

THE EXECUTIVE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 20 February, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Llinos Medi (Leader) (Chair)

Councillors Carwyn Jones, Gary Pritchard, Alun Roberts, Dafydd Roberts, Nicola Roberts, 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 Social Services
Director of Education, Skills, and Young People
Head of Adults' Services (for item 9)
Head of Housing Services
Head of Regulation and Economic Development (for item 14)
Head of Democracy
Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation
IT Team Manager (MH) (for item 11)
Service Strategy and Business Manager (NH) (for item 14)
Community Housing Service Manager (LIW) (for item 12)
Policy and Welsh Language Manager (FO) (for item 8)
Committee Officer (ATH)
Webcasting Officer (FT)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Neville Evans

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Glyn Haynes, Dyfed Wyn Jones (Vice-Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee) R. Llewelyn Jones, Dylan Rees (Chair of the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee), Scrutiny Manager (AGD), Solicitor (AO).

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Llinos Medi declared a personal interest only with regard to item 10 on the agenda as a representative of the Local Authority on the governing body of Ysgol Llanfechell.

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

None to report.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive held on 23 January 2024 were presented for confirmation.

It was resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive held on 23 January 2024 confirmed as correct.

4. THE EXECUTIVE'S FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Head of Democracy incorporating the Executive's Forward Work Programme for the period from March to October 2024 was presented for confirmation.

The Head of Democracy updated the Executive on the changes to the Forward Work Programme as reflected in the report presented and drew attention to an additional item for the Executive's 19 March 2024 meeting not included in the published Work Programme in relation to the governance of the Anglesey Freeport.

It was resolved to confirm the Executive's updated Forward Work Programme for the period March to October 2024 with the additional change outlined at the meeting.

5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW 2023/24

The report of the Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer incorporating a mid-year review of the treasury management position as at 30 September 2023 was presented for the Executive's consideration.

Councillor Robin Williams, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Finance presented the report and referred to the reporting requirements for treasury management under the Local Government Act 2003 and the CIPFA Prudential Code 2021 which include the production of a mid-year review of treasury management activities. He confirmed that the Governance and Audit Committee had scrutinised the report at its 8 February 2024 meeting and had forwarded it to the Executive without further comment.

The Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer advised that there had been no change in the Council's borrowing and investment approach in the reporting period. Cash balances have continued to be used to fund capital expenditure to avoid external borrowing with any surplus cash balances being deposited in secure UK banks and local authorities. The Council has benefitted from the interest rate increases during the period with better than forecast investment returns having been achieved. The Council's Treasury Management position has remained stable and all prudential indicators have remained within the boundaries and targets set in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2023/24.

It was resolved to note the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review report 2023/24 and to forward the same to the Full Council without additional comment.

6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2024/25

The report of the Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer incorporating the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2024/25 was presented for the Executive's consideration.

Councillor Robin Williams, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Finance presented the report as outlining the Council's strategy for managing borrowing and investment for the 2024/25 financial year supported by prudential and treasury indicators as set out in Appendix 11 to the report. The TMSS sets out the borrowing necessary to fund the capital programme as well as the criteria for investing the Council's cash and was scrutinised by the Governance and Audit Committee at its 8 February 2024 meeting where it was resolved to forward it to the Executive without further comment.

The Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer advised that a change in the approach to borrowing is envisaged over the course of the 2024/25 Treasury Management strategy. As the Council's cash reserves are utilised to contribute to balancing the budget and the HRA reserve is utilised to fund capital expenditure, the amount of cash balances will reduce significantly thereby reducing the sums available to invest as well as the level of

internal borrowing that can be supported. It is anticipated that additional external borrowing will therefore have to be undertaken to fund the Council's capital programme requirements. The Section 151 Officer further advised that any external borrowing will be scheduled so as to minimise the rates at which the Council borrows thereby reducing the cost to the revenue budget.

It was resolved to note the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25 and to forward the same to the Full Council without further comment.

7. FEES AND CHARGES 2024/25

The report of the Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer incorporating a schedule of proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 was presented for the Executive's consideration.

Councillor Robin Williams, Deputy Leader, and Portfolio Member for Finance presented the report saying that the Executive has set an objective that all non-statutory fees and charges are increased by an average of 5% across each individual service thereby allowing Service Heads to increase individual fees by more or less than 5% whilst overall the increase across the service equates to a 5% increase. All statutory fees have been increased by the sum set by the approving body where the increase has been published. Where the revised charge is not known the fee is shown as to be confirmed and will be updated once notification of the new fee has been received. Social Care fee increases are reported separately to the Executive.

It was resolved to approve the schedule of Fees and Charges for 2024/25 as outlined in the booklet attached to the report.

8. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-2028

The report of the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer incorporating the Draft Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-28 was presented for the Executive's consideration.

Councillor Llinos Medi, Leader, and Portfolio Member for Economic Development presented the Plan as setting out how the Council will fulfil the duty placed on public bodies in the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulation 2011 to give due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations between different groups in every aspect of its work. The Plan is ambitious and aims to ensure that equality is integrated into all aspects of the Council's business.

The Head of Democracy referred to the eight long-term equality objectives for strengthening and advancing equality on Anglesey and within the Council contained in the plan which are broadly based on the Equality and Human Rights Commission's areas of life for monitoring equality. The Plan also contains arrangements for monitoring the Council's progress towards achieving its equality objectives and additionally, it contributes to the wider vision of the Council Plan of creating a healthy and prosperous Anglesey where people can thrive.

The Policy and Welsh Language Manager confirmed that the Plan had been influenced by direct engagement with some protected groups including the Youth Forum, Mencap Môn and day care provision users. One of the main developments from implementing the Plan is the emphasis on how the Council as an employer uses its influence to promote equality throughout the organisation. The Council's internal structures will be reviewed to strengthen this capability and a new equality, diversity and inclusion group with cross service representation will be established.

Councillor Dylan Rees, Chair of the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee provided feedback from the Committee's 18 January 2024 meeting at which the Draft Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-28 had been scrutinised and he referred to the issues discussed at that meeting and confirmed that the Committee had recommended the Plan to the Executive whilst also asking that consideration be given to amending the title of Equality Objective 2 (Work) to offer clarity on the Council's role as an employer.

The Policy and Welsh Language Manager confirmed that the Equality Objective 2 had been reframed to specify the "Workplace".

The Executive's members welcomed the draft Strategic Plan as timely in a climate of social tensions and as integral to everything that the Council does including its services and employment practices. Acknowledging that being able to achieve the eight equality objectives in the current economic climate had been a concern of Scrutiny, the Executive noted that the Council's vision conveyed in the Council Plan is to create an Anglesey that is healthy and prosperous where people can thrive and it was emphasised that people and communities can only thrive by ensuring equality of opportunity for everyone and by having regard to the needs of all groups within society equally hence the importance of the Plan in providing a framework for that to happen. Several Executive Members referred to their engagement with Mencap Môn and to the value of listening to the views of individuals whose voices are not always heard. Reference was also made in the context of equality objective 5 relating to personal security to the well documented increase in hate crimes and it was asked in clarification of the Council's position by whom these crimes are dealt with.

The Policy and Welsh Language Manager confirmed that the Police are responsible for dealing with incidents of hate crime and she advised also that there is a local authority resource in the form of a Regional Community Cohesion Officer who is based within the Council who works across Anglesey, Conwy, and Gwynedd as well as liaising with the Police on matters of community cohesion and awareness.

It was resolved to recommend to Full Council that the draft Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-28 be approved and that Officers be authorised in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to complete and publish the Plan by 31 March 2024.

9. LOCAL AUTHORITY HOMES FOR OLDER PEOPLE – SETTING THE STANDARD CHARGE 2024/25

The report of the Head of Adults' Services which sought the Executive's approval to set the level of the standard charge for the Council's care homes was presented.

Councillor Alun Roberts, Portfolio Member for Adults' Services presented the report as an annual requirement under Section 22 of the National Assistance Act 1948.

The Head of Adults' Services referred to the considerations in calculating the standard charge for the Council's care homes as outlined in the report and advised that it is recommended that the full cost of the service is charged for 2024/25 which is £927.77 per week.

It was resolved that the standard charge be set at £927.77 per week which is the full cost of the service.

10. PROPOSAL TO TRANSFER PUPILS FROM YSGOL CARREGLEFN TO YSGOL LLANFEHELL AND CLOSE YSGOL CARREGLEFN

The report of the Director of Education, Skills, and Young People setting out a proposal to transfer pupils from Ysgol Carreglefn to Ysgol Llanfehell and close Ysgol Carreglefn was presented for the Executive's consideration.

Councillor Dafydd Roberts, Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language presented the report which sought the Executive's approval for the proposal to transfer pupils from Ysgol Carreglefn to Ysgol Llanfehell and close Ysgol Carreglefn, and to publish a statutory notice to that effect. The proposal paper has been written in accordance with the expectations of the revised School Organisation Code 2018.

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People outlined the reasons for the proposal to close Ysgol Carreglefn which included the cost per pupil which at £17,200 is the highest of all Wales's primary schools, the number of surplus places at 80% with attendance predicted to fall from 9 pupils currently to 5 pupils from September, 2024 onwards; current and future maintenance costs of £317,350 as well as the challenges of teaching a mixed age class with all pupils at the school being in a single class. He described the procedures followed in considering the future of Ysgol Carreglefn and in formulating the school closure proposal as a designated rural school and he referred to the reasonable alternative options considered and detailed at section 6 of the proposal paper. Should the proposal be approved Ysgol Carreglefn would close in August 2024 and pupils at the school would transfer to Ysgol Llanfehell in September 2024. As a school with fewer than 10 registered pupils at the 2024 January Census the School Organisation Code allows a streamlined procedure to be undertaken to bring about official closure. In the event of the school's closure, the Authority is committed to working with the community of Carreglefn with a view to providing an opportunity to secure the long-term viability of the present school building as a community resource and to providing free transport for eligible pupils from Carreglefn to Ysgol Llanfehell in accordance with the Council's transport policy for schools as the road between the two villages is deemed unsuitable for learners of that age to walk to and from school.

Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones, Vice-Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee reported from the Committee's 13 February 2024 meeting at which the proposal to transfer pupils from Ysgol Carreglefn to Ysgol Llanfehell and close Ysgol Carreglefn had been considered. The Committee had discussed a range of issues and had sought assurances with regard to the factors driving the proposal, the consideration given to the reasonable alternatives, the financial implications, provision of transport, the impact on pupils, staff and the community and the support available to them, as well as the future of the school building. In considering the latter the Committee had emphasised the importance of working with the community to find a way of retaining the school building for community use should the school close. Having considered all the information provided in the report and orally at the meeting the Committee had resolved to support and to recommend the proposal to transfer pupils from Ysgol Carreglefn to Ysgol Llanfehell and close Ysgol Carreglefn to the Executive.

The Executive's Members noted the factors driving the proposal to close Ysgol Carreglefn in relation to the cost of the education provision per pupil which would rise to £32k per pupil if as projected the roll call falls to 5 pupils in September 2024, the percentage of empty places at the school and the ongoing decline in pupil numbers as well as maintenance issues and teaching challenges. Members also referred to the challenges in a school with so few pupils of being able to provide pupils with the range of experiences and opportunities which pupils in more populated schools enjoy such as team, club, and group activities as well as greater social interaction with other pupils which is beneficial to their wellbeing and development. Transferring to Ysgol Llanfehell would also give pupils at Ysgol Carreglefn greater

opportunity to use their Welsh language skills by mixing with a larger number of pupils. Members considered the high cost of education provision at Ysgol Carreglefn unsustainable in the long-term as well as being unfair in terms of equality of provision across Anglesey's primary schools. The Executive's members agreed with Scrutiny's view regarding the importance of securing the school building for the community's use should the school close and were supportive of discussions taking place with the community to that end. They noted the variety of community activities hosted in the school building as reflected in the report.

Councillor Llinos Medi, who was also a Local Member, acknowledged that the closure proposal was a difficult proposition and she thanked everyone who had striven to keep Ysgol Carreglefn open during the past few years but accepted that declining pupil numbers and the teaching and financial challenges which that brings means that the proposal as presented is seen as the best solution to address the key drivers for the area. She referred to the closeness of the two communities and the many activities held by the community of Carreglefn which make retaining the school building for future community use all the more important. Should the proposal be accepted, the catchment area of Ysgol Llanfechell would be extended to include the existing catchment area of Ysgol Carreglefn.

It was resolved –

- **To approve the proposal “to transfer pupils from Ysgol Carreglefn to Ysgol Llanfechell and close Ysgol Carreglefn.”**
- **To authorise Officers to progress to the next stage noted in the School Organisation Code 2018 which is to publish a Statutory Notice for a period of 28 days (once a Statutory Notice is published, stakeholders will have 28 days to make a statutory objection to the proposal).**
- **To authorise Officers to respond to any statutory objections (should there be objections), in the form of an Objection Report for further consideration by the Executive.**
- **To authorise Officers to hold discussions with the community with a view to provide an opportunity to secure the long-term viability of the present school building as a community resource if required.**

11. ISLE OF ANGLESEY CC DIGITAL STRATEGIC PLAN

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Isle of Anglesey County Council Digital Strategic Plan for 2025-29 was presented for the Executive consideration and approval.

Councillor Carwyn Jones, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience presented the Strategy as providing clear direction and vision for corporate IT based upon the Council's general principles and priority areas for ICT service delivery. It supersedes the previous Digital Island Strategy which needed revision and updating as the Council Plan for 2023-28 has now been adopted. Service plans will sit under the Strategy where necessary and sub-strategies will be developed for significant work streams and programmes. It is intended that an annual operational plan will be created to ensure the implementation, monitoring and if required, review of the Strategic Plan itself. Councillor Carwyn Jones referred to the centrality of IT and digital provision to the Council's internal processes as well and as to its customer service experience which is why the Plan is a crucial part of the Council's journey towards meeting the expectations of its residents. Whilst the Plan sets out the Council's ambition to progress, improve, modernise, and simplify processes through technology it also recognises that not everyone has the same access to the digital world and it seeks to ensure that residents and visitors to Anglesey have access to high quality services through a variety of digital and traditional channels.

The Executive's Members acknowledged the increasing reliance on technology and the importance of digital participation in everyday life and were pleased to note that whilst the Digital Strategic Plan seeks to improve and develop the Council's existing digital offering it does not exclude residents who have no access to digital technology or lack confidence in using it from continuing to engage with the Council by traditional means which they saw as essential in ensuring that the Council remains inclusive and accessible to everyone. The Executive sought assurance also that the Strategic Plan is capable of being adapted to respond to developments in technology over the Plan period.

The IT Team Manager advised that the Plan's main focus on principles gives it the flexibility to respond to change and an updated version can be issued if necessary to reflect the emergence of any significant developments in the information technology field. However, the definition of technology and digital within the Strategy is broad enough to enable additional elements to be incorporated for example should the Council wish to extend the use of AI; such changes would be done in consultation with the same stakeholders who were involved in the Plan's development and would be subject to the same approval channels.

The Chief Executive advised that the Digital Strategic Plan has relevance for everyone involved with the Council both as employees and as residents who engage with the Council and that it is important to ensure an awareness and understanding of the Plan and what it means through all levels of the Council as well as providing the opportunities to develop and improve technology skills within every service.

It was resolved –

- **To approve the draft Digital Strategy and**
- **To support the principle of an annual operational plan**

12. TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-29

The report of the Head of Housing Services incorporating the Tenant Participation Strategic Plan for 2024-29 was presented for the Executive's consideration and approval.

Councillor Gary Pritchard, Portfolio Member for Children, Youth and Housing Services presented the report and Plan which has been developed to ensure that the Council's Housing Services work in partnership with tenants to develop and deliver first-rate housing services to the people of Anglesey. The development work was undertaken with both Housing staff and tenants through workshops and meetings with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Cymru. The Housing Wales Act (2014) requires all social landlords in Wales to have in place a tenant participation strategy with the long-term goal of achieving continuous improvement in landlords' performance in supporting and enabling tenants to participate. The Plan is a live document which will guide the Housing Service's interactions and engagement with its tenants with one of the main challenges being to increase the volume of tenant participation and ensure that the voices of as many tenants as possible are heard including those from groups who are under-represented in community involvement.

The Community Housing Service Manager provided an overview of the Strategic Plan including the four key priority areas identified which she elaborated upon adding that tenant engagement will also play a significant part in working towards achieving the Wales Quality Housing Standard 2023 and the decisions involved in that process. A twelve-month Action Plan will be co-developed and monitored quarterly by the Tenant Participation monitoring group and an annual progress report will be prepared for the Housing Senior Management Team.

Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones, Vice-Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee provided a summary of the matters discussed by the Committee in scrutinising the Strategic Plan at its 16 January 2024 meeting and he confirmed that having considered the documentation presented and having heard the assurances provided by the Officers and the Portfolio Member with regard to the points raised, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee had resolved to recommend the Plan for the Executive's approval.

It was resolved to approve the Tenant Participation Strategic Plan 2024-29.

13. HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-29

The report of the Head of Housing Services incorporating the Housing Asset Management Strategic Plan 2024-29 was presented for the Executive's consideration and approval.

Councillor Gary Pritchard, Portfolio Member for Children, Youth and Housing Services presented the report and Plan as enabling the Council to understand its housing stock and the standard of its properties in the context of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 thereby ensuring that the Council makes informed decisions about investing in improving its properties for the benefit of its tenants.

The Head of Housing Services advised that the Plan has been developed to reflect key changes in national policies along with the key challenges of meeting WHQS 2023 and decarbonisation. A stock condition survey was completed in 2022/23 and based on this information investment in key components as well as energy efficiency improvements will be made. The costs of achieving WHQS 2023 which comprises eight elements will be factored into the HRA Business Plan as they are established. Additionally the Housing Service is also committed to improving the responsive repairs service for the Council's tenants over the life of the plan.

Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones, Vice-Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee outlined the issues raised when the Committee was presented with the Housing Asset Management Strategic Plan at its meeting on 16 January 2024. Having considered the Plan and the Officers' and Portfolio Member's responses to the points raised at the meeting, the Committee had resolved to recommend the Plan for the Executive's approval and in noting the availability of contractors as a challenge to the delivery of the Plan, the Committee had asked the Housing Service to examine the feasibility of establishing an in-house team or teams to deliver planned work programmes over the course of the next five years.

The Chief Executive highlighted the availability of capital funding as another key consideration especially as the level of capital funding for local government in Wales has not increased significantly over a number of years meaning that fulfilling the objectives of the Housing Asset Management Strategic Plan is likely to be a challenge based on the current capital funding position. Notwithstanding the Housing Revenue Account is a separate account whose funds are ring-fenced for housing activities, environmental and net zero obligations will entail significant investment. That programme will have to be scrutinised via the Council's governance and democratic channels to ensure value for money and to achieve the best outcomes across the estate in its totality.

The Executive acknowledged affordability as an important factor in being able to make the necessary investment to meet the challenging and far reaching targets set by Welsh Government in the WHQS 2023 and otherwise with regard to reaching net zero and highlighted the need for improved capital funding support for councils in Wales.

It was resolved to approve the Housing Asset Management Strategic Plan 2024-29.

14. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE BIODIVERSITY PLAN

The report of the Head of Regulation and Economic Development incorporating the Annual Report on the Biodiversity Plan was presented for the Executive's consideration. The report set out the progress made by the Council in meeting the objectives and/or actions in the Biodiversity Plan during the last 12 months in accordance with the reporting arrangements agreed by the Executive in adopting the Plan.

Councillor Nicola Roberts, Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change presented the report and highlighted that every service within the Council has a role in contributing towards the duties specified with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The Annual Report shows how the Council is discharging its responsibilities to maintain and enhance biodiversity and is illustrated by examples of local projects and case studies related to biodiversity and habitat enhancement some of which have been Council-only schemes whilst others have involved collaboration with other agencies and partners. The report proposes recommendations for future actions in relation to strengthening capacity and understanding of biodiversity issues, establishing a formal reporting structure within each service, establishing a cross service group to lead on biodiversity matters, training, audit and review of policy documentation and collaboration.

The Executive's Members acknowledged the work achieved over the course of the past twelve months despite some challenges in terms of staff resources and they also recognised the valuable contribution made by volunteers and partner organisations in helping deliver biodiversity benefits.

It was resolved to accept the report and to endorse the recommendations therein.

**Councillor Llinos Medi
Chair**