

Minutes



Council

Date: 26 February 2019

Time: 5.00 pm

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

Apologies: Councillors I Hayat, R Mogford, M Spencer and K Whitehead

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

Paul Flynn MP

The Mayor led the Council in offering tributes to the late Paul Flynn, MP for Newport West, who had passed away on 17 February.

Stewart Greenwell

The Council also noted the sad passing of former Director of Social Services, Mr Stewart Greenwell.

The Mayor led a minute silence as a mark of respect to both of these former colleagues.

Newport County

The Mayor congratulated Newport County on the success of their recent FA Cup run.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2019 were approved as a true record.

3. **Appointments**

Councillor Harvey presented the report and updated the Council on the proposed changes to Committee appointments.

Resolved

To approve the following nominations:

Internal Appointments

Committee	No. of Vacancies / Replacements	Nominations Received
Corporate Parenting Forum	1 Replacement	Cllr Herbie Thomas to replace Cllr Christine Jenkins.
Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee	1 vacancy	Cllr Mark Spencer to be removed from this committee, replacement TBC.

Appointments to External Organisations

Organisation	No. of Vacancies / Replacements	Nominations Received
Board of Newport Live	1 Replacement	Cllr David Mayer to replace Cllr D Wilcox
SACRE	1 Vacancy	Reverend Catrin Roberts (Representative for the Presbyterian Church of Wales)

Governing Body Appointments

Governing Body	No. of Vacancies / Re-appointments	Nominations Received
Langstone Primary School	Re-appointment	Garrie Tillett
Monnow Primary School	1 Vacancy	Cllr Jason Jordan
John Frost School	1 Vacancy	Cllr Charles Ferris

4. **Police Issues**

Chief Superintendent Ian Roberts gave the Council an update on current police matters before inviting questions from Members:

- The Leader congratulated Chief Superintendent Roberts on his recent promotion.
- In response to a question from Councillor Morris on the importance of the community in tackling Anti-Social Behaviour, the officer reaffirmed the commitment to local neighbourhood policing, and that all information received from residents would be treated in the strictest confidence and followed up.
- Councillor Harvey asked that thanks be passed on to Inspector Cawley for all his hard work in the Alway ward. The Councillor also highlighted the anti-social behaviour around Chepstow Road between Beechwood and Alway, and the need for more police in the area. The Chief Inspector agreed to pass on that feedback. He highlighted the important local connection between local inspectors and ward councillors, and outlined the work being done to ensure that resources were deployed where they were needed most.
- Councillor Mudd thanked the officers involved for their prompt intervention recently with a local primary school, and highlighted her positive experience as a supporter of the policing during the recent major sporting events in the city. Finally the Councillor highlighted the recent high profile conviction secured which was testament to the work of the local PCSOs.
- In response to Councillor Guy's question around the availability of forensic science support, the Chief Superintendent outlined the arrangements in place, and reported that he was not aware of any issues with this provision in terms of impacting on local investigations.
- The Chief Superintendent agreed to look into Councillor Joan Watkins' request for further surveillance on HGVs travelling across Caerleon Bridge.
- The Chief Superintendent agreed to follow up on Councillor Critchley's concerns around drug-related crime in the Lliswerry ward.
- Councillor Cockeram thanked the officer for his input in recent issues in Shaftesbury, which had had a positive effect.
- The Chief Superintendent agreed to follow up on Councillor Hourahine's request for a senior officer to attend the upcoming ward meeting in St Julians to discuss anti-social behaviour and off-road bikes.
- In response to Councillor Chris Evans' concerns around anti-Semitic posts online, the Chief Superintendent reassured the Council that all reports of hate crime were taken seriously and there were specially trained officers in place to deal with such issues.
- Councillors Forsey and Davies thanked officers for the recent "ride-along" scheme they had taken part in from Pill Police Station, which was very worthwhile. Councillor Davies particularly noted the positive, caring relationship witnessed between the police and the homeless people they had contact with.

The Mayor congratulated Chief Superintendent Roberts on his promotion, and thanked him for attending.

5. **Revenue Budget 2019-20 and Medium Term Financial Plan**

The Leader of the Council presented the report, asking Council to agree the Council's council tax increase for 2019/20 and resulting total net revenue budget as recommended by Cabinet on 13 February 2019.

In presenting the report, the Leader highlighted the context within which the budget proposals had been developed. The Council carried out more than 800 activities and services, which were important to all people in the city, in particular those most vulnerable and in need of support. Demand for these services had increased significantly over the last few years, a UK-wide trend which was affecting all Councils. As well as meeting the increasing needs of residents, the Council was also ambitious in its aspirations for the city, and how we can “improve people’s lives”. The new corporate plan set out the key priorities for development within a continuing challenging financial environment.

The budget included:

- Continued investment in services, over and above inflation, which support the most vulnerable residents:
 - o In special education provision at £1.7m
 - o Social care at £3.9
 - o Schools at £3.6m for the next year, on top of around £10m over the last five years.
- Supporting progress against the corporate plan priorities and investment in key projects:
 - o Regeneration – the market arcade and indoor market developments, building on the success of Friar’s Walk
 - o Recycling –to increase the city’s recycling and move to having a further household recycling site in the city.
 - o Heritage – securing major investment in the city’s Transporter Bridge.
 - o School’s - £70m in the Council’s Band B programme.

In introducing the proposed Council Tax level, the Leader highlighted:

- The significant budget challenge faced by the Council. The total increase in the Council’s revenue support grant for 2019/20 was not sufficient to cover the demand for services. Even after allowing for £2m of one-off grants and an increase in our tax base, which helped fund some of the investments, the gap in next year’s budget was about £10.5m.
- The budget had not been balanced by an increase in Council Tax alone, but a combination of this and savings made. Cabinet felt this was a “fair balance”, taking everything into account and protecting services from further changes and cuts.
- Consultation on the budget showed that people understood the challenge faced and supported this level of increase in the Council Tax.
- A number of changes had been made to the initial proposals following the budget consultation process, including a decrease to the proposed Council Tax increase, reducing proposed savings in education services, and delaying increases to resident parking permits.
- The increase would still result in one of the lowest Council Tax rates in Wales and the UK, equating to increased amounts of 94p, £1.08 and £1.21 per week for a Band B,C and D dwelling
- The Council would continue to spend well below its Standard Spending Assessment.

The report also detailed the Council’s medium term financial projections, showing a continuing challenging outlook. The Council Tax resolution, which included the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner and Community Councils precept requirements, were also included in the papers.

The Leader concluded by recommending the Council Tax levels required to underpin the budget, to protect much needed services, to further invest in those services, to deliver on aspirations for the city and its residents, and continuing to provide good value for money.

The following points were made in favour of the report:

- The impact of austerity on the Council's financial position.
- The unfairness of the Barnett formula in distributing funding to Welsh authorities.
- The extensive consultation process, including the public and specific consultees such as the Scrutiny Committees and the Fairness Commission.
- The absence of alternative proposals being put forward.

The following points were made against the report:

- The impact of Welsh Government with regard to funding distribution.
- The impact of historical decisions not to increase Council Tax.
- Counter arguments regarding the impact of austerity on the Council's finances.
- Examples of alternative proposals previously put forward to make budgetary savings.
- The need to take into account precepts in the overall cost of Council tax.
- The impact of the decision to change Community Council funding.

The required number of elected members sought a recorded vote.

The following members voted in favour of the proposals:

Councillors Al-Nuaimi; Berry; Clarke; Cockeram; Critchley; Davies; Forsey; Giles; Guy; Harvey; R Hayat; Holyoake; Hourahine; Hughes; Jeavons; Jenkins; Lacey; Linton; Marshall; Mayer; Morris; Mudd; Rahman; Richards; H Thomas; K Thomas; Truman; T Watkins; Whitcutt; and Wilcox. A total of 30 votes.

There were no votes against the proposals.

The following members abstained:

Councillors Cleverly; Cornelious; Dudley; C Evans; M Evans; C Ferris; Fouweather; Jordan; Kellaway; Routley; Suller; C Townsend; H Townsend; J Watkins; White; and Williams. A total of 16 absentions.

It was therefore

Resolved

Revenue budget and council tax 19/20 (section 2-8)

- 1 To note that an extensive consultation exercise has been completed on the medium term change/ savings programme, including the 2019/20 budget proposals. Cabinet have taken these into account in recommending final details of their budget
- 2 To note the Head of Finance's recommendations that minimum general reserve balances be maintained at £6.5million, the confirmation of the robustness of the overall budget underlying the proposals, subject to the key issues highlighted in section 5, and the adequacy of the general reserves in the context of other earmarked reserves and a general revenue budget contingency of c£1.5million
- 3 To consider and approve a council tax increase for Newport City Council of 5.95%, a Band D tax of £1,120.04; and resulting overall revenue budget shown in appendix 1
- 4 To approve the formal council tax resolution, included in appendix 3 which incorporates The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent and Community Council precepts

Medium term financial projections (section 5)

- 5 To note the MTFP and the challenging financial climate over the medium term
- 6 To note Cabinets approval of the implementation of the full four-year change programme, including all budget investments and saving options, as summarised within the medium term financial projections (appendix 4). Noting they are subject to on-going review and updating

6. **Capital Strategy and Treasury Management**

The Leader of the Council presented the report, asking Council to approve the Cabinet Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20, and confirming the capital programme. Both the treasury management strategy and capital strategy were required to be approved by full Council, but had already been reviewed and amended in line with comments by the Council's Audit Committee.

The treasury strategy of the Council was closely aligned to its capital programme as that drove the Council's borrowing requirements over the long term. The report identified the future borrowing requirement to fund the capital programme, and confirmed that the revenue budget consequences arising from the borrowing requirements were included in the revenue budgets and medium term financial projections as set out in the Cabinets approved 2019/20 revenue budget and medium term projections.

The capital strategy was a new requirement for all Councils, and its contents were prescribed by regulation. It set out the Council's capital programme, the governance of that programme, commercialisation issues and the links between the Capital and Treasury Management strategies of the Council. The capital strategy was appended to the report and was in line with all requirements.

The main report focused on the capital programme, both for the current programme and prospects for costs and funding beyond that. The current programme to 2022/3 amounted to £176m and included

- New community hubs
- Better recycling facilities
- New schools and expanded schools
- Improved and increased local facilities for looked after children
- More highways maintenance
- Better broadband across the region

The Treasury Management element of the report detailed the various prudential indicators the Council was required to set. It confirmed the ongoing strategy to focus on internal borrowing where possible, and the impact of any external borrowing where that was necessary.

Some queries were put forward on the detail of the capital programme, which would be answered outside of the meeting.

It was unanimously

Resolved

- i. To note the updated current five-year capital programme ending 2022/23, and the current level of headroom available for future capital expenditure, noting the associated increased revenue costs within the current Medium Term Financial Projections for funding the cost of borrowing (MTFP) (Appendix 1)
- ii. To approve the first Capital Strategy including Prudential Indicators and approve the borrowing limits coming from the capital programme; (Appendix 2)

- iii. To approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators, the Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for 2019/20. (Appendix 3)

7. **High Street and Retail Relief Scheme 2019-20**

The Leader of the Council presented the report, asking Council to adopt the Welsh Government's High Street Relief Scheme for 2019-20.

The report outlined the criteria set by the Welsh Government in order for businesses to qualify. A similar scheme had been in place for this and the previous year. The scheme was fully funded by the Welsh Government and needed to be adopted formally by Council in order for local businesses to benefit from the relief afforded by the scheme.

If adopted, the scheme would reduce the rate burden on qualifying businesses by up to £2,500, and it was estimated that around 400 ratepayers could benefit under the scheme. The report recommended formally adopting the scheme so that the rate relief could be introduced from April 2019 and qualifying businesses would benefit from a reduction in rates payable.

In commenting upon the report, one Member was supportive of the scheme, but suggested there was need for a more balanced approach to increasing footfall and encouraging business.

It was unanimously

Resolved

To adopt the Welsh Government's Wales High Street and Retail Relief Scheme for 2019-20 by making the appropriate determination and decision, as required by Sections 47(1)(a) and 47(3) respectively of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, and set out in the appendix to the report.

8. **Questions to the Leader of the Council**

Leader's Announcements

The Leader made the following announcements:

- Congratulations to Newport County on their recent cup run.
- Feedback the Leader's attendance at the Key Cities group, a cross party network of 24 councils across the UK.
- Progress on regeneration projects including Liberty Gardens and Chartist Tower, and the awarding of grants totalling nearly £70k to 23 new ventures over the last two years.
- Feedback from the recent round-table discussion organised by the Newport Economic Network.

Newport Market

Councillor Matthew Evans raised concerns from Newport Market traders about the lack of communication from the Council about the plans for the development, and asked whether proposals would be brought before full Council for consideration.

The Leader outlined the progress on the project and the regular communication taking place with Traders through the Traders Association. The Leader highlighted the need to redevelop

the site to ensure its ongoing viability, but understood the concerns of Traders while going through the change process. Advice would be sought from the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer on the request to present proposals to full Council.

SENCOM

Councillor Chris Evans asked whether the Leader would apologise to parents and carers affected by the proposal to withdraw from the SENCOM service, and asked for clarification of the ongoing position of the staff involved.

In response, the Leader confirmed that the Council had reviewed its position and would defer this decision for 12 months for an independent assessment of the regional service. The Leader underlined the parental survey carried out of 380 parents, which returned only a small number of issues. The Leader underlined the motivation in reviewing the service which was to ensure the best level of service for these children, however if an apology was needed to ameliorate the situation then this would be done.

Newport Railway Station

Councillor Carmel Townsend asked whether the Leader would look again at the economic development opportunities around this major transport hub. The Leader confirmed that this was being looked at in the wider context of the Cardiff Capital Region, the metro and metro plus projects, and the Great Western Cities discussions.

Residential Care for Young People

In response to Councillor Deb Davies' question, the Leader outlined the developments in this area of service. Invest to save funding had been used to develop additional residential care capacity within the city, to reduce costs of out of county placements and improve the services provided to vulnerable children and their families.

9. Questions to the Cabinet Members

No questions were submitted for the Cabinet Members for this meeting.

10. Questions to the Chairs of Committees

No questions were submitted for the Chairs of Committees for this meeting.

The meeting terminated at 7.00 pm