

Minutes



Council

Date: 4 April 2017

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors D Fouweather (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, J Cleverly, P Cockeram, M Cornelious, K Critchley, D Davies, V Delahaye, C Evans, M Evans, C Ferris, G Giles, J Guy, D Harvey, P Huntley, R Jeavons, C Jenkins, M Kellaway, M Linton, D Mayer, R Mogford, A Morris, R Poole, J Mudd, J Richards, M Spencer, C Suller, T Suller, H Thomas, K Thomas, R Truman, T Watkins, Townsend, R White, D Wilcox and D Williams

Apologies: The Mayor (Cllr Atwell) Councillors D Atwell, O Ali, T Bond, R Bright, E Corten, E Garland, P Hannon, I Hayat, R Hutchings, C Maxfield, S Mlewa, M Rahman, M Whitcutt and K Whitehead

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

2. **Preliminaries**

Richard Jefferies, Chief Democratic Services Officer

The Leader of the Council and Leader of the Opposition informed Council this would be the last meeting attended by Richard Jefferies before his retirement. Both members thanked him for his service and passed on wishes for a long and healthy retirement

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2017 were confirmed as a true record by the council and signed by the Deputy Mayor

4. **Appointments**

The appointment of Robert King, Head teacher of Llanwern High School to Milton Junior Governing Body was agreed

5. **Police Issues**

The Deputy Mayor welcomed Superintendent Matthew Williams to the meeting. Superintendent Williams updated members on recent activities in an effort to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in the city. He mentioned some specific actions in relation to grass fires and referred to arrangements being put into place for upcoming events such as the Champions' League Final; Velothon and Queen's Baton Relay.

Councillors Truman; Morris; M. Evans; Davies; Al Nuaimi; Jeavons and Harvey all referred to concerns about the impact of significant illegal parking in all parts of the city. Specific

references were made to problems in the city centre; outside schools; in hatched areas and generally throughout the city. One suggestion made to help alleviate problems at schools was to encourage schools to adopt a green cone system.

Superintendent Williams stated that some 700 parking tickets had been issued in the city centre, although he recognised this was an on-going issues and was aware of the strength of feeling by elected members. He said that he would discuss the issues raised with the local inspectors, in particular as to what can be done to alleviate problems outside of schools. He reassured members that parking issues, especially in the city centre, were in the minds of officers until a long term solution was available.

Superintendent Williams informed Councillor Harvey of recent local arrests in relation to vandalism in the ward. He stated that local teams were working to address issues of antisocial behaviour

Superintendent Williams informed Councillor Kellaway that he would discuss with local officers issued raised about rubble being dumped in the road

Councillor Mudd provide positive feedback on police and partner activities in the Malpas ward, in particular in relation to recent initiatives on speed calming

6. **Welsh Language Strategy**

The Leader of the Council informed Members that the Council is required to publish a 5 Year Welsh Language Strategy. The aim of the strategy is to 'promote the Welsh language and facilitate the use of the Welsh language.'

The Leader stated that the target is to increase the number of Newport pupils in Welsh medium education from 892 in 2016/17, to 1,250 or more in 2022/23. The aim was to achieve this by filling the reception classes of Newport's three Welsh medium Primary schools for the next 5 years.

From consultation the Council had learnt that people have very different experiences of the Welsh language. In order to give people the opportunity to learn and speak Welsh, there was a need to engage all the people of Newport. There was also a need also to engage all partner organisations to support us in this work

The Leader stated that the consultation responses informed the Council of the need to do more to support children and young people in both Welsh and English medium schools to practice the language.

It was explained that the Council would to work in partnership with local organisations, to provide more opportunities to use the language, in education and through play and social activities.

The Leader of the Opposition supported the proposals but remained concerned about the financial implications of adopting the scheme and expressed hope that the Welsh Government would recognise this.

Councillor Morris related his experience of being criticised for not providing a bilingual election leaflet and Councillor Jenkins expressed the view that the strategy reflected our commitment to our heritage

Resolved

To adopt the Strategy as presented

7. **Pay and Reward Policy**

The Leader of the Council introduced a report informing Council that it was a statutory requirement to publish a Pay and Reward Statement on an annual basis. In December 2016 the Public Services Staff Commission published guidance to local authorities on their Pay and Reward Statements to complement the 2015 Welsh Government guidance.

The Leader stated that some minor changes had to be made in order to bring the document up to date. The report presented to Council set out in detail the changes that had been made

Resolved

To adopt the updated Pay and Reward Policy to the Council for adoption

8. **National Non-Domestic Rates: High Street Relief Scheme 2017-18**

The Leader of the Council informed members that the Welsh Government had made grant funding available for billing authorities to deliver the High Street Rate Relief Scheme

The aim of the scheme is to reduce the rate burden on qualifying high street retail properties.

The maximum funding from the scheme for 2017-18 is £573,500

The Leader informed members that the qualifying ratepayers will fall into two categories, those in tier 1 who will receive up to £500, and those in tier 2 where up to £1500 will be awarded for each qualifying property. Full details were set out in the report.

More details are set out in the appendix to the report set out on page 81 of the agenda

The Leader stated it was estimated that over 750 ratepayers across the city could potentially benefit from reduced rate bills under this scheme.

Councillor Kellaway welcomed the scheme but considered it needed to go hand in hand with good city centre management. Councillor Mogford was concerned about the impact of rising rates on local rural businesses

Councillor K Thomas and Councillor Al Nuaimi welcomed the initiative and the positive impact on small and medium businesses

Councillor M Evans welcomed the initiative but felt that it in no way matched what was available in England.

Councillor Richards considered the investment of £560,000 to be very significant and would be very helpful locally. He was of the view that that officers should explain the process to the local business by way of the Business Improvement district.

Resolved

To adopt the Welsh Government's Wales Retail Relief Scheme for 2017-18

9. **Independent Remuneration Panel - Annual Report 2017**

The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee introduced a report which informed members that the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) is the body tasked with setting the remuneration levels for Councils in Wales.

The Independent Remuneration Panel makes determinations in relation to Basic and Senior Salaries and also the rates and conditions for expenses paid by public authorities.

Until last year, the Council had no discretion to amend any of these values, with the exception of the payment bandings used to pay the mayor and deputy mayor.

In summary the Remuneration Panel's report includes the following changes:

- **Basic Salaries** – a 'very modest increase of 0.75% to the basic salary' for councillors. This is the first increase for 3 years and 'follows the slight easing of restraint in the pay of public sector employees'. It represents a £100 increase in the Basic salary for councillors (to £13,400)
- **Senior Salaries** – No increase is determined for senior salaries. The Panel has continued to determine a two – tier system of payments. The Democratic Services Committee remains concerned at the two levels of payments for Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs created in February 2016 as expressed in response to the consultation on the IRP report last year. The Democratic Services Committee recommended no change in the position in Newport.
- **Sickness Absence for Senior Salary Holders** – this is proposed in response to feedback from members and authorities. The approach will operate in a similar way to the current 'family absence' provisions. This proposal was broadly welcomed by WLGA members
- **Care Allowances** – The IRP has been concerned for a number of years about the low take up of this allowance.

The IRP has renamed 'Care Allowances' as 'Reimbursement of costs of care' to try to separate it from being perceived as part of an individual councillors' salary or allowances.

Resolved

- I. To adopt the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel
- II. To determine that all Senior Salary holders (Cabinet Members and Chairs of Committees) will continue to be paid at the higher level as described in the determinations
- III. To determine that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor shall be reimbursed at level 2 and as set out in the determinations
- IV. To note the IRP has determined that Care allowances shall be renamed 'Reimbursement of Costs of care'

10. **Scheme of Delegation for Chief Officers**

The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee stated that the Scheme of Delegation had been included in the Committee's review of the Constitution

He stated that the Scheme of Delegation aims at making it clear where the distinction lies between the decision making responsibilities of elected members and Chief Officers within the Council

The Scheme that relates to officers had been amended and updated and presented to the Committee.

The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee informed members there were few 'new' delegations other than those arising from new legislation or Central Government requirements. There have been a number of changes in the Chief Officer Structure since the original scheme was drafted.

The Scheme of Delegation to officers had been amended incrementally in the past to take account of changes to the officer team and to any new responsibilities that have fallen to the Council owing to changes in legislation, policies or other factors

The aim was to provide the Council with a scheme that reflects the existing structure. Inevitably incremental changes will need to be made over time as the Council has to react to new legislation, policies. The proposed scheme was recommended to Council by the Committee

Resolved

To adopt the amended scheme of delegation and that it is included in the Constitution

11. Mayoralty

The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee described Newport City Council's method of selecting the Mayor as fair and balanced and determined exclusively on seniority. What this means is that the longest serving member on the Council who has not served as the Mayor will be nominated to serve as Mayor, irrespective of which political party he or she represents.

The Committee had recognised however, that from time to time the prospective incoming Mayor may need to defer his or her election as Mayor for personal reasons.

There had been no written protocol to take account of this situation but in the past there has been an informal agreement between the parties that an individual can defer for twelve months

The Democratic Services Committee considered this appears to be reasonable position as it will allow the individual time to resolve any specific issues but it also take away the opportunity for individuals to 'pick and choose' when they serve as Mayor.

The Democratic Services Committee suggested that a form of words is written into the constitution that allows an individual to defer for one year from his or her original nomination date and that any longer deferral be a matter for decision by the Council

The Committee had also considered possible issues in an election year. In January of each year an individual is nominated to serve as Mayor. Obviously in an election year, if the individual who is nominated fails to retain his or her seat then the Mayoralty will fall to the next in line, according to seniority. However the Committee recognised that an individual could be re-elected to the Council following an absence and, on strict seniority rules would qualify as Mayor in the year of his or her election. However by that time the Council will have already made a nomination for the coming year.

It was suggested by the Committee that in such circumstances the person already nominated by the Council will become Mayor in the election year and the re-elected member will take his or her place according to seniority in the following year. Any agreed deferrals will then be extended for a further period of time.

Finally the Committee had considered an issue about the format of the AGM. In previous years, for practical reasons, the outgoing Mayor has chaired the Council AGM and this had been followed by the ceremonial Mayor-making part.

However, where the out-going Mayor is not re-standing in the elections or is not re-elected, then his/her term of office as a Councillor will have ceased before the AGM. The Committee considered that in these circumstances he/she should not Chair the official Council AGM in May.

The Committee suggested that the ceremonial Mayor-making process should now be conducted first to enable the new Mayor to be appointed and to chair the official Council business at the AGM.

Resolved

To adopt the proposed protocol set out in the report

12. Framework Member Role Descriptions and Person Specifications

The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee introduces a report which informed the Council that as part of the Committee's commitment to review the constitution, it had recommended that the WLGA's Framework Member Role Descriptions and Person Specifications are adopted by Council for inclusion in the Constitution

The Chair pointed out that the role descriptions are good practice and are included as part of the new model constitution which we need to use as a guide to our own constitution.

The Democratic Services Committee wished to make it clear to the Council and all members that these documents are not for use as job descriptions and/or being used as requirements for political appointment to specific roles in the Council. Their main use will be as a guide about what each role involves. The person specifications will help in identifying what should be included in the Member development programme.

The role descriptions will also provide advice to the public about the various types of tasks undertaken by members in their varying roles

It was suggested that the Framework Member Role Descriptions and Person Specifications are adopted in readiness for the May elections as they help provide a clear guide for any new Councillors as to the various roles within the Council

The Monitoring officer answered Councillor Morris's query about the reference to being an advocate for the Council and Councillor Al Nuaimi's questions about the relationship between the documents and members who served as company directors on Newport Transport Board.

Resolved

To recommend to adopt the Framework Member Role Descriptions and Person Specifications are and to include them in the Council's Constitution, recognising that these

documents are not for use as job descriptions and/or being used as requirements for political appointment to specific roles in the Council.

13. Retiring Members of the Council

The Deputy Mayor stated that as this was the final Council meeting prior to the election, he wished to thank those elected members who were retiring from the Council for their service to the people of Newport over the years.

He mentioned the retirement of some of the more senior members including the Mayor, Cllr David Atwell; a long – serving Cabinet Member, Bob Poole; the Chairs of Planning and Licensing Committees , Cllrs Cliff Suller and Paul Huntley; Vice Chair Cllr Val Delahaye and a former Leader of the Council, Bob Bright

The Deputy Mayor also passed on best wishes to those members standing in the election.

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to the significant contribution to the Council by the former Leader, Councillor Bob Bright.

The Leader of the Opposition also passed on best wishes to retiring members

Retiring members, Bob Poole; Val Delahaye; Cliff Suller and Paul Huntley responded by thanking members for the support and friendship over the years.

14. Questions to the Chair of the Cabinet

There were no questions to the Chair of the Cabinet on this occasion

15. Questions to Cabinet Members

There were no questions to the Cabinet Members on this occasion

16. Questions to Chairs of Committees

There were no questions to the Chairs on this occasion

The meeting terminated at 6.35 pm