

Minutes



Council

Date: 27 November 2018

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors M Al-Nuaimi, J Cleverly, P Cockeram, M Cornelious, D Davies, C Evans, M Evans, C Ferris, D Fouweather, G Giles, J Guy, D Harvey, R Jeavons, M Kellaway, M Linton, R Mogford, J Mudd, M Rahman, J Richards, M Spencer, T Suller, H Thomas, K Thomas, C Townsend, R Truman, T Watkins, M Whitcutt, R White, D Wilcox, G Berry, J Clarke, V Dudley, Y Forsey, R Hayat, T Holyoake, P Hourahine, J Hughes, J Jordan, L Lacey, S Marshall, W Routley and J Watkins

Apologies: Councillors K Critchley, I Hayat, C Jenkins, D Mayer, A Morris, K Whitehead, D Williams and H Townsend

1. Preliminaries

i) To receive any apologies for absence

The Monitoring Officer reported apologies for absence.

ii) To receive any declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

iii) To receive any announcements by the Mayor

Mike Nicholson

The Mayor paid tribute to former Director of Social Services, Mr Mike Nicholson, who had sadly passed away this month.

Gerald Davies

The Mayor also reported the sad news of the death of local businessman and former Councillor for Stow Hill, Gerald Davies.

Members observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect to Mike and Gerald and the great contributions they made to the life of this city.

Remembrance Events

A number of events had taken place earlier this month to mark the centenary of Armistice Day, commencing with the opening of the Garden of Remembrance on 5 November, and ending with the Merchant Navy Remembrance Service on 17 November.

British Empire Medals

The Mayor congratulated local residents Trevor Palmer and Martin Perry, who had attended ceremonies at the Civic Centre in the last month to receive British Empire Medals from the Lord Lieutenant.

Charity Events

The Mayor thanked everyone for their generous support of two successful events held in aid of his charities in the last month.

Get Well Soon

The Mayor wished Councillor Jenkins get well wishes following her operation this week.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2018 were approved as a true record.

3. **Appointments**

Resolved

To approve the following nominations:

Internal Appointments

Committee	No. of Vacancies / Replacements	Nominations Received
Licensing Committee	2 replacements	Cllr Tom Suller to replace Cllr Margaret Cornelious Cllr Yvonne Forsey to replace Cllr Tracey Holyoake
Performance Scrutiny Committee – Place and Corporate	1 replacement	Cllr William J Routley to replace Cllr Margaret Cornelious
Charitable Trusts Panel	2 replacements	Cllr William J Routley to replace Cllr Margaret Cornelious Cllr Mark Spencer to replace Emma Garland
Planning Committee	1 replacement	Cllr Tracey Holyoake to replace Cllr Christine Jenkins
Democratic Services Committee	1 replacement	Cllr Herbie Thomas to replace Cllr Ibrahim Hayat

Appointments to External Organisations

Organisation	No. of Vacancies / Replacements	Nominations Received
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none		
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Governing Body Appointments

Governing Body	No. of Vacancies / Re-appointments	Nominations Received
Glasllwch Primary	1 reappointment	Ruth Jones
St Joseph's RC Primary	1 reappointment	Rod McDonald
Glan Usk	1 appointment	Kathryn Dyer
Lliswerry High	2 appointments	Kevan Yeats Zach Evans
Maindee Primary	1 appointment	Gareth Arnold
Rogerstone Primary	1 appointment	Sarah Knight
St Julians School	1 appointment	Tracy McKim
Tredegar Park Primary	2 appointments	Red Cottam Jeanne Hugo
Somerton Primary	1 appointment	Ben Adams

4. Police Issues

Chief Inspector Richard Blakemore attended to answer questions from Members:

- In relation to parking enforcement, Councillor Matthew Evans asked for confirmation of the approach being taken by the Police up until the transfer of responsibilities to the Council, following a letter circulated by the Chief Constable in April indicating that support would be withdrawn from December 2018.
 - o The Chief Executive reported that he had subsequently spoken to the Chief Constable who had given verbal assurances that he was prepared to extend this deadline to 30 June, ready for the transfer of responsibilities on 1 July 2019. Formal confirmation of this was expected shortly.
- In response to concerns raised by Councillor Truman regarding parking enforcement issues in Alway, CI Blakemore agreed to raise this with the local policing team.
- In response to concerns raised by Councillor Holyoake regarding kerb crawlers and drug dealing, CI Blakemore confirmed the ongoing strategy to target these issues in Pillgwenlly and the proactive work being done behind the scenes by the teams on the ground.
- Councillor Rahman raised concerns about parking along Rodney Road, and particular issues around that area on match and event days. CI Blakemore explained the approach to match days agreed to flag these issues with the local inspector.
- CI Blakemore agreed to provide an update to Councillor Lacey in relation to recent arson attacks in the Ringland ward.

- CI Blakemore agreed to provide an update to Councillor Joan Watkins on planned surveillance on the bridge into Caerleon.
- CI Blakemore agreed to pass on Councillor Suller's concerns about vehicles racing on the A48 around the Marshfield ward.
- Councillor Cleverly requested increased police presence in Bettws in relation to a number of issues, and CI Blakemore agreed to pass on the request and the issues raised.
- In response to Councillor Mogford's question, CI Blakemore explained the approach and impact of work being done in the city and further afield to tackle drug dealing.
- Councillors Hourahine, Spencer and Joan Watkins asked for their thanks to be passed on to Inspector Cawley for support provided in their wards.
- In response to Councillor Marshall's question, CI Blakemore outlined some of the sector-leading work being done by Gwent Police in the area of mental health and policing.
- In response to Councillor Spencer's concerns about off road bikes at the Glebelands, CI Blakemore confirmed the actions being taken to tackle this, and encouraged continued reporting through 101 to enable police to monitor and address the issue.
- In response to Councillor Guy's question, CI Blakemore assured Council that the Police were committed to working collaboratively and in partnership with the Council and other organisations.

The Mayor thanked the Chief Inspector for attending.

5. **Director of Social Services Annual Report**

The Cabinet Member for Social Services presented the Director of Social Services Annual Report, explaining that this document was statutory requirement with its scope and content defined by the national social services Quality Standards. Its purpose was to provide an objective view of the delivery and progress of the Childrens and Young People's Service and the Adult and Community Service and the challenges they have met.

The report had been to the Performance Scrutiny Committee - People and Cabinet. The report showed activity and progress made in 2017/18 and was intended to be succinct and accessible. The report highlighted a number of successes during the year, including:

- The series of good Care in Wales inspection reports noted in the Report
- Generally, the maintenance or improvement in performance figures
- The opening of Ty Eirlys in partnership with Pobl and the joint working with the third sector, Health Board and Gwent Local Authorities in general.
- Partnership working on safeguarding provision.

It could not however, capture the scale and striving by staff to improve the lives of all the people the Council supports through its social services 24 hours a day. The Cabinet Member paid tribute to the work of all staff in contributing to these services, of which the Council should be very proud.

The following comments were made on the report:

- Thanks to the Director of Social Services for taking on board the detailed discussions and comments resulting from the Scrutiny Committee's consideration on the report.
- Concerns that the report was still missing comparative data from previous years and similar authorities, including staff sickness and youth justice.
- Whether more publicity could be given to the initiatives detailed in the report to advertise their work and encourage cross-working between different voluntary agencies.

- Concerns were raised regarding the position services previously provided through SEWREC. The Director reported the action being taken in response, linking in with other support the Council provides.
- The Cabinet Member suggested a seminar could be arranged to outline the work of the Wales-wide Dewis service.

The Leader of the Council concluded by commending the report and the refreshed format this year, intended to improve the accessibility and reach of the document. Comments made were noted and would be taken on board.

It was unanimously

Resolved

To receive the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services for 2017/18.

6. Standards Committee Annual Report

Councillor Herbie Thomas presented the latest Annual Report from the Council's Standards Committee, covering the November 2017 to November 2018. The report provided information on the work carried out by the Committee during the past 12 months, during which time it had met on four occasions.

This year had again seen no formal findings of misconduct in the past 12 months. Three complaints were referred to the Ombudsman about city Councillors in 2017-18, but none of these prompted further investigation. Similarly, three complaints were referred to the Ombudsman about community councillors, but none were investigated further. No formal complaints were referred to Standards Committee under the Local Resolution Protocol.

Finally, the Committee was pleased to note that 47 out of 50 city councillors had now attended the training on the code of conduct.

It was unanimously

Resolved

To receive the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2017/18 and to note the forward work programme.

7. Council Tax Discounts - Long-Term Empty Properties

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, asking Council to end the discretionary council tax discount for long term empty properties, with the intention of encouraging owners to bring those empty properties back into use and help tackle the shortage of available housing.

At present, owners were granted a discretionary 50% council tax discount when their properties were no longer exempt. Newport was one of only a handful of Welsh local authorities still granting owners this discount.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing provided further information on the wide ranging negative impacts of empty properties. With just over 1,000 long term empty properties within the city, and it was hoped that the proposal to remove the discounted rate would help bring more of these properties back on the housing market, as well as providing additional resources for additional support for tackling empty homes.

The following comments were made:

- The report was supported.
- It was commented that more action was needed to get more properties back on the housing market.
- More pressure was also needed on Registered Social Landlords keeping properties empty.
- The need to extend action to tackle empty commercial properties as well.

It was

Resolved

That Council approve a change in policy and approach which will assist in bringing more long-term empty homes back into use in the city by:

1. Resolving to stop the current policy of giving 50% Council Tax discount on long-term empty homes from 1 April 2019 and charge the full rate from that date.
2. Investing a proportion of the anticipated increase in Council Tax to generate into a small number of posts and other costs in the housing, legal and revenue teams to enable a more co-ordinated and robust support and interaction with owners of long-term empty homes to get them back into use.

8. Minor Property Transactions

The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee presented the report proposing a change to the scheme of delegations regarding the approval of minor property transactions.

Currently all acquisitions and disposals of property had to be decided, in advance, by the designated Cabinet Member. This could result in relatively minor matters becoming delayed, and significant management and member time being committed in processing such transactions. Previously, the Council had adopted a policy to manage minor matters through a simplified procedure, delegated to Chief Officers. This report proposed reintroducing this system.

This matter was debated by the Democratic Services Committee earlier this month, and some changes were requested to the policy to clarify the value of transactions included here, and also to highlight the importance of member consultation. These amendments had now been made and the report was therefore recommended for approval.

The following comments were made:

- Clarification was requested on the weighting of the various criteria listed in the report.
- Clarification that paragraph 5 should read Cabinet and Ward Members, not Cabinet or Ward Members. The report would be updated to reflect this.

It was

Resolved

To adopt the policy for Minor Property Transactions set out in the report. This would speed up and simplify minor property transactions and reduce management costs.

9. Gambling Act Policy

Councillor Truman presented the report seeking approval and adoption of the revised Gambling Act 2005 Council Statement of Principles.

The Council was responsible for issuing premises licences under the Gambling Act 2005 - for example in relation to bingo halls, bookmakers, gaming centres - where it was proposed that gambling should take place. Under the legislation, the Council had to prepare and publish a Statement of Principles for each successive period of three years, outlining the principles that the Council would apply in exercising its licensing functions. The existing Statement of Principles was adopted by the Council on 14 January 2016 and therefore it was necessary for the Council to review the policy before January 2019.

The proposed revised Statement had been prepared in accordance with Regulations and Guidance issued by the Gambling Commission and has been the subject of extensive consultation. As there had been no changes to the Gambling Act 2005 in the past 3 years, then most of the contents of the Policy remained unchanged.

The changes that had been proposed simply reflected amendments to the Gambling Commission's Guidance/Code of Practice. This included giving clear guidance on what the Council expected from both new applicants and current license holders to include in their local risk assessments.

These risk assessments provided evidence to the Council about how licensed premises were going to promote the 3 licensing objectives:

- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime.
- Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way.
- Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

Therefore, the new policy now required Premises licence holders to take into account a variety of relevant risk factors; these included levels of deprivation or crime and antisocial behaviour in local risk assessments to support communities and improve the areas in which they live; and recognising the diversity of areas and ensuring appropriate responsible gambling information was provided.

The following points were highlighted:

- Support for tightening up these regulations, particularly around fixed-odds betting terminals.
- The role of national government in setting the regulations, which local authorities then enact.
- The problems associated with gambling addictions, especially affecting men aged between 18-40, and the need for support for these problems and their impact in the community.

The Cabinet Member responded, outlining the input of the Health Board and GamCare into the strengthened risk assessments, reflecting their feedback and concerns.

It was

Resolved

That Council approves and adopts the revised 2019 Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005.

10. Questions to the Leader of the Council

Leader's Announcements

In response to the first question from the Mayor, the Leader made the following announcements:

- The success and impact of recent events held in the city, namely
 - o The Tiny Rebel Newport Food and Drink Festival in October
 - o The Tomorrow's Democracy Conference held at the Riverfront Theatre on 5 November
- Welsh Government approval for Newport's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
- The successful launch of the city's Christmas events and the importance of buying locally to support Newport's independent retailers.
- Partnership working between trading standards and a local charity to redistribute counterfeit goods to those in need.
- The Leader was honoured to have been asked to become a fellow of the RSA.

Newport Market

Councillor Matthew Evans asked for an update on the development proposals for Newport Market, and when progress would be reported to Cabinet. The Leader responded that due diligence was still taking place and when completed would go to the next stage of development, including reports.

Councillor Evans queried how long the due diligence would take, highlighting the pressure on traders at this time of year, and requesting an update before Christmas. The Leader highlighted the liaison taking place with the traders at the moment, and agreed to provide a response to Councillor Evans on the details of the timeframe.

Spirit of Newport Award Nomination

Councillor Chris Evans highlighted the 30th World Aids Day on 1 December 2018, and suggested that Martin Butler, one of the founders of the Terrance Higgins Trust, should be put forward as a recipient of a Spirit of Newport Award. The Leader responded that this was a cause that was also very important to her, and the suggested nomination would be followed up.

Old Green Roundabout

Councillor Carmel Townsend asked for an update on the study looking at improvements to the Old Green Roundabout. The Leader agreed to follow this up and provide a full and frank answer outside the meeting.

Unison Audit of Austerity Report

Councillor James Clarke asked for the Leader's views on this report. The Leader responded, highlighting the impact of austerity on Councils, particularly in Wales, and the very difficult settlement being faced this year. The Leader emphasised the significant cuts made to services, and the disproportionate impact of austerity on local authorities. In conclusion, the Leader highlighted the ongoing negotiations with Welsh Government on the final settlement for Councils this year.

11. Questions to the Cabinet Members

There were no questions for the Cabinet Members.

12. **Questions to the Chairs of Committees**

There were no questions for the Committee Chairs.

13. **Standards Committee Minutes (Draft)**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Standards Committee were noted.

The meeting terminated at 6.45 pm