

THE EXECUTIVE

Minutes of the meeting held in the Committee Room and on Zoom on 21 January, 2025

- PRESENT:** Councillor Gary Pritchard (Leader) (Chair)
- Councillors Neville Evans, Dyfed Wyn Jones, Carwyn Jones, Alun Roberts, Dafydd Roberts, Nicola Roberts, Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Robin Williams.
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive (for items 1 to 7)
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
Head of Democracy
Committee Officer (ATH)
Webcasting Officer (FT)
- APOLOGIES:** None received
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Douglas Fowlie (Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee) Glyn Haynes, Kenneth Hughes, Derek Owen Scrutiny Manager (AGD).
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1. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Dafydd Roberts declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of item 7 on the agenda and withdrew from the meeting when the matter was discussed.

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

None to report.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meetings of the Executive held on the following dates were presented for confirmation –

- 26 November 2024
- 10 December 2024

It was resolved that the minutes of the previous meetings of the Executive held on the following dates be confirmed as correct –

- **26 November 2024**
- **10 December 2024**

5. THE EXECUTIVE'S FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Head of Democracy incorporating the Executive's Forward Work Programme for the period from February to September 2025 was presented for confirmation.

The Head of Democracy updated the Executive on changes to the Forward Work Programme specifically the addition of the quarterly performance and financial monitoring reports to the Executive's September 2025 meeting and a report on the termination of the GwE regional partnership as a new item for the Executive's next scheduled meeting on 18 February 2025.

It was resolved to confirm the Executive's updated Forward Work Programme for the period February to September 2025 with the changes outlined at the meeting

6. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26

The report of the Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer incorporating the initial draft Revenue Budget proposals for 2025/26 was presented for the Executive's consideration and approval for the purpose of public consultation.

Councillor Robin Williams, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Finance and Housing in presenting the report said that the initial draft budget proposals were set out fully to the meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2025 where they were examined and challenged in detail by both the committee and members of the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee invited to attend in a comprehensive discussion. He summarised the position by saying that the draft local government settlement announced by Welsh Government on 10 December 2024 provided an increase of 3.6% for Anglesey (0.7% below the Welsh average and the 16th highest increase from the 22 authorities in Wales). Although the settlement was better than had been expected it falls far short of what is needed to keep pace with the cost pressures facing the Council and after the main budget changes have been accounted for as explained in section 4 of the Section 151 Officer's report, the Council is left with a funding gap of £10.791m before any change in Council Tax. If the Council was to seek to make up the budget shortfall through Council Tax alone it would mean raising Council Tax by 20.6% which the Executive accepts is unrealistic and not a step it would wish to take. The Executive is therefore proposing an approach based on a combination of budget savings, use of reserves and Council Tax increase to produce a balanced budget which by law the Council is required to do. An initial draft revenue budget of £195.234m is proposed made up of budget savings of £699k, utilisation of £2m of reserves and a Council Tax increase of 9.5% (to include 0.65% Fire Service Levy) which would increase the Council Tax on a Band D property by £2.87 per week. The Executive is asked to approve the initial draft budget proposals for public consultation which is planned to run from 22 January to 7 February. Councillor Robin Williams urged Anglesey residents to take part in the consultation and to make known their views which will inform the final budget proposal ahead of its submission to the Full Council on 6 March. He added that confirmation of the final settlement would not be received until February and any consequent changes and impact on the proposed budget would be considered at that time.

The Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer confirmed that the outcome of the public consultation process will be reported to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee which will examine the final budget proposal in light of the public feedback at its meeting on 19

February 2025 with the Executive then meeting on 27 February to recommend a final budget for 2025/26 for Full Council's approval. He also encouraged Anglesey residents to read the budget report and to view the webcast of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting last week to better understand the reasons for the proposed Council Tax increase and the challenges faced by the Council in putting together a balanced budget for 2025/26.

Councillor Douglas Fowlie, Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee spoke to confirm that the committee at its meeting on 15 January 2025 having considered all the budget documentation presented and the responses of the relevant Portfolio Members and officers to matters raised in relation to the details and impact of individual proposals, had resolved to support the initial draft budget proposals for 2025/26 as presented in order to set a balanced budget, and to recommend them to the Executive for public consultation.

The Chair thanked Councillor Douglas Fowlie and Scrutiny members for a full and instructive discussion at the 15 January meeting. In referring to one of the fundamental issues raised at the meeting as having been the justification for increasing Council Tax by 9.5% when the Council has received more funding, he explained that although the Council has received a better than planned for settlement, in order to be able to continue to deliver its core services at the current level without implementing any savings and keeping Council Tax increase to a minimum, the Council would have had to receive a settlement of 9% from Welsh Government as opposed to the 3.6% which it actually received. Given the budget gap – the difference between the funding the Council has received and what it needs to spend to provide services in 2025/26, producing a balanced budget for 2025/26 has been challenging. The Chair emphasised that while no member wants to increase Council Tax or cut services there are few options available to balance the budget and that there needs therefore to be proper financial recognition by the Westminster and Welsh Governments of the services which local government provides if those services are to remain sustainable in the future.

At the request of the Executive which was keen that there should be public understanding of the kind of challenges the Council has had to address in balancing the budget for 2025/26, the Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer referred to the pressures which the Council is facing due to rising costs for goods and services, pay increases including the increase to the National Living Wage and changes to NI employer contributions as well as growing demand for Council services especially in children and adults' social care and in homelessness. The Section 151 Officer explained the impact of all these factors on how the budget is set in practice many of which are beyond the Council's control and which it can only seek to manage as best as possible.

The Director of Social Services clarified how the demand for children's social care can add significantly to the Council's costs especially in complex cases where children's needs are such that they require specialist care in high cost placements outside Anglesey. These are demands which the Council has to respond to and make provision for. He explained how the Council is seeking to limit the impact of these pressures by strengthening its own provision chiefly through the development of small care homes (Cartrefi Clyd) on the island and by providing early intervention and support for children and their families to prevent problems from escalating into serious issues. The Executive further noted that similar pressures are being felt in adult social care where an ageing population with increasingly complicated needs means there is more demand for the Council's services.

The Section 151 Officer advised that the challenges which the Council is having to manage are not unique to Anglesey and that councils across Wales are experiencing the same budget pressures. The indications are that most councils are considering above inflation increases in Council Tax for 2025/26 with a number of proposed increases in the region of 8% to 9.5% or above. Anglesey's Council Tax was the lowest in North Wales in 2024/25 and was £80 below the Welsh average. He further advised that the final Council Tax bill will also include the 2025/26 police and town/community council precepts which cover the cost

of policing in North Wales and the budget requirements of town and community councils to provide the services they are responsible for. He also explained how factors in the wider UK economy as well as global issues could influence the funding outlook for local government in 2026/27 and beyond. The Government's planned spending review in Spring 2025 is expected to provide clarity on the matter and it is hoped that it will also provide an indication of future years' funding including for Welsh Government so that councils in Wales can better plan for the medium term beyond the current one year cycle which is what councils have been lobbying for through the WLGA.

In closing comments, Executive members highlighted that developing the budget for 2025/26 had been a long and challenging process over many months. They also highlighted that the formula by which funding is allocated to councils in Wales is disadvantageous to more rural councils with an elderly population such as Anglesey which has received a below average settlement compared to that allocated to urban councils mostly in the South.

It was resolved to approve the following –

- **The initial proposed budget for 2025/26 of £195.234m.**
- **A proposed increase in Council Tax of 8.85%, plus 0.65% to cover the Fire Levy making a total of 9.50% which takes the Band D charge to £1,721.70.**
- **To formally propose to maintain the premium on empty and second homes at 100%.**
- **That £2.000m is released from the Council's general balances and earmarked reserves in order to balance the 2025/26 revenue budget.**

7. LOCAL AUTHORITY HOMES FOR OLDER PEOPLE -SETTING THE STANDARD CHARGE FOR 2025/26

The report of the Head of Adult Services which sought the Executive's approval to set the level of the standard charge for the Council's care homes for 2025/26 was presented.

Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, Councillor Dafydd Roberts left the meeting when it was discussed and voted upon.

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

The Head of Adult Services referred to the considerations in calculating the standard charge for the Council's care homes as outlined in the report and advised that for 2025/26 it is recommended that a separate charge is introduced for EMI residential care.

It was resolved –

- **That the standard charge for residential homes be set at £983.86 per week which is the full cost of the service.**
- **That for EMI residential homes the full cost of service is implemented over a 3 year period meaning that the full cost of service is discounted to £1,046.41 per week in 2025/26.**

8. COMMUNITY BASED NON-RESIDENTIAL SOCIAL CARE SERVICES – FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26

The report of the Head of Adult Services seeking the Executive's approval to set the rate of community based non-residential social care services fees and charges for 2025/26 was presented for consideration.

Councillor Alun Roberts, Portfolio Member for Adult Services and Community Safety presented the report which set out the proposed fees and charges for community based non-residential social care services for the 2025/26 financial year in accordance with the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. It is usual practice to review the charges in respect of domiciliary services annually to coincide with Central Government's revision of pension and benefit levels.

The Head of Adult Services provided the context for each category of fees and charges and explained the rationale for the fee level proposed in each case. In response to a question by the Executive regarding recruitment challenges within domiciliary services to which the report makes a reference, the Head of Adult Services confirmed that those challenges remain and cited the nature of the work, unsociable hours and uncompetitive rates of pay as key factors. In response to a further question about the effect on the service of Welsh Government's £100 cap on the amount councils can charge for care and support at home, the Head of Adult Services advised that the cap has now been in place for nine years and if inflation had been applied over that period the charge would be over £150 by today. The cap also means that there is a disparity between residential and community care costs with clients who receive care and support in the community paying less for the provision than they would in a residential care setting which may influence the choices people make about their care and may result in their remaining within the community for longer than they should. The cost differential can in some cases be significant and could be viewed as unfair especially where an individual has the means to pay.

Councillor Alun Roberts confirmed that the issue had been raised with Welsh Government's previous Health Minister with a promise being made to review the issue which has not happened. A recent discussion between Portfolio Members and the new Health Minister at the end of last year was more positive and it is hoped that there will be some movement on this matter in due course.

It was resolved to approve the following –

- **To apply the maximum threshold for home care services endorsed by Welsh Government.**
- **Charges for Telecare services as outlined in Table A of the report:**
 - **Tier 1 – everyone will pay £78.00 per quarter**
 - **Tier 2 – everyone will pay £153.40 per quarter**
- **Annual Telecare charges as outlined in Table B of the report:**
 - **Services and Maintenance £142.50**
 - **Services only £91.50**
 - **One off installation £57.00**
- **Rate for Direct Payments at £16.80 per hour**
- **To implement a charge of £19.00 per hour for Micro Carers**
- **To maintain a charge of £10.00 for the administration of Blue Badge requests and replacement as outlined in the report.**

- **To increase the fee for purchasing day care services in independent residential homes by 1.7% to £45.10 per day (rounded up to the nearest £0.05)**
- **To increase Domiciliary Care fees by £1.73 per hour to comply with new legislation.**
- **Charges for Meals in Day Services as outlined in Table C of the report:**
 - **Meals in Day Services for adults (excluding people with learning disabilities) - £7.80**
 - **Mid-day snack in Day Services for people with learning disabilities - £3.30**
 - **Other refreshments (tea/coffee/cake) in Day Services - £1.85**

**Councillor Gary Pritchard
Chair**

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