracy and accountability as well as an impact on the local economy and Council Tax levels. She said that the Council Tax level for Band D properties in Gwynedd are £100 higher than that of Anglesey County Council which affords the same level of services. The Leader said that this Council already works in partnership with other authorities and gave an example of

collaborative working with Conwy County Borough Council in respect of the transformation of Library Services within this authority and to gauge the procedure undertaken by Conwy Council. The six North Wales local authorities are collaboratively working on the North Wales Growth Bid. She also referred to the collaborative working with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board as regard to Social Services.

The Leader also referred to the suggestion that local government reorganisation could cost more than £200m and noted that this money would be better spent on improving services for residents when local government budgets are under such severe pressure. She noted that merging Anglesey and Gwynedd would be huge geographically and that this could impact on local accountability and how services are delivered locally to the residents.

The Committee considered the report and made the following comment :-

- Merging of 22 local authorities into 10 does not equate to better services which has been seen in North Wales in terms of the health service;
- Local accountability and services to local residents is paramount;
- The possible negative impact on merging of local authorities on the hard work and vision of this Authority in building a close working relationship with developers of major infrastructure projects i.e. Wylfa Newydd, Bluestone, Morlais Marine Energy and Orthios;
- Welsh Government should concentrate on improving transport links between South and North Wales rather than spending unnecessarily on reorganisation of local government;
- A severe economic impact on the county's town of Llangefni where the main council offices are located would result if most of the staff were to be relocated;
- The 'grass roots' of local services will be lost to rural communities;
- Leadership based on local knowledge is more important than the size of the authority;
- The Welsh Government's expectations could be met through a combination of collaboration and local provision of services;
- The Green Paper is preoccupied with structures and lines on map;
- Welsh Government should concentrate on the uncertainties attached to Brexit and they should focus on maximising the benefit of Brexit to Wales;
- Public finances should be the priority of Welsh Government rather than reorganisation of local authorities. This Council has made significant efficiencies savings through transformation of services and should be left alone to carry out the best services affordable to local residents. An example was given as the success of the recycling on the Island with Anglesey being one of the best performing local authorities;
- The Green Paper does not mention the multi member model in Anglesey with 30 Elected Members and as to how this would equate to Gwynedd Council who has 75 Elected Members representing individual wards;
- Reference has been made within the Green Paper to Town and Community Councils being an integral part of local government. It was considered that whilst accepting that Town and Community Councils have a role within local communities it was stressed that democratic accountability from Welsh Government should be referred to local government in the first instance.

Following further deliberations **it was RESOLVED :-**

- **To confirm the Council's position on local government reorganisation as set out in Appendix 2 together with responses to specific questions.**
- **To authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to finalise the Council's response by the 12 June, 2018.**

Councillor Glyn Haynes abstained from voting.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**