

# Agenda



## Newport City Council

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Date: Tuesday, 23 January 2024  
Time: 5.00 pm  
Venue: Hybrid/Council Chambers - Civic Centre  
To: **All Members of the City Council**

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### **WEBCASTING NOTICE**

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*At the start of the meeting the Presiding Member will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed. The images and sound recording may be also used for training purposes within the Council.*

*Generally the public seating areas are not filmed. However by entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.*

*If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager.*

Item	Wards Affected
1. <u>Preliminaries</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. To receive any apologies for absence.</li><li>ii. To receive any declarations of interest.</li><li>iii. To receive any announcements by the Presiding Member.</li></ul>	
2. <u>Minutes (Pages 5 - 22)</u> To confirm and sign the minutes of the last meeting.	
3. <u>Appointments (Pages 23 - 26)</u> To consider any proposed appointments.	
4. <u>Police Issues</u> 30 minutes is allocated for questions to the Gwent Police representative.	
5. <u>Notice of Motion: Protected Characteristics for Care Experienced People</u> Newport City Council acknowledges that the Children and Young People's Education Committee established by the Senedd Welsh Parliament recommended that care experience becomes a protected characteristic in UK legislation and supports the Corporate Parenting Charter in Wales which the	

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Date of Issue: Tuesday, 16 January 2024

Welsh Government has recently published inviting other public sectors organisations to become a Corporate Parent for care experienced children and young people in Wales.

**This council recognises that:**

- Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives;
- Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into account;
- Care experienced people often face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and in the criminal justice system;
- Care experienced people may encounter inconsistent support in different geographical areas;
- As corporate parents, councillors have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us as an authority;
- As corporate parents Newport Council will commit to acting as mentors, hearing the voices of care experienced children and young people and to consider their needs in any aspect of council work;
- Councillors will be champions of the children in our care and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society;

**This Council therefore resolves:**

- That it recognises that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination;
- That it recognises that Newport Council have a duty to put the needs of disadvantaged people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration;
- That future decision, services and policies made and adopted by the Council should be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic.
- That in the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council includes care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a protected characteristic in services and employment.
- To formally call upon all other bodies to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.
- For the council to continue proactively seeking out and listening to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views.

Motion proposed by Councillor Jane Mudd and seconded by Councillor Stephen Marshall.

6. Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Pages 27 - 34)
7. Council Tax Premiums (Pages 35 - 50)
8. Governance and Audit Annual Report (Pages 51 - 68)
9. Schedule of Meetings 2024/25 (Pages 69 - 84)
10. Mayoral Nomination 2024/25
11. Questions to the Leader of the Council  
To provide an opportunity for Councillors to ask questions to the Leader of the Council in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.

**Process:**

No more than 15 minutes will be allocated at the Council meeting for questions to the Leader of the Council.

The question must be addressed through the Mayor or the person presiding at the meeting and not directly to the person being questioned.

12. Questions to the Cabinet Members  
To provide an opportunity to pose questions to Cabinet Members in line with Standing Orders.

**Process:**

No more than 10 minutes will be allocated at the Council meeting for questions to each Cabinet Member.

Members must submit their proposed questions in writing in advance in accordance with Standing Orders. If members are unable to ask their question orally within the allocated time, remaining questions will be answered in writing. The question and response will be appended to the minutes.

The question must be addressed through the Mayor or the person presiding at the meeting and not directly to the person being questioned.

Questions will be posed to Cabinet Members in the following order:

- i. Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years
- ii. Cabinet Member for Community and Wellbeing
- iii. Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Regulation and Housing
- iv. Cabinet Member for Social Services
- v. Cabinet Member for Organisational Transformation
- vi. Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Bio-Diversity
- vii. Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Assets

13. Questions to the Chairs of Committees  
To provide an opportunity to pose questions to the Chairs of the Committees in line with Standing Orders.

**Process:**

No more than 10 minutes will be allocated at the Council meeting for questions to each Chair.

Members must submit their proposed questions in writing in advance in accordance with Standing Orders. If members are unable to ask their question orally within the allocated time, remaining questions will be answered in writing. The question and response will be appended to the minutes.

The question must be addressed through the Mayor or the person presiding at the meeting and not directly to the person being questioned.

Questions will be posed to Committee Chairs in the following order:

- i. Scrutiny Committees
  - a. Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
  - b. Performance Scrutiny Committee – People
  - c. Performance Scrutiny Committee – Place and Corporate
  - d. Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships
- ii. Planning Committee
- iii. Licensing Committee
- iv. Democratic Services Committee

**For information:**

**A digest of recent decision schedules issued by Cabinet, Cabinet Members and Minutes of recent meetings of Committees has been circulated electronically to all Members of the Council.**

# Minutes



## Council

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Date: 28 November 2023

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors C Reeks, S Cocks, E Stowell-Corten, J Harris, A Screen, L James, T Harvey, M Howells, P Bright, J Peterson, A Pimm, D Batrouni, D Jenkins, P Drewett, B Davies, S Adan, M Pimm, C Baker-Westhead, J Reynolds, R Howells, A Sterry, G Horton, J Cleverly, P Cockeram, D Davies, M Al-Nuaimi, M Evans, D Harvey, M Linton, D Mayer, R Mogford, J Mudd, M Spencer, K Thomas, C Townsend, T Watkins, K Whitehead, J Clarke, Y Forsey, P Hourahine, J Hughes, J Jordan, S Marshall, W Routley, A Morris, F Hussain and B Perkins

Apologies: Councillors J Jones, D Fouweather and M Kellaway

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### 1. Preliminaries

#### 1.i Apologies

Councillors Fouweather, Jones and Kellaway

#### 1.ii Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hughes, Item 7 Regional Partnership Board  
Councillor Hussain, Item 5 Notice of Motion

#### 1.iii Presiding Member's Announcements

Presiding Member asked Council to take a moment's silence to mark the passing former Mayor Harry Williams who died last month and also Diane Huntley, wife of former Councillor Paul Huntley.

### 2. Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting 26 September 2023 were accepted as a true record.

### 3. Appointments

To consider the proposed appointments set out in the report.

Councillor Clarke moved the appointments set out in the report, as agreed by the Business Managers as set out below.

Councillor Reeks seconded the report.

**Resolved:** That the following appointments be agreed.

#### **Governing Body Appointments**

<b>Governing Body</b>	<b>Appointments/ Resignations</b>	<b>Name</b>
Eveswell and Somerton Primary School Partnership	Reappointment	Alan Speight
Eveswell and Somerton Primary School Partnership	Disqualification	Geraldine French
Eveswell and Somerton Primary School Partnership	Appointment	Deiniol Parselle
Gaer and Maesglas Primary School Partnership	Resignation	Jackie Littlejohns
Gaer and Maesglas Primary School Partnership	Appointment	Rob Gregory
*Marshfield Primary School	Appointment	Sean Powell
Alway Primary School	Resignation	Michelle Miles
Alway Primary School	Appointment	Kaite Blair
Maindee Primary School	Resignation	Maddy Cameron
Maindee Primary School	Appointment	Gavin Horton

\*Suzanne Evans transferred to another governor type

#### 4. **Police Issues**

The Presiding Member introduced Superintendent J White of Gwent Police, who provided Council Members with an update on police issues within East, West, and Central Newport.

The Presiding Member invited the Leader to address Superintendent White.

The Leader was pleased that further street safety funding had been made available, which would make a huge difference to the community.

The Leader asked for assurance that officer support would be available in the city centre during the festive period.

Supt White stated that officer numbers had been doubled in the city centre in the last four weeks on a Friday and Saturday night to increase visibility. The service is in contact with partners such as Pub Watch, Licensing and landlords, and community support officers were starting their shifts earlier in the evening to provide support. Supt White was also looking at a triage service for matters that could be dealt with alternatively to using police resources. Going forward, Supt White felt that the police were in a very good place to manage the additional pressures associated with this period.

Additionally, the Leader asked what advice the police could give to ward members on how to report incidents.

Supt White urged residents that if there was an emergency to dial 999. The 101 service had improved dramatically, with Gwent being the best performing force in the country in terms of handling calls. The police website lists the local neighbourhood teams, for reporting localised issues, such as anti-social behaviour concerns. There are also social media channels, which are monitored 24/7. Face-to-face services are available at Newport Central Police Station.

#### Questions to the Police raised by Councillors:

- Councillor Evans explained the role of a PCSOs, who provided key support in community policing. Councillor Evans wanted assurance that Newport communities were not disadvantaged by a freeze on the recruitment of PCSO's.

Supt White agreed on the importance of PCSOs and assured Councillor Evans that there are good levels of PCSO support in place. Based on needs and demands they would be placed in the community where needed.

- Councillor Harvey referred to an issue last week where a dispersal order was put in place in Ringland. Residents were concerned and. Councillor Harvey therefore requested a public meeting with the police and residents.

Supt White would speak to the inspector to understand the issue and would make every effort to arrange a public meeting.

- Councillor Adan referred to cannabis factories in abandoned and disused buildings on Commercial Street and asked how this could be prevented.

Supt White noted that the local inspector for the city centre sat on a task group with other officers from the Council including the City Centre Manager. Supt White asked for an up-to-date database of all premises within the city centre to find out who the landlords and tenants of these premises were, as well as the activities in each of the premises to ensure that they were lawful.

- On behalf of the allotment holders in St Julians Councillor Hourahine thanked Supt White for the donation of the high-quality fertilizer and compost, which was as a result of a recent drug raid.
- Councillor Mogford referred to e-scooters and e-bikes and was concerned about young people using these modes of transport. Supt White advised that police tactics, are used proportionately to the offense.
- Councillor Cocks referred to the 7.5 tonne weight limit ignored by HGV drivers driving through Caerleon, and asked could measures be put in place to prevent this. Supt White would get in touch with the local policing team to put some action in place.
- Councillor Morris referred to e-bikes and asked was there any way that suppliers of these products could be stopped at source. Supt White mentioned that Trading Standards needed to play an active part, and amended regulatory powers would be welcomed.
- Councillor Forsey thanked PCSOs for attending police surgeries in Rogerstone, which were useful for residents and councillors to raise issues. Supt White would pass on Councillor Forsey's thanks.
- Councillor Reynolds echoed Councillor Forsey's thanks and thanked the police regarding an incident at a care home for young people where he worked.

#### 5. **Notice of Motion: The Westgate Hotel**

The Presiding Member invited Councillor Routley to introduce the notice of motion, with Councillor Mogford to second.

*The Westgate Hotel, a historic landmark in our city, holds significant importance as a turning point in history that advanced modern-day democracy, a reminder of our struggles for political beliefs.*

*We call upon this Council to do everything in its power to ensure the future of this historic building.*

*With your support, we could be reclaiming this remarkable building, preserving our history while shaping a brighter future for the Westgate, the city, and our citizens.*

Councillor Routley explained that the motion was brought to Council in reference to the importance of the Chartist movement and in unify the Council. Councillor Routley went on to say that on 19 October 2023 when the Westgate volunteer group found themselves locked out of the Westgate Hotel without notice. This group had done a remarkable job in celebrating the Chartist movement and supporting the Westgate Hotel.

The motion was therefore to preserve the past. Councillor Routley wanted support for the motion, or even the amendment to the motion, to recognise and honour the fallen in the 22 men who lost their lives at the Westgate Hotel in 1839. This motion was therefore about protection of the Westgate Hotel and turning it into a living monument.

Councillor Mogford reserved the right to speak at the end of the debate.

Councillor Drewett proposed the following amendment to the Motion:

*The Westgate Hotel, a historic landmark in our city, symbolises a significant point in history that advanced modern democracy. Promotion and preservation of our cultural and heritage assets is a strategic priority for Newport.*

*This Council will do everything in its power to ensure the future of this historic building by including it in the Placemaking Plan and the Cultural Strategy, together with input from all stakeholders, preserving our history while shaping a brighter future for the Westgate, the city, and our citizens.*

Councillor Mudd seconded the amendment to the motion.

At the request of Councillor Evans, the amendment was circulated to Members for their information.

Councillor Mudd reserved the right to speak at the end of the debate.

Councillor Drewett mentioned that the substantial difference between the original motion and the amendment was that it considered that the Westgate Hotel was already going to be part of the Placemaking Plan and Cultural Strategy.

Councillor Drewett reserved the right to speak at the end of the debate.

#### Comments of Councillors:

- Councillor Hughes was surprised by the original motion and whilst the amendment was valued, the legacy to protect democracy and what the Chartists were trying to achieve was more important.
- Councillor Screen supported the amendment, which he considered was about preserving the cultural heritage of Newport.
- Councillor D Davies supported the amendment, which focused on Newport being a city of culture, history, and democracy. This was a key issue as part of the Placemaking Plan.
- Councillor Morris was proud to come from Newport, because of the association with Chartism. Councillor Morris would also like to see the Westgate Hotel become a World Heritage site and added that he hoped that his Council colleagues were all in agreement to preserve the Westgate Hotel, which could make a difference to Newport. Councillor Morris therefore supported both motions.



- Councillor M Howells saw in the amendment a proposal to include a Placemaking Plan for the city centre, which included a Cultural Strategy. Councillor Howells therefore welcomed the amendment.
- Councillor Cocks felt that the amendment improved the original motion and therefore supported it as a substantial motion.
- Councillor Evans recalled that in recent times, the Westgate Hotel was a grade II listed building bustling with life, which hosted dances and weddings and did not want to see it go into a state of further disrepair. Councillor Evans therefore supported the amendment.
- Councillor Batrouni supported the amendment and mentioned that Councillor Drewett championed the Westgate Hotel and that the Placemaking Plan was a critical key point of the amendment to the motion put down by Councillor Routley.
- Councillor Routley spoke to the amendment giving his reason why it was put forward. Councillor Routley was glad that the original motion was able to assist in saving the Westgate Hotel and preserve the future.
- Councillor Hourahine noted that whilst the Westgate Hotel was very important, the Cultural Strategy supported democracy.
- Councillor Whitehead considered that a heritage centre would be good as a catalyst for revitalising the area and suggested a steering group from all political sides to get involved.
- Councillor Al-Nuaimi supported the amendment to see the hotel brought to life and become part of the cultural and heritage scene in Newport. The hotel, however, was owned privately and the Council should encourage the owner to participate in the development, otherwise this was an academic debate.
- Councillor Mudd thanked everyone who contributed, adding that this was important to Members and residents. The majority group embedded in its manifesto its Placemaking Plan, with a solid commitment to stakeholder engagement. Going forward, in 2024, both the strategy and the plan would be under development.
- Councillor Drewett mentioned that moving the amendment served as a reminder of what the Chartists achieved. Part of the Placemaking Plan was that Newport should be a heritage and civil rights destination and Newport's heritage could be utilised for tourism, education, and investment purposes. Councillor Drewett asked that colleagues continued this task and celebrate Newport's ancestors beyond the Westgate Hotel.
- Councillor Routley withdrew the original motion, with the agreement of its seconder Councillor Mogford, and Councillor Evans accepted and supported the amendment to the motion as the substantive motion.

**Resolved:**

- Council supported the amendment to the motion, which therefore became the substantive motion.
- Council supported the motion.

**6. Treasury Management Half Yearly Monitoring Report**

The Presiding Member invited the Leader to introduce the first report which outlined the Council's treasury management activity for the first half of 2023/24 and confirmed that treasury activities completed so far during the year complied with the Treasury Strategy previously considered and set by Members.

The report compared activity with the year-end position for 2022/23 and detailed the movement from April to September 2023/24 and the reasons for those movements. This was the first of two reports received on treasury management during the year.

The report highlighted the following information:

- Reminder of the Treasury Strategy agreed.
- Details of borrowing and investment activity throughout the year
- Wider economic considerations e.g., economic climate
- A medium to long term outlook for borrowing need.
- And concludes with an examination of activity against prudential indicators, confirming compliance.

The report was presented to Governance and Audit Committee at the October meeting and was endorsed by the Committee prior to Cabinet considering the report on 15 November.

The key highlights included the level of borrowing, which, as of 30 September 2023, decreased by £3.1m from the 2022/23 outturn position and was now £135.5m.

This decrease was in relation to:

- A number of loans which were repaid in instalments over the life of the loan.
- The redemption of two small PWLB maturity loans at the end of September, which did not need to be re-financed.
- This was netted off by a minimal amount of new long-term borrowing that was taken out, totalling £300k from Salix which was interest free and linked to a specific energy efficiency project.

As at the end of September, the Council's overall borrowing also included six Lender Option / Borrower Option (LOBO) loans totalling £30m. Whilst in the first half of the year these loans were not subject to any change in interest rates, in late October and November the Council received notification that three lenders of LOBOs, totalling £15m, had elected to increase the interest rates.

Following advice from the Council's treasury advisors, the Council redeemed the loans, rather than accepting the increased interest rate. This was because the revised interest rate was higher than the current rate and either not dissimilar to current borrowing rates through the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) or significantly higher. The Council managed these repayments through a combination of using available investment balances and applying for one new long-term PWLB loan of £5m.

Whilst not immediately refinancing two of these loans would ultimately accelerate the Council's underlying need to undertake new external borrowing, exiting from LOBO arrangements allowed the Council to de-risk an element of its borrowing portfolio, by taking away the risk of further interest rate rises on these specific loans.

The level of investments increased by £7.4m to £54.7m. It was anticipated however, that investment balances would naturally reduce as the year progressed, mainly due to progress in delivering capital schemes.

The report provided a forward-looking indicator, the Liability Benchmark, which provided a graphical illustration of the Council's existing and future borrowing requirement. This was an important indicator to understand as it demonstrated the impact that decisions taken now in relation to capital expenditure on the long-term net borrowing requirement, which ultimately impacts upon the revenue budget in the form of capital financing costs.

The Council's underlying long-term need to borrow, coupled with the need to refinance existing loans, meant there was exposure to a higher level of interest rate than experienced over recent years. As a result, the Council continued to defer the need to take out long-term borrowing for as long as possible. It was hoped that by adopting this approach, interest rates may have reduced from their current levels by the time new borrowing was required, reducing to some extent the impact upon the revenue budget of undertaking new borrowing. Any decision about undertaking additional long-term borrowing would be made in line with advice from the Council's treasury advisors and only where there was a clear financial benefit and need to do so.

Finally, the Authority measures and manages its exposure to treasury management risks using various Prudential Indicators, outlined in Appendix A. The report confirmed that for the first half of the year, the Council complied with the Prudential Indicators set for 2023/24.

**Resolved:**

Council noted the report on treasury management activities during the first half year period of 2023-24.

**7. Gwent Regional Partnership Board Area Plan/Gwent Regional Partnership Board Annual Report**

The Presiding Member introduced the Leader to present the next report, which was the Gwent Regional Partnership Board Annual Report (RPB) as required in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

The Board had a statutory duty under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and as amended by the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 to produce an annual report and an area plan. These documents must then be presented and considered through the structures of each of the bodies who make up the membership of the Regional Partnership Board.

The Welsh Government set out the statutory framework for the development of both the Regional Area Plan to include how joint health and social care priorities were delivered in partnership across the region and the Annual Report.

The Regional Partnership Board fully embraced and adopted the principles of both the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and was wholly aligned to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 principles.

Turning to the report itself, the progress on the delivery of the area plan was set out in the RPB Annual Report.

The report highlighted the work carried out in partnership across social care and health. It provided strong examples of the benefits of partnership working and how the work positively impacted citizens.

The Leader was pleased to note that there was a good discussion with Members, when the report was presented to the Council's Performance Scrutiny Committee for Partnerships on Tuesday 10 October.

Comments of Councillors:

- Councillor Hughes mentioned that the plan set out the focus on joint authorities under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 as well as providing family care and strong community partnerships. Councillor Hughes thanked staff who helped produce the report and the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships for its input.

- Councillor D Davies added that the huge positive was making Gwent the first Marmot Region in Wales. Councillor Davies highlighted the principles to colleagues and why they are important in challenging and addressing inequalities.
- The Presiding Member added that as a former Chair of the Regional Partnership Board, it brought health and councils together to achieve more.

**Resolved:**

- Council considered the joint regional commitments within the Area Plan.
- Council reviewed the RPB Annual Report and progress made against the objectives and provide any feedback/comments.

**8. Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022/23**

The Presiding Member introduced the Leader to present the Council's Annual Report on the progress against its Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24.

Under the Equality Act (2010), the Council is required to report annually on the progress it makes against the strategic equality objectives contained within the Strategic Equality Plan, alongside staff equalities data.

The Annual Report was reviewed by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Cabinet. Their comments were included in the report.

This report set out the third year of delivery against Strategic Equality Objectives agreed by this Council.

The summary of achievements highlighted progress against each of the objectives, such as:

1. Llanwern High School being awarded the inaugural Betty Campbell MBE Award for its work on anti-racism.
2. The use of participatory budgeting which distributed funding to 44 community projects during this financial year alone.
3. The promotion, support, and celebration of diversity across the city during significant dates, including Eid al-Fitr, Black History Wales, UN Anti-Racism Day and, of course, Pride in the Port, Newport's first community Pride event, which went from strength to strength and is an example of how communities can come together to achieve real success.

It was encouraging to see the progress made including the closure of the gender pay gap amongst officers and gender equality evident within Cabinet.

The report closed with staff equality data and information underpinning the continued commitment to working towards a workforce that reflected the communities across our city. This is a key objective within the new Strategic Equalities Plan and People Plan (both to be published in 2024) and is embedded within the Corporate Plan.

Comments of Councillors:

- Councillor Batrouni thanked staff for their commitment to equality and paid testament to the work of the staff networks.
- Councillor Hussain met with ethnic minority groups as part of the staff network, listened to their concerns and would take actions forward.
- Councillor Cocks supported the report and the discussion at Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships. Councillor Cocks reflected that Newport had a legal and moral

duty to reduce the disparities of outcomes for people with different ethnic backgrounds. by getting out into the community and talking to people. Councillor Cocks was impressed with the range of activities taking place and the section of the report devoted to data, which he felt was the foundation of effective equalities policy and would make a difference to what Newport City Council did in the future.

**Resolved:**

Council approved the final monitoring report to be published on the Council's website, in accordance with statutory deadlines.

**9. Corporate Plan Annual Report 2022/23**

The Leader introduced the Corporate Plan Self-Assessment Report for 2022/23 to Council colleagues.

This was the first annual report on the progress of delivery against the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027, which was approved by Council in November 2022.

This report was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2014 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The annual report reflected on the progress made by the Council and its partners in the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the four Well-being Objectives.

The report acknowledged the challenges that Newport and many other local authorities face to deliver services in the context of increasing pressures, in supporting households and businesses through the cost-of-living crisis and to ensure that a financially sustainable balanced budget s achieved.

The annual report required the Council to reflect on its performance and outlined how the Council made a positive start in two of the four Well-being objectives with the two remaining Well-being objectives requiring further improvement.

Despite these challenges, the Council's Chief Executive, the senior leadership team, and officers from across the Council demonstrated the positive impact which services have had.

The Council was also listening to the views of residents and those who use its services, as well as working collaboratively with other public, not-for-profit, and private sector organisations to improve services.

It was important for all members to understand these pressures and to work collaboratively to improve services to ensure the Council continued to provide the best services for residents in Newport.

Comments of Councillors:

- Councillor Bright welcomed the report and referred to two projects being undertaken in St Julians, which was the Warm Homes project and the Graffiti Project. Councillor Bright therefore welcomed the report.

**Resolved:**

Council endorsed the annual Corporate Plan self-assessment report 2022/23.

**10. Amendment to Council Constitution - 'Budget Framework procedure rules'**

The Presiding Member invited Councillor Mogford, the Chair of Democratic Services Committee to present to Council the recommendations of the Democratic Services Committee that amendments were made to the Council's Budgetary and Policy Framework Procedure Rules under Part 4 of the Constitution.

The proposed amendments were intended to ensure that the Council's Constitution is in alignment with the Welsh Model Constitution and helped support the Council's decision-making processes in setting a balanced budget each year in accordance with statutory requirements.

Following the 2023/24 budget setting meeting of full Council in February 2023, the Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer undertook a review of the Council's Constitution regarding the budget procedure rules.

The review concluded with the recommendations that whilst the Council's Constitution broadly aligned to the 'Welsh Model', amendments were required to the procedure rules for alternative budget proposals to be submitted prior to the budget-setting Council meeting, held at the end of February each year.

The recommended amendments can be summarised as follows:

- i) That Members submit any proposed amendments to the draft Budget to the Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer for consideration by 4pm at least five clear days prior to the Budget meeting of full Council.
- ii) Within this timescale officers are provided with time and opportunity for consideration of the suitability of any proposed amendments; and
- iii) That the budget and policy framework procedure rules are separated to ensure that the budget setting process is distinguished from that of the policy framework to ensure that a finalised budget can be agreed in time for the statutory deadline of 11<sup>th</sup> March in each year.

The amendments outlined were incorporated into the draft amended Budget and Policy Procedures Rules document included with the report to Council as Appendix 1.

Democratic Services Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer in relation to these amendments at their meeting on 20 November and approved the proposed amendments as drafted, with the recommendation that the proposals be taken forward for approval by full Council.

#### Comments of Councillors:

- Councillor M Howells referred to errors in the report and drew colleagues' attention to paragraph 2.5 Urgent Decisions, which referred to 2.4 instead of 2.6. This error was repeated twice.

Councillor Howells also sought clarification on a proposal by a Member to amend the budget, which was seconded and submitted to the Proper Officer five days prior to Council. Councillor Howells asked would this be treated as confidential or would it be public information.

The Monitoring Officer advised that it would be put to Cabinet prior to reaching an agreement before the Council meeting. If it was not accepted, it would be discussed at Council.

#### **Resolved:**

Council approved and adopted amendments to the Council's Constitution in line with the 'Welsh Model Constitution' and supported the Council to meet its statutory requirements in terms of decision-making concerning the Council's budget.

#### 11. **Standards Committee Annual Report 2022/23**

The Presiding Member welcomed Andrew Mitchell, Chair of Standards Committee to Council to provide a summary of the work of the Standards Committee in the preceding 12 months and note the forward work programme.

The Chair was pleased to present the 2022/23 Standards Committee Annual Report to Council.

This was the tenth Annual Report of the Standards Committee setting out the work carried out by the Committee during the past 12 months.

The Annual Report covered a shorter period than usual, from December 2022 to March 2023 and followed on from the last report presented to Council in November 2022. The Annual Report was previously presented to Council on a voluntary basis. However, Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced an additional statutory duty under Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000, which required Standards Committee to make an annual report after the end of each financial year and for full Council to consider that report within three months. To support this change, this report considered a brief period that spanned from the time of presenting the last report, to the end of the last financial year. The Chair looked forward to coming back to present the next full Annual Report in the Summer of 2024.

The statutory report summarised how the Committee discharged its functions through consideration of reports and actions or recommendations made by or referred to the Committee. In addition, the Annual Report included an assessment of the extent to which leaders of political groups on the Council have complied with their new duties to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within their groups. The Chair was pleased to note the commitment of Group Leaders to their new duty to report to Standards Committee: whilst this was still in the planning stage during the reporting period, the Group Leaders made clear their commitment to fulfilling this requirement.

The Standards Committee was satisfied that this Annual Report to full Council met the requirements of the 2021 Act. The Standards Committee is committed to promoting high standards of ethical conduct among elected Members and officers to maintain public confidence in local government. The Committee continued to proactively review all ethical standards policies and procedures as part of the forward work programme.

This year, the Chair was pleased to report that no serious complaints of misconduct were referred to the Standards Committee by the Ombudsman during the reporting period and no complaints were referred for determination by the Committee under Stage 3 of the Local Resolution Protocol. Finally, the Chair took the opportunity to thank all Members of the Committee and Council officers for their advice and support throughout the last 12 months.

#### Comments of Councillors:

- Councillor M Howells mentioned that the Standards Committee Annual Report should be presented to Council no more than three months after the financial year as required in the Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021 and therefore asked why the report was late. The Monitoring Officer stated that the next Annual report would satisfy the new legislative timescales as set out in this update and would provide some further clarify over the requirements of the legislation after the meeting.

- The Presiding Member thanked Andrew Mitchell for his work as Chair on the Standards Committee.

**Resolved:**

Council received the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2022/2023 and noted the forward work programme.

**12. Democratic Services Annual Report 2022/23**

The Presiding Member once again invited Councillor Mogford, as Chair of Democratic Services Committee, to provide a summary of the work of the Democratic Services Committee in the preceding 12 months and note the forward work programme.

The Chair was pleased to present the 2022/23 Democratic Services Committee Annual Report to Council.

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 required the Committee to report annually to the Council on the work carried out in the past 12 months and its future work programme.

This annual report covered the period from November 2022 to October 2023.

The Committee was a politically balanced group which worked together in a non-partisan manner to consider various aspects of the Constitution and other matters that impacted on the governance of the Council.

The report highlighted the important work carried out by the Committee last year, which met on five occasions during the past 12 months.

Councillor Mogford highlighted several items that were considered by the Committee during the year, including ward meetings, constitutional arrangements and training and development.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the committee members for their work during this period and looked forward to delivering the work programme of the Committee during 2024.

**Resolved:**

Council received the Democratic Services Committee's Annual Report for 2022/23.

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

Before Commencement with questions, the Leader made the following announcements to Council:

**Investment zone**

Last week, the Chancellor made the much-welcomed announcement that a Southeast Wales investment zone would be developed around the compound semiconductor cluster. This is great news for the semiconductor sector in Newport, the city and its residents, and the wider region.

Newport is home to the world's first semiconductor cluster which, with the right support and recognition, has the potential to deliver significant benefits for the local and national economies.

An investment zone should provide the support required to help the semiconductor industry become a scientific superpower with Newport at the heart of that vision.



The enterprise, capability, and infrastructure to achieve this is already largely in place and the local industry is robust and well-connected. Strong partnerships are in place which would also be key to successful delivery.

An investment zone would deliver a raft of benefits for local people: more highly skilled jobs, inward investment, and economic growth, all of which would translate into prosperity for Newport's communities. There are also broader benefits for the wider UK in terms of national security.

Delivery of an investment zone would complement the work already underway to establish a National Institute of Technology for Wales, with a focus on existing strengths, compound semiconductors and data science, alongside respected existing academic institutions, Cardiff University, and the University of South Wales.

The Leader looked forward to collaborating closely with partners in the industry, academia, the Welsh Government, and the UK Government on this exciting development.

### **Fast Track City**

Newport last week became a Fast Track City and joined a global network of over 300 cities committed to eradicating HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths.

The international initiative worked to end new cases of HIV by 2030, have zero preventable deaths from HIV/AIDS, zero stigma and discrimination and a better quality of life for people living with HIV.

The Council worked closely with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Pride in the Port to establish a Fast Track Newport group to become a pathfinder city, with the potential for the scheme to expand into the wider health board area.

The Newport group would initially focus on three priorities:

- 1) Increasing awareness of testing and numbers of people getting tested.
- 2) Reducing the stigma around HIV.
- 3) Reaching out to communities that have traditionally been underserved with access to HIV services.

This is about supporting communities, and joining Fast Track Cities will give the backing and resources of a global network of knowledge and experience to use at a local level, to deliver positive outcomes for people living with HIV.

### **New employment and skills scheme**

Newport has delivered many excellent schemes that have helped local people improve their employability prospects.

A new project – the Shared Prosperity Fund employment and skills scheme - offers support to people who might have missed out on other avenues of support.

The scheme is open to unemployed people and people who are in work if they meet certain criteria. It would work with individuals to give them the tools they need to help them into sustainable employment, further learning, or a new challenge.

Funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and delivered by the Council, it would help to ensure that every resident had access to support and gained the skills they needed to improve their job prospects.

Further information on the scheme and how to get involved are available on our website.

### **Tackling empty homes**

At the last Cabinet meeting, a proposal was supported to seek residents' views on introducing a premium on council tax for long-term empty and second homes.

Demand for affordable housing is outstripping supply but there are more than 800 properties in the city that were unoccupied for at least a year, and 15 second homes.

In March, more than 450 households were in temporary accommodation. There were 8,500 people registered for social housing but in 2021/22 there were just 686 new social housing lettings.

From these figures there was motivation to take steps to increase the availability of good quality and affordable housing, in turn helping to tackle homelessness.

Considerable efforts were made to encourage the owners of empty homes to bring them back into beneficial use, but this had limited success.

Councils were allowed to charge a council tax premium of up to 300 per cent and most across Wales have already started, or were due to start, making a charge.

At the time of the meeting, the consultation was live on the Council website, and the Leader urged people to have their say on a scheme and whether they think it would be a positive move for the city.

### **Small Business Saturday**

Newport City Council is again supporting Small Business Saturday which took place the weekend following Council.

The campaign was a celebration of the independent businesses that are a vital part of the local economy and encouraged everyone to "shop local".

Small Business Saturday puts the national spotlight on shopping local, but the message is also about shopping local every day.

When shopping locally, more money stays within the community.

Spending money with local independents also encourages more small traders to set up in the city. And the more businesses that are operating in Newport city centre, the more vibrant it becomes.

Whether it was Christmas shopping or everyday shopping the Leader urged residents to please shop locally, buy locally and support local independent businesses.

### **New events listings**

A new events portal was launched for residents to explore all the amazing events Newport had to offer - together in one place.

Newport has a growing reputation as host of major events, such as the marathon, as well as some great regular events like the Countdown to Christmas.

The Council, working with organisations across the city, created the new events portal for exploring all that Newport had to offer and it was one everyone could contribute to and use.

From talks and walks, live music, and performances, to late-night shopping, community events and job fairs.

Anyone organising an event in Newport can submit details using a simple form and it would be there for all to see.

Take a look at [whatsoncityofnewport.co.uk](http://whatsoncityofnewport.co.uk)

## **Leaders Questions**

### Councillor Evans:

Councils in Wales are supporting traders during the Christmas period. Councillor Evans referred to the park and ride scheme that used to operate in Newport. Additionally, Councillor Evans mentioned the previous temporary free bus scheme. Councillor Evans referred to the Leader mentioning in November 2021 that the initiative was a boost to the local businesses as well as encouraging the use of more sustainable transport. This would be a great way to improve footfall and deter Newport residents going to Cwmbran or out-of-town shopping centres.

### Response:

The Leader replied that in 2021 it was a very different situation. Due to the pandemic, Newport was in a position to stimulate economy with subsidised free travel. Through Transport for Wales, WG and the Burns Commission, the Council was able to further subsidise free travel across the city of Newport. In the current financial environment, resources were unfortunately not available to implement the schemes at the level seen previously. The Leader was delighted to see the initiative Newport Transport had introduced to ensure that families could enjoy a reduced rate of travel with a £5 family ticket for families to move across the city. The Leader added that if the resources were available to the Council, she would be championing and supporting free and subsidised public transport. There were, however, growing pressures on resources, and particularly the revenue budget. The Leader would support businesses in the city centre, for example, eligible business would not pay rates this year because Newport City Council was providing a 25% rate subsidy, which aligned with the WG 75% subsidy. Whilst this was only one example, it demonstrated a conscious decision to support businesses within the city centre.

### Councillor Morris:

Requests from Lliswerry residents to Jessica Morden, MP's Office get relayed directly to the Leader. Councillor Morris referred to an ongoing incident at Thompson Avenue concerning a reen; Could the Leader therefore facilitate an urgent meeting with Lliswerry Ward members and appropriate senior officers to address the issue.

### Response:

The Leader clarified that in terms of process, there was one point of contact to effectively relay any issues. The Leader was happy to facilitate a meeting with ward members and senior officers.

### Councillor Whitehead:

If Leader was successful as candidate for Police Crime Commissioner next May, would she be standing down as Leader of the Council.

### Response:

The Leader advised that for clarity, she was currently the Labour party member selected as a candidate in Gwent. If, however, the Leader was successful at elections in May, the Leader would stand down as Leader at the Council AGM in May.

### Councillor Bright:

Referred to the stand in main reception, highlighting the white ribbon campaign and asked if the Leader could update colleagues on Newport City Council's involvement in the campaign.

Response:

The Leader hoped that other Members took the opportunity to also take time to visit the stand and noted that some Members were wearing the white ribbon sticker.

The white ribbon is an internationally recognised campaign which originated in Canada in 1991 and every year, in the UK, on 25 November, the UN day for the elimination of violence against women.

The aim of the campaign is to prevent men's violence towards women and girls by addressing its root causes: harmful and dominant masculine norms. Aspirations such as building a community of change-makers, to raise awareness through campaigns, encouraging everyone to make the white ribbon promise, educating young people and holding policy makers to account.

This year's theme was 'Change the Story', encouraging men and boys to change the story for women and girls across the UK. The Leader highlighted figures to colleagues, adding that 1.7 million women in the year ending 2022 experienced domestic abuse.

Gwent Police reported 2,693 domestic abuse incidents in Newport, which is why White Ribbon Day was needed to change the story.

Within the Council, there was an online quiz for officers to engage with to raise awareness, a social media campaign, sending out key messages and the stand in foyer to promote the campaign and engage with residents, members, officers, and visitors. The Head of Safeguarding and champions would also be helping with the promotion during the period.

The Leader hoped, through liaison with White Ribbon UK, to be able to fly a white ribbon flag next year at the Civic Centre to mark this important event in the calendar.

#### 14. **Questions to the Cabinet Members**

**Councillor Chris Reeks:**

With new waste regulations for businesses set to be introduced from 6 April 2024, by the Welsh Government, can the Cabinet Member confirm what plans the Council will be implementing to support Newport businesses with these regulations and what extra measures are being put into place at the Waste Transfer Centre to cope with the increased volumes?

**Response from Councillor Yvonne Forsey, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity:**

NCC is currently redesigning its commercial waste collection services in partnership with Wastesavers, so that it can provide a single integrated service for businesses.

NCC will be able to provide all businesses with the collections its needs by 4 April through a range of solutions that are best suited to individual businesses.

Our comms teams are working with Welsh Government who are leading an engagement campaign, with a dedicated website and tailored communications to all businesses in Wales, including letters to all businesses in Newport, to remind them of the requirements. We have also contacted all our current customers directly and will continue wider engagement with organisations across Newport ahead of the changes.

Supplementary Question:

Councillor Reeks asked if the Cabinet Member could confirm were there any plans to introduce the collection of plastic packaging waste for businesses for recycling in the same manner that larger superstores did for shoppers' plastic packaging.

Response:

Councillor Forsey advised that the recycling information was as laid out in legislation and would be communicated to people and a wider discussion took place at the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Place and Corporate.

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# Report

## Council

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### Part 1

Date: 23 January 2024

**Subject** Appointments

**Purpose** To agree the appointment of Council nominees to committees and outside bodies.

**Author** Governance Team Leader

**Ward** General

**Summary** In accordance with its terms of reference within the Constitution, Council is responsible for appointing the members of Council Committees, and the Council's representatives on outside bodies. The current vacancies and nominations received are set out in the attached report.

**Proposal** Council is asked to receive and approve the nominations for representatives, as listed in the report

**Action by** Governance Team Leader

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Council Business Managers
- Head of Law and Standards

**Signed**

## Background

In accordance with its terms of reference within the Constitution, Council is responsible for appointing the members of Council Committees, and the Council's representatives on outside bodies. The current vacancies and nominations received are set out below.

Any vacant appointments / nominations received after the publication of this report, will be announced at the Council meeting by the appropriate Business Manager or Group Leader.

### Governing Body Appointments

Governing Body	Appointments/ Resignations	Name
Pillgwenlly Primary School	Reappointment	Edward Watts
St Mary's RC Primary School	Reappointment	Charles Ferris
Ysgol Gymraeg Ifor Hael	Reappointment	Jan Cleverly
Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd	Reappointment	Alan Speight
Ringland Primary School	Transferred to alternative governor role	Shaninoor Alom
Ringland Primary School	Appointment	Stacey Drew

### Proposal

Council is asked to receive and approve the nominations for representatives, as listed in the report.

### Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

### Comments of Monitoring Officer

The appointment of individuals to serve on outside bodies is a Local Choice function under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Functions and Responsibilities) (Wales) Regulations 2007. The Council has determined that responsibility for this function shall rest with Full Council unless delegated by the Council.

### Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

### Local issues

There are no local issues as this report relates to the Council's processes.

### Scrutiny Committees

Monthly update reports allow the Scrutiny and Cabinet work programmes to be better coordinated. The Scrutiny team and Members are currently developing new ways of working through the new Committees, and continually reviewing the work programmes to focus more on risk and ensure all scrutiny activity has a defined purpose and constructive outcome.

### Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

This does not apply to this procedural report.

### Children and Families (Wales) Measure

This procedural report does not impact on Children and Young People although certain reports contained in the programme may do and will need appropriate consultation and comment when they are presented to cabinet.

### Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015



This is a procedural report but reports contained within the programme will need to show how consideration has been given to the five things public bodies need to think about to show they have applied the sustainable development principle put into place by the Act.

### **Consultation**

As set out above

### **Background Papers**

Newport City Council Constitution

Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Functions and Responsibilities) (Wales) Regulations 2007

**Dated: 15 January 2024**

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# Report

## Council

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### Part 1

Date: 23 January 2024

**Subject** Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25

**Purpose** For Council to consider a proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25 and to determine local discretions.

**Author** Head of Finance

**Ward** All

**Summary** The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2024/25 updates the scheme that was introduced on 1st April 2013. The Council is not required to consult on the proposals of the new scheme as the changes made are in consequence of amendments made to the Prescribed Requirements Regulations. The local discretions that are available to the Council are recommended to remain unchanged. This report provides information on the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

**Proposal** That Council approves the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25 in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Schemes) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 ("the Prescribed Requirements Regulations") exercising its local discretions as indicated in the report.

**Action by** Benefits Manager – Finance

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Head of Law and Standards
- Head of Finance
- Head of People, Policy and Transformation

**Signed**

## 1 Background

- 1.1 In Wales the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, continues to be a national scheme (in contrast to England, where schemes are local to each billing authority.)
- 1.2 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme in Wales is set by Regulations made under Schedule 1B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as inserted by the Local Government Finance Act 2012). On 16 January 2024, the Welsh Assembly are expected to approve amending regulations to have effect from 1st April 2024: the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Schemes) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. These Regulations prescribe the main features of the Scheme to be adopted by all Councils in Wales. The revisions for 2024/2025 are:
- 1.3 The usual annual uprates to the financial figures used to calculate entitlement to a council tax reduction to reflect the cost of living.
- 1.4 The financial figures in the 2013 Regulations will be uprated as follows:
- Personal allowances in relation to working age, and carer and disabled Premiums:
  - The financial figures in respect of these allowances have been amended and have increased in line with the cost-of-living rises. The convention is to uprate in line with the Consumer Price Index figure for September from the previous year (2023), which is 6.7%
- 1.5 Personal allowances in relation to pensioners:
- 1.6 The financial figures in respect of pensioner rates have been amended and are aligned with Housing Benefit. These have been calculated with assistance from the Department of Work and Pensions and have been uprated by different mechanisms. For example, the Pension Credit Standard Minimum Guarantee is uprated by earnings, whereas the Additional Pension and increments are uprated by prices.
- Non-dependant deductions
- 1.7 The financial figures for the income bands and deductions made in relation to non-dependants have been uprated. If amendments are not made, the deductions from CTRS awards would not be appropriate as the income thresholds would no longer reflect average earnings and the deduction would no longer reflect the overall cost of council tax.
- 1.8 Other consequential amendments have been made to ensure the 2013 regulations remain up-to-date and fit for purpose:

## 2 Widowed Parents Allowance and Bereavement Support back payments

- 2.1 The proposed amendment to the 2013 CTRS Regulations will ensure no applicant living in Wales is negatively impacted because they have received a Widowed Parents Allowance (WPA) back payment or a retrospective Bereavement Support Payment (BSP).
- 2.2 The amendment makes provision to disregard any payment received from the calculation of an applicant's capital under the scheme.
- 2.3 The amendment proposes that any backdated BSP award would be aligned with the existing provision for BSP awards and disregarded for a period of 12 months. Any WPA back payments will continue to be disregarded from a person's capital.

## 3 Post Office Compensation payments

- 3.1 The UK Government has announced funding to enable the Post Office to deliver compensation schemes and arrangements for various cohorts of postmasters. These include the Horizon Shortfall Scheme, compensation arrangements for postmasters whose convictions were overturned and a compensation scheme for postmasters who did not receive remuneration during a suspension period.
- 3.2 An amendment will ensure no applicant living in Wales is negatively impacted because they receive any compensation or support payment made in connection with the failings of the Post Office Horizon system.
- 3.3 The amendment makes provision to disregard any compensation or support payment received from the calculation of an applicant's capital and a non-dependant's deduction under the scheme.

#### **4 The Vaccine Damage Payment scheme**

- 4.1 The Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) incorporated COVID-19 from December 2020, and the scheme is now processing these claims. The majority of VDPS awards are already disregarded relating to compensation for personal injury. However, this does not currently apply to the partners of vaccinated individuals who receive a payment derived from a VDPS award.
- 4.2 The proposed amendment to the 2013 CTRS Regulations will ensure that no applicant living in Wales is negatively impacted because they receive a payment under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 in respect of a partner.
- 4.3 The amendment makes provision to disregard a payment received from the calculation of an applicant's capital under the scheme.

#### **5 The Infected Blood Inquiry**

- 5.1 The Infected Blood Inquiry published its first interim report in July 2022: this made a number of recommendations for a framework for compensation and redress for the victims of infected blood. The report recommended that interim compensation payments of £100,000 be made to infected persons and bereaved partners who registered with a UK infected blood support scheme.
- 5.2 Where an infected person or their bereaved partner died before the interim payment could be made, the Government agreed that the interim payment of £100,000 would be made to that person's estate.
- 5.3 An amendment to the 2013 CTRS Regulations will ensure that no applicant living in Wales is negatively impacted because they receive an interim infected blood compensation payment from their deceased parent's estate.
- 5.4 The amendment makes provision to disregard a payment received from the calculation of an applicant's capital under the scheme.

#### **6 Minor technical and consequential amendments**

- 6.1 Some further minor technical amendments are proposed to the 2013 CTRS Regulations to align provisions in Wales with England and housing benefit provisions. These ensure an applicant who is a pensioner and responsible for a young person who is in receipt of an Armed Forces Independence Payment is taken into account when calculating eligibility. The amendment also ensures that the list of matters which must be disregarded in relation to non-dependant deductions in relation to working-aged people also applies to pensioners.
- 6.2 A consequential amendment will also reflect changes to the legislative landscape as a result of The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 which becomes operational from April 2024.

- 6.3 The amendments made to the Prescribe Requirements Regulations by regulations 6 to 9 update certain figures used to calculate whether a person is entitled to a reduction, and if so, the amount of that reduction. The updated figures apply to non-dependant deductions (adjustments made to the maximum amount of a reduction that a person can receive taking into account adults living in the dwelling who are not the applicant's dependants) and the applicable amount (the amount against which an applicant's income is compared to determine the reduction, if any, which the applicant may be entitled to receive). A number of other figures are also updated to reflect changes to various other entitlements. The same amendments are made to the Default Scheme Regulations by regulations 14 to 16. Regulation 15 also corrects a typographical error in the Welsh text of the Default Scheme Regulations.
- 6.4 Although the Act gives Welsh Ministers discretion to allow Welsh local authorities to determine the contents of schemes themselves, the Government's decision to establish a national framework for the provision of Council Tax Support in Wales avoids what has been termed a "postcode lottery" whereby eligibility for a Council Tax reduction and the size of the Council Tax reduction for particular groups could be different in different council areas.
- 6.5 Although a national scheme is due to be approved at the Senedd debate on 16 January 2024, within the Prescribed Requirements Regulations, limited discretion is given to the Council to apply additional discretionary elements that are more generous than the national scheme and which provide for additional administrative flexibility remain. These are:
- 6.6 The ability to increase the standard extended reduction period of 4 weeks given to persons after they return to work where they have previously been receiving a council tax reduction that is to end as a result of their return to work;
- 6.7 Discretion to increase the amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions which is to be disregarded when calculating income of the claimant;
- 6.8 Discretion to enhance the process for notification of decisions above the minimum requirements; and
- 6.9 The ability to backdate the application of council tax reduction with regard to late claims prior to the new standard period of three months before the claim.
- 6.10 It is required by the Prescribed Requirements Regulations that the Council adopts a Council Tax Reduction Scheme by 31 January 2024, regardless of whether it applies any of the discretionary elements. If the Council fails to make a scheme, then a default scheme shall apply under the provisions of the Default Scheme Regulations. The Council can only apply discretion if it makes its own scheme under the Prescribed Requirements Regulations, which is the purpose of this report now to Council. The Council has not undertaken consultation on the adoption of the scheme as the Council is no longer obliged to carry out consultation on the adoption of a scheme as the provisions were set by the Welsh Government and no changes are recommended on the discretionary elements. Even without the application of any of the discretionary elements, the Council is obliged to make a scheme under the requirements of the Prescribed Requirements Regulations notwithstanding the fact that a default scheme would come into effect even if the Council failed to make a scheme. The obligation is a statutory duty and applies even if the Council chose not to apply any of the discretions available to it.
- 6.11 The recommended approach is to adopt the Scheme in the Prescribed Requirements Regulations and to continue to exercise the available discretions as follows:-
- 6.12 The ability to increase the standard extended reduction period of 4 weeks given to persons after they return to work where they have previously been receiving a council tax reduction that is to end as a result of their return to work [It is not recommended to increase the standard extended reduction period] ;

- 6.13 Discretion to increase the amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions which is to be disregarded when calculating income of the claimant [It is recommended to disregard the whole amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions] ;
- 6.14 Discretion to enhance the process for notification of decisions above the minimum requirements [It is not recommended to enhance the process for notification of decisions] ; and
- 6.15 The ability to backdate the application of council tax reduction with regard to late claims prior to the new standard period of three months before the claim. [It is not recommended to increase the backdated period].
- 6.16 It should be noted the above recommendations follow existing practice and continue with the features of the existing, 2022/2023 Scheme. There are no additional monies available from the Welsh Government to fund discretionary elements.
- 6.17 The Council continues to have powers to support hardship on an individual basis or in respect of a defined group. Such arrangements cannot form part of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme itself. The Council has previously had access to grant for discretionary housing payments and will continue to provide support where appropriate.

## 7 Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

- 7.1 Up-rating the financial in respect of pensioners and working age allowances would slightly increase total reductions under CTRS. However, if the financial figures in relation to non-dependant deductions were also up-rated, this would mitigate some of the increase in total reductions. Consequently, total council tax reductions are not expected to rise significantly as a result of the up-rating.
- 7.2 Funds to pay for the scheme are within the Council's base budget as the historical specific grant from WG that used to fund this was transferred into the Revenue Support Grant in 2013/14 for the provision of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

## 8 Risks

The Council needs to manage the cost of Council Tax Support within its budget.

<b>Risk Title / Description</b>	<b>Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)</b>	<b>Risk Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)</b>	<b>Risk Mitigation Action(s)</b> What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	<b>Risk Owner</b> Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?
Failure to adopt a scheme in accordance with the required regulations	L	L	There is a default scheme in the event that the Council does not follow the appropriate procedures.	Head of Finance

Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

## 9 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- 9.1 The Welfare Reform changes are imposed by national government and devolved to the Welsh Government for implementation by Councils. The Council's response within its service areas will be to try to ensure that any effects of the reforms are mitigated wherever possible.

## **10 Options Available and considered**

### **Option 1 – Do nothing.**

- 10.1 If the financial figures used to assess household allowances in the council tax reduction means-test remained static, the criteria used would be slightly less generous for non-passported applicants and would lead to small decreases in support in real terms.
- 10.2 The financial figures used to assess the eligibility of households with non-dependants would be out-of-date. The income thresholds would no longer reflect average earnings and the adjustment made to the final Council Tax Reduction would no longer reflect overall cost of Council Tax.
- 10.3 If consequential amendments are not made to the 2013 CTRS Regulations, this would mean that they would not take account of changes to related welfare benefits and other legislation. This could disadvantage some applicants by reducing or stopping their entitlement to support. It could also create confusion for applicants and increase the administrative burden for local authorities and advice providers.
- 10.4 The default scheme would be implemented and the local discretionary elements would be lost.

### **Option 2 – Adopt amended Regulations and retain local discretionary elements.**

- 10.5 This option would mean that amendments would be made to uprate the financial figures in the 2013 CTRS Regulations in line with to Welsh Government policy, cost-of-living increases and changes to qualifying benefits.
- 10.6 The financial figures in relation to working age, disability or carer rates will continue to increase with the cost of living for 2024-25 which is 6.7%, as measured by CPI. The personal allowances for pensioners will be uprated to align with those for Housing Benefit and the benefits system. The increase would be aligned to the UK Government's Standard Minimum Guarantee (in Pension Credit) plus the maximum amount of Savings Credit (in Pension Credit).
- 10.7 The financial figures used to calculate the adjustment for non-dependant deductions would be uprated. The income thresholds in relation to non-dependants would be uprated to reflect average earnings and the non-dependant deduction from CTRS would reflect the average increase in council tax.
- 10.8 The necessary technical and consequential amendments would also be made.
- 10.9 The local discretionary elements would be retained as indicated in the report above and which are unchanged from the current position on these.

## **11 Preferred Option and Why**

- 11.1 The changes are largely mandatory with the exception of the limited discretions identified in the report. The Council needs to determine the specific discretions as part of its Scheme.
- 11.2 The proposal is that Council adopts the revised national Council Tax Reduction Scheme including the preferred discretions which maintain existing practice, as detailed in option 2 above.



## **12 Comments of Chief Financial Officer**

12.1 As noted above, the funds to pay for the scheme are contained within the Council's base budget, since WG transferred the specific grant for this into the Revenue Support Grant in 2013/14. The budget is uplifted each year in line with the increase in Council Tax and to date, has been more than sufficient. A saving on the budget is being proposed in the Cabinet's draft budget but that is simply to re-align with current demand levels. As no changes to these flexibilities are being recommended, the current budget (after any savings agreed) should therefore be sufficient on a like for like basis on current demand levels.

12.2 Whilst unrelated to the updating of the scheme parameters and eligibility criteria, there are key issues to note in relation to this important scheme:

- This is a demand led budget and the schemes criteria and eligibility alone determines its costs to the Council and not budget availability. All eligible applicants are supported in line with the national scheme / local discretions.
- The demand for CTRS support is very important in the current situation with continuing cost of living challenges and all opportunities to advertise its existence is used. In saying that, claimant numbers/costs have not increased significantly over the last 12 months or so and is monitored carefully.

## **13 Comments of Monitoring Officer**

13.1 The Council has a statutory duty to approve a revised Council Tax Reduction scheme by 31st January 2024 in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Schemes) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. If the Council does not adopt a revised local scheme before the end of January, then a Default Scheme will come into operation. In Wales, the Welsh Government has prescribed a national council tax reduction scheme and, therefore, the Council has no option but to adopt the mandatory elements of the scheme. The previous mandatory scheme has been revised to ensure that financial allowances are provided for those most in need. The national scheme also permits some local discretions to be applied as set out in this report and it is recommended that these should continue to be applied as part of the local scheme. There is no longer any formal consultation requirement, because of the mandatory nature of the national scheme and the Council has previously consulted on the local discretions. The approval of the Council Tax Reduction scheme under the Regulations and the Local Government Finance Act 1988 is a non-executive decision for full Council.

## **14 Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation**

14.1 The proposed CTRS is mainly reflective of amendments to the Prescribed Requirements Regulations. In addition, it is proposed to keep the preferred discretions from the previous scheme in place and follow existing practice. This will maintain the measures in place to support low-income households in paying Council Tax and in doing so contributing to wellbeing objectives including a more equal Wales and principles of fairness.

14.2 There are no human resources issues arising from this report.

## **15 Comments of Cabinet Member**

15.1 The Cabinet Members for Sustainable Development, Community and Resources and for Social Services (pending confirmation) have been consulted on the report and support the proposal.

## **16 Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:**

## **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**

15.1 The policy supports the principles within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Maintaining full entitlement to Council Tax Reduction Scheme will continue to help low income households in meeting their council tax liability and as such will help to contribute to the wellbeing objectives of: a prosperous Wales; and a more equal Wales.

## **16 Equality Act 2010**

16.1 The council has considered its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A full FEIA has not been completed in relation to this report as an all-Wales policy is being adopted, with the full range of local discretions being implemented in Newport, in turn resulting in positive impacts for those communities who may experience disadvantage. The all-Wales policy has been developed by Welsh Government who are a specified body with responsibilities under the Equality Act.

16.2 An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the introduction of the 2013 Council Tax Reduction Scheme Regulations and will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

## **17 Socio-economic Duty**

18.1 This policy does not constitute a strategic decision as defined under the Socio-economic Duty. However the additional discretions to apply council tax reduction to specified groups contributes to the reduction of inequalities that may arise as a result of socio-economic disadvantage.

18.2 As Council Tax Reduction is a means tested benefit those who qualify could be assumed to be in lower social-economic groups. As these changes relate directly to the basis of the means test within CTR, those who work or have independent sources of income are the only groups affected by the proposed changes and would have to contribute more towards their Council Tax liability. The low median income for working households in Newport means these households are more likely to need financial assistance through CTR with paying their Council Tax.

## **19 Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

19.1 The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 modernised the existing legal framework regarding the use of the Welsh language in the delivery of public services. The measure is an inherent component of fairness and equality. The council supports promoting and facilitating use of Welsh and treating Welsh no less favourably than English.

## **20 Consultation**

20.1 The Council is not required to consult on the proposals of the new scheme as the amendments made are in consequence of amendments made to the Prescribed Requirements Regulations. The local discretions that are available to the Council will remain unchanged.

## **21 Background Papers**

The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.

Explanatory Memorandum to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2024



Draft CTRS  
regularions 2024.pdf

Explanatory  
Memorandum CTRS

Dated: 08 December 2023



# Report

## Council

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### Part 1

**Date:** 23 January 2024

**Subject** **Council Tax Premiums for Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes**

**Purpose** This report provides Council with Cabinet’s recommendations on the introduction of council tax premiums for long term empty properties and second homes.

**Author** Head of Finance and Benefits Manager

**Ward** All

**Summary** Cabinet at its meeting on 10 January 2024 looked at the options available for charging council tax premiums for long term empty properties and second homes as a way to encourage owners to bring properties back into use and reduce the number of unoccupied and underused properties across the city.

Cabinet decided to recommend introducing council tax premiums and this report sets out the full proposal for Council to consider.

**Proposal** **To consider Cabinet’s recommendation to introduce council tax premiums for long term empty properties.**

**To move a recommendation to introduce Council Tax premiums in line with paragraph 3.1 from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 for long-term empty homes and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 for second homes at a rate of 100%.**

**Action by** Head of Finance and Revenues and Benefits Manager.

**Timetable** Effective from 1 April 2024 for long term empty properties and 1 April 2025 for second homes.

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Head of Finance
- Head of Law & Regulation
- Head of People Policy and Transformation

**Signed**

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Since the pandemic Newport has seen a 114 per cent rise in demand for temporary accommodation. In March 2023, there were over 450 households placed in temporary accommodation under the council's statutory housing duties. There are currently over 9,000 people on the Common Housing Register for social housing in the city. In 21/22 there were 686 new letting of social housing of which 302 went to homeless households.
- 1.2 As a council we are committed to transforming our housing service to meet current pressures, improve outcomes for citizens and to ensure that homelessness becomes rare, brief and unrepeated in the city. To achieve this we must increase the supply of good quality and affordable accommodation by making best use of all available housing stock, including empty properties. There are currently high numbers of empty properties that despite efforts to encourage owners to bring them back into use, remain empty, often for many years. There are also a small number of second homes in the city that are kept furnished and ready for use but are not used as anyone's sole or main residence.
- 1.3 There are currently 2,565 empty dwellings in the city, of which 1,440 are exempt from paying council tax. Of the remaining 1,125, many of those, around 830 are long term empty properties, having been continuously vacant for a year or more. There are currently 15 second homes.
- 1.4 From April 2019, Newport City Council removed the discretionary 50% discount on empty homes and no reductions are available other than the statutory exemptions when a property first becomes empty and unfurnished.
- 1.5 In the case of empty properties, they are initially exempt for 6 months, or 12 months if major work is required. Following the expiration of the exemption period, council tax is charged at the full standard rate. If introduced, a premium would apply after a property has been empty and unfurnished for a period of at least 12 months which includes the exemption period.
- 1.6 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 gives local authorities in Wales the discretion to charge a premium on top of the standard rate of council tax on long-term empty dwellings and second homes. Most Welsh councils have now adopted premiums and Newport City Council is one of only a handful of authorities yet to do so.
- 1.7 The Council can choose any percentage for the premium up to a maximum of 300% of the standard council tax. A premium of 100% effectively doubles the amount due, a premium of 300% would see four times the standard council tax being charged.
- 1.8 The intention of charging a premium is to encourage property owners to bring them back into use as soon as possible to avoid having to pay a premium. Should they remain unused the additional income raised from the premium can be used by the Council.
- 1.9 The Council can retain the full amount of council tax premium collected without its share of RSG being adversely affected. The Council is encouraged to use the additional funds for housing related expenditure, though this is not mandatory. Housing services costs have increased very significantly over the last 2-3 years as housing demand outstrips supply and the cost of short-term temporary placements is unrecoverable due to Housing Benefit Subsidy regulations. The Council invested £2.7m in housing budgets over the last 2 years and demand continues to exceed budget levels.
- 1.10 Whether to charge a premium on second homes or long-term empty properties (or both) is, therefore a decision to be made by each Council. The Act also provides regulations which make exceptions to the premiums and these are set out in the Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015.

- 1.11 The report to Cabinet on 15 November 2023 set out the conditions when a premium could be charged and Cabinet agreed that a consultation exercise should be carried out to gauge public opinion on the matter. The consultation has now concluded.

At its meeting on 10 January 2024 Cabinet considered the results of the public consultation and decided to recommend that the Council considers introducing council tax premiums for long term empty properties and second homes.

## **2. Consultation Summary**

- 2.1 An online consultation exercise was undertaken, and respondents asked for their views on a number of key points around long-term empty properties and second homes premiums.

The consultation was open for 4 weeks and 470 responses were received during that time.

The detailed analysis of the consultation responses is shown in appendix 1 and is summarised below.

### **Long Term Empty Properties**

- The responses showed that most respondents 66%, consider that empty homes are detrimental to the neighbourhood.
  - The responses received highlighted the anti-social behaviour that often accompanies long term empty homes and this was mentioned in the comments numerous times.
  - From the survey responses there is strong support for the Council to take steps to reduce the number of empty homes in the city, with 76% in favour of the Council doing more to reduce the number of long-term empty homes.
  - Empty home premiums are broadly supported with 57% agreeing with the introduction of a premium, compared to 34% that disagreed.
  - A majority of respondents 64% believe that the introduction of a long-term empty premium would result in decrease in the number of empty homes.
  - Opinion was spread on the percentage that an empty home premium should be set at to be effective however the most popular choice saw 26% choosing 100% as the preferred level.
- 2.2 The Consultation also sought views on any exceptions, other than the statutory ones that could be provided for if premiums for long-term empty properties are introduced.

It was evident from the comments received that there are a multitude of reasons why a property is left empty, however the following were circumstances most mentioned where respondents felt that a premium should not be charged:

- Where building work is taking place to make empty homes habitable.
  - Where the empty property is attached to and accessed via a business premises and does not have a separate entrance, for example a flat over a shop where access to the flat is through the shop.
  - Where a new owner buys a long-term empty property and must pay a premium straight away without any allowance given to get the property ready for occupation.
- 2.3 For cases that do not fall into one of the statutory exception classes the Council can, should it wish to do so, include its own classes of exception to a premium. Owners with properties that do not fall into either the statutory or Newport specific exception classes may submit an appeal against a premium using the existing process for consideration under the Council's discretionary relief policy.

## Second Homes

- Second homes were seen as less detrimental to the neighbourhood than empty properties, with the most respondents 48% seeing them as having a neutral effect on local neighbourhoods.
- There was no clear view on whether steps should be taken to reduce the number of second homes with 47% agreeing that steps should be taken to reduce the number, compared to 52% that do not want action taken.
- The question on whether the Council should introduce a premium for second homes saw 47% for the introduction of a second home premium and 38% against.
- On the question of the effect on the number of empty homes if a second home premium was introduced, 61% of respondents believe the number would decrease whilst 34% thought it would have no effect.
- The question of the percentage that second home premium should be set at to be effective saw the largest number 30% choosing 100% as the preferred level.
- The introduction of a second home premium was seen by most respondents, 57% as likely to have a neutral effect on the Welsh Language.

2.4 The Consultation also sought views on any exceptions, other than the statutory ones that should be allowed for if premiums for second homes are introduced.

Unlike long term empty homes there was less consensus on additional exceptions for second homes however the following circumstances were mentioned by several respondents:

- Second homes being used by commuters.
- Short term lets as they bring economic benefits to the city.
- Probate and family disputes connected to inheritance or the estate of a deceased person.

2.5 As well as the consultation exercise Council officers have participated in a number of meetings facilitated by Welsh Government to enable the experiences of those that have already introduced premiums to be shared.

These meetings have highlighted the following:

- The statutory exceptions to premiums are too narrow leading to high numbers of appeals.
- Many councils are considering introducing additional exceptions due to the time taken to deal with appeals and the additional resources required to do so.

The main issues identified are:

- Those purchasing a long-term empty property having to pay a premium from day 1 of ownership, even if the intention is to live there.
- Those purchasing a long-term empty property having to pay a premium from day 1 of ownership, where the intention is to carry out building work to make it habitable.
- Properties attached to business premises without a separate entrance that cannot be sold or let independently.

2.6 Should it choose to do so the Council can include its own classes of exceptions to a premium if a case does not fall into one of the statutory or Newport specific exceptions an appeal would need to be made and considered under the existing discretionary relief policy.

## Comments Received

2.7 The consultation also allowed for respondents to register their comments and a selection are shown in appendix 1 to this report.

### **3. Recommendations for Newport City Council**

3.1 Based on the consultation responses and the experiences of other Welsh councils that have already introduced council tax premiums, and the need to bring empty properties back into use, Council are asked to consider and implement:

- Introducing from 1 April 2024 a council tax premium of 100% long-term empty properties and from 1 April 2025 a council tax premium of 100% for second homes.
- Allowing for specific additional exceptions to a premium in certain cases, namely:
  - A period of up to 3 months without a premium for new owners who would otherwise be subject to a premium from day one of ownership, and up to 6 months for new owners where major building work is being carried out.
  - No premium to be charged on properties attached to a business where there is no separate entrance.

Where a registered social landlord has strategic empty properties that are earmarked for future large scale development, the Council will develop a policy that balances the need for homes and future development.

### **4. Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)**

4.1 There are no capital implications.

From a revenue perspective, the implementation of a premium will result in additional Council Tax being due, in line with the relevant level of premium adopted and the number of eligible properties. The level of premium due across all eligible properties will be reflected in the Council's annual tax base calculation. For example, should a premium of 100% be implemented, an eligible property would effectively be worth double the standard rate of Council Tax at the relevant banding. As a result, when setting the annual revenue budget for the year, the Council would budget for the additional Council Tax likely to be generated, less the appropriate allowance for non-collection.

It is important to note that Council Tax premiums are discounted from the tax base figure that features in the Welsh Government's annual Local Government Settlement calculation. Therefore, the introduction of a premium will not impact upon the level of Revenue Support Grant received by the local authority.

As well as the additional income that is generated, it will be necessary to consider the resources required within the Revenues team to administer the scheme. This cost is something that will need to be reflected as a pressure in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and will, in overall terms, reduce the level of additional income that can be budgeted for.

### **Risks**

<b>Risk</b>	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
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Eligible properties are lower than the Council anticipated leading to lower income levels.	H	M	A survey of empty properties and targeted inspections will be undertaken in advance of premiums being introduced to refine the estimates for chargeable premiums.	Head of Finance
Collection rates of premiums are lower than budgeted.	M	M	Recovery action will be taken promptly and where necessary a charge to secure the council tax debt will be placed on the property.	Revenues & Benefits Manager.
Large volume of queries/appeals are received.	H	H	Additional staff resources will be required to handle the additional correspondence and property inspections.  Specifying NCC specific exceptions will reduce the number of potential appeals and protracted correspondence.	Revenues & Benefits Manager.

## Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Addressing homelessness and increasing the availability of affordable housing is set out within the Council's Corporate Plan and the Housing and Communities Service Plan. This report provides proposals on how introducing Council Tax premiums could impact upon available premises and support Council financial management processes by bringing empty properties back into use.

One of the principles for delivery of our Corporate Plan is to be a listening council and for the views of communities, service users, and partners to shape the services we deliver, and the places people live in. Should cabinet progress with this proposal, a public consultation will be undertaken and will inform any decision making.

## Options Available and considered

### Options 1 - Introduce a second home and long-term empty home premium at 100%

The consultation showed that there is strong support for the Council to take steps to reduce the number of long-term empty homes in the city with a majority in favour of introducing a council tax premium for long term empty properties. Should Council agree to the introduction of a long term-empty property premium and second home premium the earliest it could be effective is from 1 April 2024 in the case of long-term empty properties and 1 April 2025 for second homes.

There was less consensus on the level that any premium should be set at, the consultation showed that a premium level of 100% was most popular, and given that introducing premiums would be a significant change to the administration of council tax a higher level than 100% could cause difficulties given the



tight timescales before implementation and the lack of data regarding all the individual reasons why a property is vacant. It would therefore be sensible to introduce a premium at 100% given all these factors.

Whilst the consultation showed that there was less support for a second home premium to be introduced it is fair that all homes that are not used as someone's main residence are treated in a similar way and introducing a second home premium would achieve this. The Council would be required to agree to a second home premium before 31 March 2024 for charges to be made from 1 April 2025 due to the time limits in the regulations.

## **Option 2 - Do not introduce a second home and long-term empty property premium.**

Nothing will change if Cabinet decide not to recommend introducing a second home and long-term empty property premium and owners will continue to be liable for just the standard rate of council tax.

Given the fact that the number of empty homes across the city has remained stubbornly high for many years it is unlikely that this will change should the opportunity to introduce premiums not be taken.

## **Preferred Option and Why**

The recommendation of this report is that option 1 is taken and Council adopt the **Newport City Council – Council Tax Premium Scheme** shown in appendix 2, and a council tax premium of 100% is introduced for long term empty properties from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, and for second homes from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, for all relevant properties that do not fall into one of the statutory exceptions or one of the additional categories detailed in the scheme.

## **Comments of Chief Financial Officer**

The introduction of a Council Tax premium will hopefully result in homes being back into use across the city. The income generated from this should therefore, if the policy objective is successful, reduce over time and will need to be carefully monitored.

If approved by full Council, the initial financial impact will be based on a realistic number of houses which would be subject to a premium and make allowance for resources to collect this income and achieve the policy objective. This will be factored into the Council's MTFP and be reviewed annually thereafter.

## **Comments of Monitoring Officer**

The Council has the power to raise the Council Tax charge on empty dwellings as set out in the report. The legal provisions and considerations relating to this are summarised and set out full within the embedded guidance document produced by the Welsh Government.

Prior to implementing the change, the Council has entered into a consultation process as agreed by Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The responses received have been largely positive in terms of introducing premiums for empty properties and second homes, with the preferred option being the introduction of a 100% premium for these properties.

In addition to the consultation process a Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. The results are summarised within the report and demonstrate that the recommended decision will achieve a positive impact on those with protected characteristics. The Council must ensure that the outcomes from the consultation process and the FEIA set out in this report are taken into

account and are considered prior to making any final decision on the matter. Any decision to implement a change to Council Tax charges must be taken by full Council.

## **Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation**

This report proposes the use of Council Tax premiums as a way to encourage more dwellings to be brought back into use, and increase the long-term availability of safe, secure housing within the city. A consultation exercise was undertaken which indicated strong support for the introduction of premiums in the case of empty homes, but less so for second homes, of which there are a relatively small number in Newport. A Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is summarised in this report. There are no direct HR implications.

## **Scrutiny Committees**

none

## **Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:**

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Socio-economic Duty**
- **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act seeks to improve the social, economic environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Public bodies should ensure that decisions consider the impact they could have on people living in Wales in the future. The Council has always sought to engage with residents before taking any decision which may impact upon the delivery of any public service in accordance with the principles of fairness and legitimate expectation. The sustainable development principle and 5 ways of working set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act have been considered as outlined below:-

- **Long term:** the importance of balancing short- term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs: The consultation exercise that was carried out gathered opinion on the use of premiums as a way to encourage more dwellings to be brought back into use and increase the long-term supply of available housing within the city.

There was strong support amongst those that responded for the Council to take action to bring empty properties back into use.

- **Prevention:** How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help us meet our objectives. If more homes are made available because of the introduction of premiums it will help reduce reliance on temporary and emergency housing.

- **Integration:** Consider how the proposals will impact on our wellbeing objectives, our wellbeing goals, other objectives, or those of other public bodies. This proposal supports the following wellbeing objectives:

**To improve skills, education and employment opportunities** – insecure housing leads to adverse outcomes for the education of children and maintaining employment, the provision of stable quality affordable housing is required to ensure that education and employment opportunities are not diminished.

**To enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient** – to achieve this people require safe, secure and accessible housing, by introducing council tax premiums the Council is demonstrating its commitment to using all available options to increase available housing across the city.

**To build cohesive and sustainable communities** – cohesive communities are those that have secure stable housing enabling residents to put down roots and feel part of the local community, by introducing council tax premiums the Council is therefore demonstrating its commitment building cohesive and sustainable communities.

- **Collaboration:** Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of NCC) that could help us meet our well-being objectives. Should council tax premiums be introduced the Revenues Team will be working closely with the empty homes team to identify properties where a premium may be applicable and also to offer solutions to the owners who may require assistance in bringing their properties into a useable condition.

- **Involvement:** The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the city we serve. The Council engaged with the local community related to the proposal by way of a public consultation.

A Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) has been carried out, and is summarised below:

The council has a number of legislative responsibilities to assess the impact of any strategic decision, proposal or policy on people that may experience disadvantage or inequality. This has been carried out as follows:

- A public consultation exercise was undertaken to gather views on the proposal to introduce council tax premiums. The outcome of the consultation is summarised in the report and full analysis of the data can be found in Appendix 1. The recommendations of this report take account of the feedback, including local exemptions to the Newport scheme.
- The key stakeholders are the owners of empty properties and second homes, they have all been directly contacted and invited to take part in the consultation and ensure that their views are recorded. As noted above, their feedback has been noted and informed the recommendations in this report.
- No negative impacts on any groups with protected characteristics have been identified through the FEIA process.
- The FEIA details the positive impact that bringing properties back into use will have on homelessness within the city.

## Consultation

A full consultation exercise has been undertaken on the proposal and the full results are shown in Appendix 1 to this report.

## Background Papers



WG Guidance  
Council Tax on Emp

Dated: 29 December 2023

## Appendix 1

### Consultation on the Introduction of Second Home and Long Term Empty Council Tax Premiums

This report presents the findings of the Empty Properties and Second Home consultation with regard to the proposed introduction of a Council Tax Premium.

The consultation was conducted in-house in the form of an online survey.

The consultation period ran from the 17 November 2023 and ended on the 15 December 2023.

Views were sought on proposals to; -

- Reduce the numbers of empty homes and second homes in the city.
- Introduce a Council Tax Premium on long-term empty properties and second homes.
- The level of premium to be most effective.
- The effect a premium may have the number of available properties.
- Additional exceptions when a premium should not be applied.
- The effect that introducing a premium on long-term empty properties and second homes would have on the Welsh language.

The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders; -

- A letter or email was sent to all empty property and second home owners.
- An online questionnaire was available on the Newport CC website.
- Promotion of the consultation on the Council's website/social media and in the residents newsletter.
- A link to the online survey was emailed to over 33,000 people who are registered for the Council's online services that have indicated they are happy to be contacted.

In total 470 responses were received to the consultation.

#### Who Responded?

Local residents	377
Local businesses	15
Public Sector/Voluntary organisations	5
Other/no answer	73

Newport Residents	422
Live Elsewhere	47
Did not answer	2

Pay council tax to NCC	380
Do not pay council to NCC	88

Did not answer	2
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Own an empty property in Newport	106
Do not own an empty property	363
Did not answer	1
Own a second home in Newport (some respondents may have classified an empty property as a second home and ticked both boxes)	59

Respondents provided their comments on the proposals via the facility to free type their comments.

A large number of comments were from owners of empty properties and second homes and in disagreement with the proposals.

A common concern expressed was that a blanket policy of higher rates will unfairly impact people with individual circumstances beyond their control. Circumstances described included;

- increased costs of renovation work,
- difficulties in finding tradesmen/source supplies and planning delays;
- collapsed sales or longer than expected time spent on the sales or letting markets;
- inherited property.
- being unable to meet the costs of selling or letting a property.
- having ties to the local area but being unable to live here at present.
- and a number of other individual situations.

A number of respondents have let/ currently let/ intend to let properties but state that they are unable to afford or complete necessary works to bring properties up to legislative standards. Causes included:

- damage by former tenants.
- unexpected redundancy or ill-health.
- Cost of renovations.

## Results

Question	Options	No. of Responses	%
What effect do empty homes have on the neighbourhood?	Negative Neutral Positive No Answer	310 130 20 10	66% 28% 4% 2%
Should NCC put measures in place to reduce the number of empty homes?	Yes No No answer	359 108 2	76% 23% 1%
To What extent to you agree with introduction of an empty home premium?	Strongly Agree/Agree Neutral Strongly Disagree/Disagree No answer	270 39 159 2	57% 8% 34% 1%

What effect would an empty home premium have on the number of empty homes?	Decrease significantly/moderately Stay the same Increase moderately/significantly? No answer	303 145 20 2	64% 31% 4% 1%
To be effective at what level should an empty property premium be set?	100% 200% 300% Other No Answer	121 76 45 186 42	26% 16% 10% 40% 8%
What effect would the introduction of an empty home premium have on Welsh language?	Positive Neutral Negative Did not answer	110 258 93 9	23% 55% 20% 2%

## Second Homes

Question	Options	No. of Responses	%
What effect do second homes have on the neighbourhood?	Negative Neutral Positive No Answer	173 225 65 7	37% 48% 14% 1%
Should NCC put measures in place to reduce the number of second homes?	Yes No No Answer	222 242 6	47% 52% 1%
To What extent to you agree with introduction of a premium for second homes?	Strongly Agree/Agree Neutral Strongly Disagree/Disagree No Answer	219 68 177 6	47% 14% 38% 1%
What effect would a second home premium have on the number of empty homes?	Decrease significantly/moderately Stay the same Increase moderately/significantly? No answer	285 160 18 7	61% 34% 4% 1%
To be effective at what level should a second home premium be set?	100% 200% 300% Other No answer	142 48 68 143 69	30% 10% 14% 30% 16%
What effect would a second home premiums have on Welsh?	Positive Neutral Negative No answer	84 268 97 21	18% 57% 21% 4%

## Comments Received

The consultation invited respondents to add their comments throughout the consultation.

### **On the question of empty homes and the effect on neighbourhoods:**

*'It can't be right for 800 homes to be left empty when so many people need places to live.'*

*'Empty homes attract squatters and vandals and are often a magnet for vermin. They also tend to be unkempt and make a neighbourhood look run down and generally spoil the look and feel of the street.'*

*'It makes an area look run down and neglected, it also adds to ASB'*

*'There are many homeless people in Newport. Empty houses are adding insult to injury.'*

*'If these were on the market, rent and house prices should go down'*

*'No-one living there the local economy doesn't benefit'*

*'Very bad for the homes located around the property and local area'*

*'An increasing premium dependent on how long a property remains empty. It is completely unacceptable to have people in Newport struggling to find a home when so many places are sitting empty.'*

*'Current housing pressures require innovative solutions.'*

**A number of comments reflected the view that help should be made available to owners to bring empty properties back into use:**

*'Why not work with property owners. Why is the property empty and what can be done to help'*

*'You should encourage owners with other schemes to try and get the empty houses occupied rather than charge owners more council tax.'*

*'Compulsory purchase - at a reduced rate due to lack of use and maintenance.'*

**A number of comments were received disagreeing with the introduction of a premium for long term empty properties:**

*'If the empty houses don't use your services they shouldn't pay anything.'*

*'none is just another money grabbing scheme (sic)'*

*'This consultation smacks of political cowardice. If someone owns a second home and decides to leave it empty, that is their business and none of yours. It's private property and not the council's business to be trying to penalise them for a legitimate and lawful choice.'*

*'Empty homes are a result of financial difficulties. increasing council tax just adds to the difficulty and debt'*

*'If you're not living there you shouldn't pay. Stealth tax. People are already struggling.'*

*'There cannot be a blanket policy as there are circumstances beyond a person's control which is not recognised by the council.'*

*'I don't think this should be charged. Charging additional council tax I don't think will encourage owners like myself back into use. It is just an additional cost that I will incur while completing the renovations.'*

**Comments received in relation to whether second homes have a positive or negative effect on neighbourhoods:**

*'Unfair if not in use.'*

*'second homes contribute very little other than to the owner.'*

*'houses are not used for living and this is a waste.'*

*'Attracts tourism in summer/Xmas but needs a strong tourism attraction/series of attractions to be beneficial. Otherwise, it's generally negative.'*

*'Second homes in a place like Newport are so unlikely that I have no idea why this is even a question. It's hardly the seaside, is it?'*

*'For the time the property is occupied during the season. Why not make use of these empty properties to house homeless people revenue is being spent locally- thus helping the community. But for the 'closed' season it is just another empty property.'*

**Comments received on the introduction of a premium for second homes:**

*'It reduces tourism in the area which is not a good thing.'*

*'Second Homes are not a problem in Newport.'*

*'People should be entitled to own a second home if they wish, so shouldn't be stopped, but they should pay a premium so they help the economy in other ways.'*

*'Discourages investment brought to city'*

*'If people can afford a second home through their hard work then why penalise them. People make choices in life, some good, some bad.'*

*'It depends why there are second homes if they are being let to people that can not afford to purchase them what is the choice.'*



## **Appendix 2**

### Council Tax Premiums for Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes

#### **Newport City Council – Council Tax Premium Scheme**

##### **Long Term Empty Properties**

Effective from 1 April 2024 all long-term empty properties, as defined in the Council Tax (Long Term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied Periodically) (Wales) Regulations 2022, shall be charged a premium of 100% unless they fall into one of the statutory exceptions as specified in the Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015.

In addition, no premium in respect of a long-term empty property shall apply in the following circumstances:

##### **Local Exception A**

Where an empty property does not have a separate entrance and can only be accessed through an existing business premises and it is not possible to create a separate entrance, for example, by blocking-up or unblocking a doorway.

The exception will be granted annually and will be reviewed and inspected periodically.

This category will not apply if the building is altered to remove an existing separate entrance.

This exception will end if a separate entrance is created.

##### **Local Exception B**

Where a premium is payable on a long-term empty property that is sold, the new owner will not be charged a premium for the first 3 months following the date of purchase.

To qualify the property sale must be evidenced by registration with the Land Registry or by the solicitors acting for the parties.

No premium shall apply until 3 months after the completion of the sale.

If a premium falls due within in the first three months of new ownership, an exception will be granted that is equivalent to no premium being due until 3 months after the date of purchase.

The exception will end when the time limit is reached.

##### **Local Exception C**

Where a premium is payable on a long-term empty property that is sold, the new owner will not be charged a premium for up to 6 months while major building work is being carried out with the intention of bringing the property back into use.

This exception will only be awarded following an inspection and a detailed schedule of works being provided.

To qualify:

- The application must be made within 12 months of the change of ownership and the property sale must be evidenced by registration with the Land Registry or by the solicitors acting for the parties.
- Works being carried out must be structural and substantial, this exception will not apply to minor works for example replacement windows or the renewal of a bathroom or kitchen.
- The owner may be entitled to claim a council tax exemption if this has not already been awarded to a previous owner. Should a class an exemption apply the owner will receive this exception only in cases where less than 6 months exemption can be awarded, the owner will receive an exception that is equivalent to no premium being charged for 6 months.
- Regardless of circumstances the maximum exception that will be awarded to a new owner is 6 months and in the event that the new owner has already received exception B above, and then commences structural work, only a further 3 month exception under exception C will be awarded.
- Exception C will end when the work is completed, the property is occupied or the time limit as detailed above is reached.

## **Second Homes**

Effective from 1 April 2025 all second homes, as defined in Council Tax (Long Term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied Periodically) (Wales) Regulations 2022 shall be charged a premium of 100% unless they fall into one of the statutory exceptions as specified in the Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015.

The premium shall apply to any second home that falls into class 12A or 12B of the regulations unless an exception applies.



# Report

## Council

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### Part 1

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024

**Subject** Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23

**Purpose** To provide Council with an update on the work of Governance and Audit Committee during 2022/23 and to provide assurance of compliance with legislative responsibilities.

**Author** Head of Finance

**Ward** All Wards

**Summary** This report provides a useful update on the work of Governance and Audit Committee during the 2022/23 financial year. The report demonstrates how the Committee has met the legislative requirements of the Local Government Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, set out within its Terms of Reference under the Council's Constitution

The Committee has achieved this by concentrating on its core responsibilities during the year. The work of the Governance and Audit Committee is a critical component of the Council's assurance processes.

**Proposal** To accept that the Council has met its legislative responsibilities and agree the Committee's annual report.  
To thank committee members for their robust challenge and hard work during the year.

**Action by** Council

**Timetable** Annual report 2022/23 to be accepted by Council January 2024

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Strategic Director for Transformation and Corporate
- Head of Law and Standards
- Head of People, Policy and Transformation

**Signed**

## Background

The Council's Governance and Audit Committee role is to provide challenge in relation to the effectiveness of financial control, risk and assurance processes and procedures in place within the Council to guarantee the adequacy and effectiveness of financial control and corporate governance arrangements.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 brought forward a number of changes to form and function of the previous Audit Committee. These included:

- former Audit Committees would be re-named Governance and Audit Committees
- from May 2022 the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee was required to be a lay member
- one third of its membership had to be lay members.

The Committee has agreed Terms and Reference (as included within the Council's Constitution) in line with the Local Government Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The responsibilities of Governance and Audit Committee, as required by the above legislation, are included in full under Appendix 1 of the Annual Report.

Newport City Council's Governance and Audit Committee comprised three lay members and five elected members during 2022/23. The Committee held six meetings during the municipal year. All meetings were held on a hybrid basis in accordance with Part 4, Appendix 2 of the Constitution setting out arrangements for multi-location meetings. All meetings in 2022/23 were quorate.

Regular reports were received by the Governance and Audit Committee throughout the year. All Members contributed to the challenge process where officers were held to account for improving identified risks and weaknesses. Members contributed positively to the process and took the responsibility of being on the Governance and Audit Committee seriously.

As in previous years, the Committee's main responsibilities concerned having robust and proportionate oversight of the Council's governance, internal control and risk management arrangements including:

- Approving the internal audit plan and monitoring performance against the plan
- Reviewing internal audit reports and seek assurances of change where required
- Considering the reports of external audit and inspection agencies
- Reviewing the draft financial statements
- Reviewing the Council's Treasury Management Strategies and compliance with Prudential Indicators in this respect.
- Considering the effectiveness of the Authority's risk management arrangements
- Maintaining an overview of the Council's Constitution in respect of contract procedure rules and financial regulations
- Making recommendations, as appropriate, to Cabinet and Council on any matters reported through the Governance and Audit Committee
- Ensuring compliance with legal requirements, namely the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, in respect of overseeing the Council's performance assessment and the arrangements for handling complaints
- Scrutinising and being satisfied with the Council's Annual Governance Statement, to demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of objectives, and monitor management action in-year to further improve arrangements; and

- Supporting the ongoing development and effectiveness of Governance and Audit Committee.

A standard agenda item for the Governance and Audit Committee introduced in 2022/23 is a Recommendation Table, where named officers are responsible for updating the Committee on previous matters discussed or questions raised. This ensures appropriate responses are received and accepted by the Committee on issues they felt were important enough to challenge and hold officers to account.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Guidance identifies 'Core Functions' of a Governance and Audit Committee along with what it refers to as possible 'wider functions' of a Governance and Audit Committee. The Committee fulfilled its role during 2022/23 by receiving a comprehensive suite of reports in line with its work programme for the year, as shown at Appendix 2 of the full report.

The Committee were satisfied that the Council's assurance statements, including the annual governance statement (AGS), properly reflected the risk environment and any actions required to improve it, and demonstrated how governance supports the achievement of the Council's objectives.

## Financial Summary

The co-opted members of the Governance and Audit Committee are entitled to a special responsibility allowance in accordance with the prescribed members' allowances scheme. There are no specific costs associated with the running of this committee other than those involved in the cost of administration of this and other council functions within the democratic process.

## Risks

<b>Risk Title / Description</b>	<b>Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)</b>	<b>Risk Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)</b>	<b>Risk Mitigation Action(s)</b> What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	<b>Risk Owner</b> Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?
Non-compliance with the requirements of the Local Government Measure	M	L	This report suggests the content of an annual report in line with the requirements of the Measure.	Head of Finance
Inadequate resources to discharge the statutory requirements of the Measure	M	L	The Annual Report confirms the adequacy of existing resources.	Head of Finance

\* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

## Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Corporate Plan 2022-27

Annual Governance Statement

The Governance & Audit Committee have an integral role in contributing to the Council governance arrangements and processes across a wide range of issues and in doing so; helps the Council in meeting its objectives and priorities.

## Options Available and considered

Option 1: To accept that the Council has met its legislative responsibilities and agree the Committee's annual report. To thank committee members for their robust challenge and hard work during the year.

Option 2: To take no action

### **Preferred Option and Why**

Option 1 is the recommended option in order to meet the requirements of the Local Government Measure.

### **Comments of Chief Financial Officer**

This report and the accompanying annual assessment of the Governance & Audit Committee provides a self-evaluation of the work of the committee over the 2022/23 financial year. There are no direct financial impacts arising from this report.

### **Comments of Monitoring Officer**

According to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Council must keep under review the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively and using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council must also ensure that it has effective governance arrangements in place to ensure that those matters are kept under review. The aforementioned requirements are known as the Council's "*performance requirements*". The Council must also consult with local people, other people carrying on business in its area, its staff and any trade unions recognised by the Council at least once in each financial year about the extent to which the Council is meeting its performance requirements.

S.91 of the Act requires the Council to produce a report in each financial year, known as a "*self-assessment report*", setting out its conclusions as to the extent to which it has met its performance requirements during that financial year. The annual assessment document appended to this report is intended to fill that purpose. The report must:

- set out any actions the council intends to take, and any actions it has already taken, with a view to increasing the extent to which it will meet the performance requirements in the financial year following the financial year to which the report relates;
- include the council's conclusions as to the extent to which any actions included by virtue of the above point in the council's preceding report increased the extent to which the council met the performance requirements in the financial year to which the self-assessment report relates; and
- take into account the views of the consultees referred to above.

The Council is required to make a draft of the self-assessment report available to its Governance and Audit Committee. This report has been presented to the Governance and Audit Committee and any recommendations for change have been included in the report. Full Council is asked to consider the report, accept that the Council has met its legislative responsibilities and agree the Committee's annual report.

### **Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation**

The report provides Council with the Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23. The Annual Report outlines how the Committee has discharged its responsibilities in terms of the democratic services function in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

Through ensuring the effectiveness of the Council's corporate governance and decision-making processes, the Council will ensure that requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are met, and the Five Ways of Working are properly embedded within the Council's governance and decision-making structures. The Committees work also supports the development of A More Equal Wales and doesn't adversely affect any of the other Well-being Goals for Wales.

There is no specific consultation required, with no direct HR implications associated with this report.

## **Scrutiny Committees**

Not applicable.

## **Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:**

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Socio-economic Duty**
- **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

The Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report outlines how the Committee has discharged its responsibilities in terms of the democratic services function in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. Part of its role is to review and monitor the effectiveness of the Council's corporate governance and decision-making processes and the terms of the Council's Constitution.

Through ensuring the effectiveness of the Council's corporate governance and decision-making processes, the Council will ensure that requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are met and the following principles of the Act can be properly embedded within the Council's governance and decision-making structures:

- **Long term:** the importance of balancing short- term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
- **Prevention:** How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help us meet our objectives.
- **Integration:** Consider how the proposals will impact on our wellbeing objectives, our wellbeing goals, other objectives, or those of other public bodies.
- **Collaboration:** have you considered how acting in collaboration with any other person, or any other part of our organisation could help meet our wellbeing objective.
- **Involvement:** The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the City.

The Committee's work in developing and publishing the Council's Participation Strategy supports the development of A More Equal Wales; achieving more diversity in decision-makers and the voices that are heard in decision-making will help to reduce inequalities. The Strategy does not adversely affect any of the other Well-being Goals for Wales. The Strategy underpins the Involvement principle of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by supporting residents to be involved in making the decisions that affect them, considering diverse needs when developing services, and helping people to feel connected to the place that they live.

## **Consultation**

Not applicable.

## **Background Papers**

Minutes of previous meetings of Governance and Audit Committee

Constitution

Cabinet Papers

Dated: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024



# **Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2022-23**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Council's Governance and Audit Committee has responsibility for ensuring that there are procedures in place within the Council to guarantee the adequacy and effectiveness of financial control and corporate governance arrangements.
- 1.2. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 ("The Measure") (as amended by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021) requires the Council to appoint a Governance and Audit Committee. The Measure (as amended) prescribes the functions of the Governance and Audit Committee as:
  - Reviewing and scrutinising the authority's financial affairs
  - Making reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's financial affairs
  - Reviewing and assessing the risk management, internal control, performance assessment and corporate governance arrangements of the authority
  - Making reports and recommendations to the authority on the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements
  - review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.
  - make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.
  - Oversee the council's internal and external audit arrangements and
  - Review the financial statements prepared by the authority.
- 1.3. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 determined that a number of changes must be brought into effect:
  - former Audit Committees would be re-named Governance and Audit Committees
  - from May 2022 the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee was required to be a lay member
  - one third of its membership must be lay members.
- 1.4. The Terms of Reference, as included within the Council's Constitution, are set in line with the Local Government Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The responsibilities of Governance and Audit Committee, as required by the above legislation, are included in full under Appendix 1 of the Annual Report.
- 1.5. In May 2022, the Head of Law and Standards presented an information only report setting out the legislative changes in terms of the title and Constitution of the Committee and the revised Terms of Reference. The report also set out the revised remit in terms of considering and making recommendations about the Council's self-assessment report, and its response to panel performance assessment and special inspection reports. The report confirmed the strengthening of the lay membership requirements, so that one third of members would be required to be lay members.
- 1.6. Newport City Council's Governance and Audit Committee comprises three lay members and five elected members; elected member representation reflects the proportional representation of the full Council. The lay member positions were advertised as vacancies in early 2022 and appointments were made following a process of assessment and selection.

1.7. The Committee appointed a Chair and Vice Chair at their inaugural meeting in May 2022.

1.8. The Committee met on six occasions during the municipal year 2022/23:

- 26th May 2022
- 28th July 2022
- 29th September 2022
- 27th October 2022
- 26th January 2023
- 30th March 2023

1.9. The Governance and Audit Committee is supported by Democratic Services with the Strategic Director for Transformation and Corporate, the Head of Finance, the Assistant Head of Finance, the Audit Manager and Head of People, Policy, and Transformation in attendance at most meetings. Other Officers are invited to attend as required by the agenda. External Audit (Audit Wales) are invited to all meetings.

1.10. All meetings were held on a hybrid basis in accordance with Part 4, Appendix 2 of the Constitution setting out arrangements for multi-location meetings. All meetings in 2022/23 were quorate.

## **2. Work Delivered in 2022/23**

2.1. Regular reports were received by the Governance and Audit Committee throughout the year. All Members contributed to the challenge process where officers were held to account for improving identified systems weakness. Members contributed positively to the process and took the responsibility of being on the Governance and Audit Committee seriously.

2.2. As in previous years, the Committee's main responsibilities concerned having robust and proportionate oversight of the Council's governance, internal control and risk management arrangements including:

- Approving the internal audit plan and monitoring performance against the plan
- Reviewing internal audit reports and seek assurances of change where required.
- Considering the reports of external audit and inspection agencies
- Reviewing the draft financial statements
- Reviewing the Council's Treasury strategies and performance
- Considering the effectiveness of the Authority's risk management arrangements
- Maintaining an overview of the Council's Constitution in respect of contract procedure rules and financial regulations
- Making recommendations, as appropriate, to Cabinet and Council on any matters reported through the Governance and Audit Committee
- Ensuring compliance with legal requirements, namely the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, in respect of overseeing the Council's performance assessment and the arrangements for handling complaints

- Scrutinising and being satisfied with the Council's Annual Governance Statement, to demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of objectives, and monitor management action in-year to further improve arrangements; and
  - Supporting the ongoing development and effectiveness of Governance and Audit Committee.
- 2.3. A standard agenda item for the Governance and Audit Committee introduced in 2022/23 is a Recommendation Table, where named officers are responsible for updating the Committee on previous matters discussed or questions raised. This ensures appropriate responses are received and accepted by the Committee on issues they felt were important enough to challenge and hold officers to account.
- 2.4. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Guidance identifies 'Core Functions' of a Governance and Audit Committee along with what it refers to as possible 'wider functions' of a Governance and Audit Committee. The Committee fulfilled its role during 2022/23 by receiving a comprehensive suite of reports in line with its work programme for the year, as shown at Appendix 2.
- 2.5. The Committee were satisfied that the Council's assurance statements, including the annual governance statement (AGS), properly reflected the risk environment and any actions required to improve it, and demonstrated how governance supports the achievement of the Council's objectives.

### **3. Internal Audit, External Audit, and Inspection Agencies**

- 3.1. During the year 2022/23, the Governance and Audit Committee received Internal Audit performance updates, details of finalised audit assignments and progress on implementation of audit recommendations. This suite of information has enabled Members of the Committee to consider the effectiveness of the Internal Audit process for 2022/23 within the assurance framework.
- 3.2. A key part of the Governance and Audit Committee's role is to support the Council's Internal Audit Service to remain independent, assess whether it has adequate resources available to it and to monitor the performance and quality of work delivered throughout the year. The Internal Audit Service fulfilled this requirement through approval of a revised Internal Audit Charter in May 2022. The revision included the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) update in 2017, inclusion of an Internal Audit Mission, reference to the new Executive Board and Strategic Directors within the Council and reference to the new Governance and Audit Committee.
- 3.3. The results of Internal Audit's work for the preceding financial year were brought together in the form of the Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report for 2021/22, which was brought to Committee in May 2022. The report presented the Committee with an overall opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal controls during 2021/22, which was Reasonable - Adequately controlled. The disruption caused by the Coronavirus pandemic continued into 2021/22 with the Internal Audit team unable to undertake all their planned work due to services prioritising the delivery of frontline services and the restrictions imposed on visiting premises as a result of the pandemic. The report confirmed that the original planned audit work for 2021/22 which was not undertaken will be carried forward into the 2022/23 Audit plan. The Committee noted and endorsed the report.
- 3.4. Quarterly updates on progress against the Annual Audit Plan were presented to the Committee throughout the year, for 2021/22 and 2022/23 in the reporting period. The reports highlighted performance against planned work and externalities like

special investigations, financial advice, and financial regulations training. The Internal Audit section's performance was measured against performance indicators set and agreed by the Welsh Chief Auditors' Group. The Committee explored the progress made at each quarter and provided recommendations in wider support of the aims of the Audit section.

- 3.5. Summary reports of finalised audit opinions were reported to the Governance and Audit Committee during the year. This included the audit reports that concluded with an Unfavourable/Unsound Audit Opinion. A summary report of progress made against unfavourable audit opinions was considered by the Committee in September 2022. The Committee resolved to call-in the relevant Heads of Service and Strategic Directors to provide an update on progress made against two audits concluding in a second unfavourable opinion: Audit of Adoption Allowances and Passenger Transport Unit. The Officers attended Committee to present an update in a written report, and subsequently attended to provide a verbal update on further progress made to resolve issues identified. Members of the Committee considered the explanations and assurances provided by the Strategic Director and the Head of Service responsible and made recommendations to be implemented alongside those proposed by officers. Where considered appropriate, further updates were requested by the Committee in future meetings to continue appraisal of developments.
- 3.6. The Operational Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23 based on an assessment of risk and available audit resources was reported to and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee in July 2022.
- 3.7. Reports were received and considered from Audit Wales during the reporting period. Officers were asked to provide responses where appropriate, and Members of the Committee sought assurances on the process of External Audit. Papers presented included:
  - Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary 2021
  - Audit Wales Audit Plan 2022
  - Statement of Accounts 2020/21 ('ISA 260' Response to the Accounts)
  - Audit Wales Fee Consultation 2023/24
  - Audit Wales and Regulatory Bodies 6-month update
  - Audit Wales Newport City Council Outline Plan
- 3.8. In January 2023, the Committee considered the reports and recommendations of external audit and inspection agencies and their implications for governance, risk management or control arrangements. The Committee recognised that this was a relatively new report under the Governance and Audit Committee's updated Terms of Reference to align with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The report included regulatory activity updates from three external regulators: Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales, and Estyn; each responsible for providing assurance that the Council was fulfilling its statutory duties and providing value to the public. This report covered October to March of 2021/22 financial year.
- 3.9. Where recommendations were raised for local authorities to consider, an overview of the Council's action(s) was included in the report. There were three local reports from Audit Wales: audit of accounts, Cremation Committee, and the improving reporting audit. There was one national review in Wales involving the participation of many local authorities, including Newport, looking at the National Fraud Initiative that

resulted in three recommendations that were shared with Committee. The report also confirmed that there a small number of reviews ongoing.

- 3.10. The Committee considered the contents of the report concerning regulatory activity completed, and the assurances provided in the meeting that where recommendations were raised, the Council was taking necessary action.
- 3.11. At the first Governance and Audit Committee meeting of the 2022/23 Municipal Year, Audit Wales provided a summary of the reported the 2021 Audit Plan for the Council, and thereafter provided quarterly Audit Wales Work Programme Updates during the year to enable the Committee to be kept up-to-date with the work of Audit Wales and provide opportunity to seek clarity or further information where required.
- 3.12. Audit Wales presented finalised reports to the Governance and Audit Committee during the year, accompanied by Council progress updates on the implementation of recommendations and proposals for improvement contained within the reports.
- 3.13. During the Council's budget-setting process the Committee raised concerns regarding the proposed reduction in resource within the Internal Audit Team.

#### **4. Risk Management Arrangements**

- 4.1. Considering the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements and the control environment falls under the remit of the Governance and Audit Committee. This includes reviewing the risk profile of the organisation and securing assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues that may prevent the Council from achieving its Corporate Plan or delivering services to its communities and service users in Newport. The Governance and Audit Committee fulfilled its role in reviewing and monitoring the corporate governance and risk management arrangements in place, with comments and recommendations of the Committee on the risk process going on to be considered by Cabinet. The Committee explored the arrangements in place to record and monitor risks in order to establish that the processes for identifying risks were robust and operating correctly, rather than the detail of the risks themselves. Comments and recommendations made by Committee were considered by Cabinet.

#### **5. Financial Statements, Council's Constitution in respect of contract procedure rules and financial regulations**

- 5.1. The Governance and Audit Committee is required to monitor the effectiveness of the control environment, including arrangements for ensuring value for money, supporting standards and ethics and for managing the authority's exposure to the risks of fraud and corruption. The Committee were presented with the draft 2021/22 Statement of Accounts for the Council and Audit Wales provided a verbal update on the progress of the audit of those accounts. They informed the Committee that no significant matters had been identified to date although there were delays due to the issues around infrastructure assets valuations included in the accounts and which was an 'all Wales issue.' The Committee noted that a final, audited, set of accounts would be presented at the January meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee for approval. Following review and endorsement by Committee, the Council's 2021/22 audited Statement of Accounts were signed by the Chair of Governance & Audit and Head of Finance in January 2023, having received an unqualified opinion by Audit Wales (i.e., clean bill of health).

- 5.2. The Year End Report on Treasury Management was presented to Committee in May 2022. The report confirmed that all treasury and prudential indicators had been adhered to for the financial year 2021/22. The Committee explored the relevant factors presented in the report with Officers before endorsing the content of the report.
- 5.3. The Committee considered the Half Yearly Report on Treasury Management in October 2022. This report informed Governance and Audit Committee of treasury activities undertaken within the financial year 2022/23 and confirmed, (other than interest rate volatility exposure), that all treasury and prudential indicators had been adhered to. The Committee provided feedback on the report which was shared in the subsequent report to Cabinet and Council.
- 5.4. In January 2023, the Committee considered the draft Capital and Treasury Management Strategy prior to it being reporting to full Council. The Capital Programme is a key enabler in delivering against the Council's Corporate Plan. The programme presented was due to end in March 2023, with a new five-year programme commencing in 2023/24. The new programme comprises of annual recurring allocations and a number of ongoing schemes carried forward from the existing programme. The Committee found the report to be comprehensive and well-written and noted and commented on a number of the complexities the report referenced. The report was approved by the Committee.
- 5.5. The Head of Finance presented a report on Lessons Learned in 2021/22, outlining the findings of an initial review carried out by finance officers following the 2021/22 accounts closedown to put into place further improvements for the closedown of the accounts process. The Committee considered the assessment on the findings of the Lessons Learned review, the plans in place to implement for 2022/23 and the key risks to the closedown process for 2022/23. The Committee noted that this review was of high importance to ensure improvements for 2022/23 were delivered. The Committee added their endorsement to the following up of Related Party form submission with group leaders and endorsed the report and planned improvements.
- 5.6. The Committee received regular updates providing details of decisions on the use of Standing Order 24 (decisions taken urgently) or the Waiving of Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) for the above period. In consideration of these reports, Members were mindful that they were not questioning the merits of the decisions taken but were focussing on why decisions were taken as urgent or why CSOs needed to be waived. Background information on the reviewing of Cabinet Member Urgent Decisions and their reason for urgent decisions was explained at the Committee as well as the Waiving of CSOs. The Committee requested clarity on matters raised, considered the reasons for the urgency/waiving of CSOs and noted the decision.

## **6. Annual Governance Statement**

- 6.1. The draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2021/22 was reported to the Governance and Audit Committee in May 2022; the statement concluded that the Coronavirus pandemic did not lead to significant internal control or governance issues which impacted on the overall review of effectiveness and that there are effective governance arrangements in place at Newport City Council. The Committee endorsed the conclusion of the report and recommended that monitoring continued during 2022/23.

## **7. Arrangements for Handling Complaints**

- 7.1. In May 2022, the Committee considered an overview of the Council's approach to completing its annual Corporate Self-Assessment as per the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Committee endorsed the approach that the Council would integrate its Self-Assessment into the Council's Annual Corporate Report whilst also considering the findings and assessments completed in other statutory annual reports. The Committee committed to ensuring that the self-assessment had been completed in accordance with the Act; reviewing the draft report, its conclusions, and actions; and proposing recommendations for changes to the assessment.
- 7.2. The draft Annual Corporate Well-being Self-Assessment Report 2021/22 was brought to Committee for their consideration in October 2022. The Council confirmed that it had integrated its Annual Report with its annual Well-being Report to provide an overview on the effectiveness of the Council's Governance and Performance arrangements to deliver its Corporate Plan and services. The Council's Self-Assessment requirements had also considered the findings and assessments completed in other statutory annual reports. The Governance and Audit Committee considered the Council's Corporate Annual Report 2021/22 and made a number of recommendations for improvement to the report including clarifying the link between the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives and the outcomes being achieved.
- 7.3. In September 2022, the Committee was asked to consider an overview of how the Council manages Compliments, Comments and Complaints and the annual report on the Council's performance in 2021/22. In accordance with the additional requirements under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Council considered the report and made recommendations for improvements, including adding further details to future reports concerning equalities data captured to better understand the demographics and representation of residents raising concerns. An action plan to improve the service delivered by the service and to address issues identified in the report was included in the presentation to Committee. A follow-up report on progress made against the actions for improvement was presented to the Committee in March 2023. Further progress will be reported to the Committee in the 22/23 Annual Report.

## **8. Ongoing Development of Governance and Audit Committee**

- 8.1. The Committee completed training in the reporting period as follows:
- Finance and Treasury in May 2022
  - Risk Management in September 2022

## **9. Conclusion**

- 9.1. During 2022/23 the Council's Governance and Audit Committee has reviewed and challenged a range of topic areas, including the work of Internal and External Audit, the Committee's responsibilities as set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and its responsibility in respect of reviewing and scrutinising the Council's Treasury Management arrangements. From a review of the coverage of Governance and Audit Committee's work and oversight during the year, as set out in Section 2, it is considered that the Committee has delivered its work plan and responsibilities in line with its Terms of Reference. The Annual Report demonstrates that the Council has sound arrangements in place in respect of its Governance and Audit Committee, noting that the level of knowledge and experience of Members was good or satisfactory.



## **Appendix 1**

### **Terms of Reference of the Governance and Audit Committee**

To exercise the following functions and take the following resolved decisions, under delegated powers:

- (i) To appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee
- (j) To receive and approve the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations
- (k) To receive and approve the Annual Internal Audit Report from the Chief Internal Auditor
- (l) To receive and approve the Annual Internal Audit Plan
- (m) To review and approve the annual programme for internal audits, the audit priorities and effectiveness of the programme in providing adequate assurance in respect of the Council's main business risks
- (n) To review and monitor the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control and the proper administration of its financial affairs, including corporate governance and risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements
- (o) To engage with external auditors and inspection agencies and other relevant bodies to ensure that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit.

To exercise the following functions and make recommendations, where appropriate

- (p) To monitor and oversee the implementation and outcomes of the internal audit programme and, where necessary, review and make recommendations regarding unsatisfactory audit reports
- (q) To review the adequacy of the Council's internal audit resources and to make recommendations, where necessary
- (r) To seek assurances on the adequacy of Cabinet, Cabinet Member and/or management responses to internal audit advice, findings and recommendations and monitor implementation and compliance with agreed action plans
- (s) To consider the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter, make any recommendations to Cabinet and to monitor the Council's response to individual risks or areas of concern identified in the Letter
- (t) To consider the Annual Report on Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators and make recommendations to Council
- (u) To receive and consider inspection reports from external regulators and inspectors and to make recommendations and, where necessary, monitor implementation and compliance with agreed action plans
- (v) To monitor and review decisions to waive Contracts Standing Orders and urgent executive decisions taken without consultation and to make recommendations where appropriate.
- (w) To make recommendations to the Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer in relation to the Financial Procedures and Regulations set out in the Council's Constitution
- (x) To recommend to the Council the appointment of further lay members, where appropriate

## Appendix 2

### Reports received by Governance and Audit Committee in 2022/23

Meeting	Report
May 2022	Audit Committee: Changes to Title and Terms of Reference
May 2022	Annual Corporate Self-Assessment
May 2022	Corporate Risk Register Q3 2021/22
May 2022	Treasury Management Year End Report 2021/22
May 2022	Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary 2021
May 2022	Audit Wales Annual Audit Plan 2022
May 2022	Internal Audit – Progress Against Audit Plan Q3 2021/22
May 2022	Internal Audit Charter Revised and Updated
May 2022	Annual Governance Statement (draft)
May 2022	Internal Audit Annual Plan 2022-23
May 2022	Internal Audit Annual Report 2021-22
July 2022	Corporate Risk Register Quarter 4
July 2022	Regulatory Reports 2021/22 Update
July 2022	Statement of Accounts 2021/22
July 2022	Internal Audit Plan 2022/23
July 2022	SO24/Waiving of Contract SOs: Quarterly report reviewing Cabinet/CM Urgent Decisions or waiving Contract SOs (Q3 2021/22)
September 2022	Annual Reports on Compliments, Comments and Complaints Management 2022
September 2022	Corporate Risk Register Q1 2022/23
September 2022	Progress against Internal Audit Plan Q1 2022/23
September 2022	Audit Wales Fee Consultation 2023/24
September 2022	Internal Audit Plan – Progress against Unfavourable Audit Opinions
October 2022	Call In re: the Internal Audit of Adoption Allowances resulting in a Second Unsatisfactory Opinion

October 2022	Annual Corporate Well-being Self-Assessment Report 2021/22
October 2022	Treasury Management Report 2022/23
October 2022	Internal Audit – Progress against Audit Plan Q2 2022/23
January 2023	Call In re: the Internal Audit of Passenger Transport Unit resulting in a Second Unsatisfactory Opinion
January 2023	Update on Call In re: the Internal Audit of Adoption Allowances resulting in a Second Unsatisfactory Opinion
January 2023	Corporate Risk Register Q2 2022/23
January 2023	Audit Wales and Regulatory Bodies 6-month update
January 2023	Internal Audit Plan – Progress against Audit Plan Q3 2022/23
January 2023	SO24/Waiving of Contract SOs: Quarterly report reviewing Cabinet/CM Urgent Decisions or waiving Contract SOs (Q3 2022/23)
January 2023	Draft Capital and Treasury Management Strategy
January 2023	Statement of Accounts 2021/22
January 2023	Audit of Financial Statements Report 2021/22
March 2023	Update on Compliments, Comments and Complaints Management Report 2022
March 2023	Corporate Risk Register Q3 2022/23
March 2023	Lessons Learned 2021/22
March 2023	Audit Wales NCC Outline Plan 2023

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# Report

## Council

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### Part 1

Date: 23 January 2024

**Subject** **Schedule of meetings**

**Purpose** To adopt a schedule of meetings for the period May 2024 to May 2025.

**Author** Governance Team Leader

**Ward** All wards

**Summary** The proposed schedule of meetings attempts to structure the diary with a series of meetings to facilitate the decision-making process through the Council, Executive and Regulatory Committees. The schedule of meetings also sets a pattern of meetings for Scrutiny Committees and other bodies.

The diary does not include dates for meetings of individual Cabinet Members as Cabinet Members will take a view on when they need to meet to make decisions, rather than be bound by a diary of meetings. This will, of course, not affect members' opportunities for consultation on proposed decisions or to request to meet the Cabinet Member before decisions are taken.

It is suggested that the dates, times and locations of all meetings other than the Council meeting are to be left to each individual committee. It is suggested that the needs of Councillors who have work or other commitments at any time during the day are taken into account by the various committees and groups.

The schedule will remain a guide and subject to change and amendment to meet the needs of the work programmes of each committee or other group.

**Proposal** **To adopt the schedule of meetings as the basis for arrangements for May 2024 to May 2025, recognising it is subject to change and amendment to meet the needs of the work programmes of each committee or other group.**

**Action by** Governance Team Leader

**Timetable** As set out in the diary and subject to the views of individual committees

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Monitoring Officer
- Head of Finance
- Scrutiny and Governance

**Signed**

## Background

The Council needs to agree a schedule of meetings to allow members to be aware of the pattern of meetings and to assist officers in producing reports in good time for the various stages of the decision making process or the overview and scrutiny process.

### Work programme and schedule of full Council meetings

The following sets out the notional Council work programme and proposed dates of meetings. Normally the meetings will commence at 5.00pm and will be broadcast live on the Council's website.

Meeting Date	Provisional Work Programme
16 July 2024	
24 September 2024	
26 November 2024	
21 January 2025	
25 February 2025	Budget
22 April 2025	
13 May 2025	Mayor Making and AGM

### Cabinet meetings

Normally the Cabinet will meet each month but additional meetings will be arranged as necessary. The Leader of the Cabinet will agree any amendments to the programme as shown in this report.

### Other committees

For all other meetings, timings of meetings will be a matter for each individual committee. Amendments will be agreed following consultation with committee members.

### Financial Summary

There are no specific costs in agreeing a schedule of meetings.

### Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Not adopting a schedule of meetings so that Work planning and key decision making is ad – hoc and lacks transparency and opportunities for proper consultation	M	L	The report suggests an understandable and structured schedule of meetings that meets the needs of the decision-making process but is also flexible enough to meet the needs of the council and its members	Democracy and Communications Manager

Adopting too rigid a schedule will not allow the needs of the council or its members to be taken into account.	M	L	The report offers the opportunity for all committees to arrange meetings to meet the needs of the membership of each committee.	Democracy and Communications Manager
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**Links to Council Policies and Priorities**

The schedule of meetings allows work planning to be undertaken in an informed manner allowing the Council’s decision-making process to meet statutory and constitutional requirements.

**Options Available**

- To adopt the Schedule as a guide
- To amend the schedule
- To take no action

**Preferred Option and Why**

The preferred option is to adopt the schedule of meetings as the basis for arrangements for May 2024 to May 2025.

**Comments of Chief Financial Officer**

There are no direct financial consequences.

**Comments of Monitoring Officer**

The proposed programme of meetings and arrangements for their frequency and timing are in accordance with Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and statutory guidance. The frequency and time of the Council meetings has previously been reviewed and agreed, to reflect the needs and commitments of Councillors. It is not proposed that these arrangements should change. The forward work programme and diary of meetings for full Council also needs to reflect statutory timescales for certain policy Framework decisions, for example the need for the annual general meeting in May and the budget meeting in February. Other Council reports can be included within the forward work programme as and when they arise.

**Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation**

The report details the proposed schedule of meetings. Therefore, there are no relevant staffing, policy or performance matters for consideration. Having a clear plan of meetings and decision points for Council allows for a more considered approach to monitoring of key activity and compliance with legislation.

**Local issues**

There are no local issues

**Scrutiny Committees**

This is a matter for consideration by Council.

**Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:**

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Socio-economic Duty**
- **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

An FEIA is not required for this report.

**Consultation**

As set out above.

**Background Papers**

None.

**Dated: 16 January 2024**



# June 2024

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
22	27	28	29	30	31	1	2
23	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		10am Taxi Panel	10am Planning Committee		10am Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee		
24	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	2pm PSC – Place	10am PSC - People	4pm Cabinet				
25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
			1pm Gwent Cremation Joint Committee				
26	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	2pm PSC – Place	10am PSC - People			10am Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee		

# July 2024

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
27	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
		10am Taxi Panel	10am Planning Committee	6pm Liaison Meeting with Community Councils			
28	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
		10am PSC - People	4pm Cabinet				
29	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
		5pm Council		5.30pm Standards Committee			
30	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
			5pm PSC Partnerships	10am Democratic Services Committee 5pm Governance and Audit Committee	10am Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee		
31	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

# August 2024

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
31	29	30	31	1	2	3	4
32	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		10am Taxi Panel	10am Planning Committee				
33	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
34	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
35	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
	August Bank Holiday						

# September 2024

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
35	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
36	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		10am Taxi Panel	10am Planning Committee		10am Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee		
37	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
			4pm Cabinet				
38	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	2pm PSC Place	10am PSC - People	1pm Gwent Cremation Joint Committee				
39	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
		5pm Council		5pm Governance and Audit Committee	10am Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee		
40	30	1	2	3	4	5	6

# October 2024

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
40	30	1	2	3	4	5	6
		10am Taxi Panel	10am Planning Committee	6pm Liaison Meeting with Community Councils			
41	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
			5pm PSC Partnerships				
42	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			4pm Cabinet	5.30pm Standards Committee			
43	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
					10am Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee		
44	28	29	30	31	1	2	3

# November 2024

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
44	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
45	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		10am Taxi Panel	10am Planning Committee 5pm PSC Partnerships				
46	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	2pm PSC Place	10am PSC People	4pm Cabinet				
47	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
				10am Democratic Services Committee			
48	25	26	27	28	29	30	1
	2pm PSC Place	10am PSC People 5pm Council		5pm Governance and Audit Committee			

# December 2024

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
48	25	26	27	28	29	30	1
49	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		10am Taxi Panel	10am Planning Committee 5pm PSC Partnerships		10am Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee		
50	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
			4pm Cabinet (Draft Budget)	6pm Liaison Meeting with Community Councils			
51	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
52	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
			Christmas Day	Boxing Day			
1	30	31	1	2	3	4	5
			New Year's Day				

# January 2025

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	30	31	1 New Year's Day	2	3	4	5
	6	7 10am Taxi Panel	8 10am Planning Committee	9	10	11	12
2	13 2pm PSC - Place	14 10am PSC - People	15 4pm Cabinet	16 5.30pm Standards Committee	17	18	19
	20	21 5pm Council	22	23	24	25	26
4	27	28	29	30 5pm Governance and Audit Committee	31 10am Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee	1	2



# February 2025

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5	27	28	29	30	31	1	2
6	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		10am Taxi Panel	10am Planning Committee 5pm PSC Partnerships				
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
			4pm Cabinet (Final Budget)				
8	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	2pm PSC – Place	10am PSC - People		10am Democratic Services Committee			
9	24	25	26	27	28	1	2
		5pm Council (Budget)					

# March 2025

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9	24	25	26	27	28	1	2
10	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		10am Taxi Panel	10am Planning Committee		10am Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee		
11	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
			4pm Cabinet				
12	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
			1pm Gwent Cremation Joint Committee				
13	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
		10am PSC - People	5pm PSC Partnerships	5pm Governance and Audit Committee			
14	31	1	2	3	4	5	6

# April 2025

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
14	31	1	2	3	4	5	6
		10am Taxi Panel	10am Planning Committee		10am Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee		
15	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			4pm Cabinet	5.30pm Standards Committee	Good Friday		
17	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	Easter Monday	5pm Council					
18	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
			5pm PSC Partnerships				

# May 2025

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
18	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
19	<b>5</b> Early May Bank Holiday	<b>6</b> 10am Taxi Panel	<b>7</b> 10am Planning Committee	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
20	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 5pm Council (AGM)	<b>14</b> 4pm Cabinet	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
21	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 10am Democratic Services Committee	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
22	<b>26</b> Spring Bank Holiday	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> 5pm Governance and Audit Committee	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>