

# Minutes



## Council

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Date: 27 February 2020

Time: 5.00 pm

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

In Attendance:

Apologies: Councillors M Cornelious, K Critchley, D Fouweather, C Jenkins, M Kellaway, M Whitcutt, D Williams and Y Forsey

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### 1. Preliminaries

#### i. To receive any apologies for absence

The Monitoring Officer reported apologies for absence (noted above)

#### ii. To receive any declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest at this stage.

#### iii. To receive any announcements by the Mayor

There were no announcements made by the Mayor.

### 2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 January 2020.

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of 28 January 2020 be approved and adopted.

### 3. Appointments

To consider the proposed appointments set out in the report

Councillor Harvey moved the appointments set out in the Report, as agreed by the Business managers, subject to the additional appointments set out below.

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

## Internal Appointments

### Champions

Older Persons Champion - Cllr Trevor Watkins  
Disabled, Vulnerable Persons & Mental Health Champion - Cllr Kate Thomas  
Carers Champion - Cllr Graham Berry  
Anti-Poverty Champion - Cllr Phil Hourahine  
Armed Forces Champion - Cllr Mark Spencer  
Homelessness - Cllr Yvonne Forsey  
Biodiversity Champion - Cllr Laura Lacey  
B.A.M.E Champion - Cllr Majid Rahman  
L.G.B.T. Champion - Cllr Laura Lacey  
Welsh Champion - Cllr Jason Hughes

### Appointments to External Organisations

Organisation	No. of Vacancies / Replacements	Nominations Received
WLGA 3	Leader, Deputy Leader and Cllr M Spencer	
WLGA Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure		1 New appointment Councillor D Harvey
Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee		1 Reserve Councillor J Hughes

### Governing Body Appointments

Governing Body	No. of Vacancies / Re-appointments	Nominations Received
Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd	1 Continuation of appointment	Alan Speight
St Patricks RC Primary School	1 Continuation of appointment	Allan Morris
St Patricks RC Primary School	1 Continuation of appointment	John Richards
St Josephs RC Primary School	1 Continuation of appointment	Ceri Gibbons
St Mary's RC Primary School	1 Continuation of appointment	Charles Ferris
Tredegar Park Primary School	1 LEA Governor	Mr Savage

## 4. Police Issues

Superintendent M Richards gave the Council an update on current police matters before inviting questions from councillors

□ Councillor Truman referred to a spate of serious antisocial incidents in Alway, Ringland and Llisbury. A meeting was held by residents, who raised their concern that there was lack of communication and visibility from the Police. Residents understood and sympathised with the Police cuts and the Councillor thanked the Police for attending. Councillor reiterated that it was an easy thing to fix; communication and visibility. Supt M Richard, thanked Councillors Truman, Guy and Jeavons and had recognised the massive support from councillors and was aware that police needed to do more and with this in mind, was committed to acting on issues raised at the resident's meeting and was working more closely with the elected members.

□ Councillor Linton was at the above mentioned meeting and echoed the sentiment of Councillor Truman and asked what was to be done by the police in addition to the above mentioned for Ringland. Supt M Richard was stressed that it was important to get visibility right. Community Safety Officers presence was taken out of Alway and Ringland and placed with primary school children for extra security. Improvements however was expected in the key areas.

- Councillor Harvey thanked the police on swift their swift reaction in relation to the above wards and thanked Insp Cawley, who was a good inspector that cared about residents. Police were faced with cuts and residents did not understand this until they attended the meeting. The Superintendent was committed to working together with residents and councillors.
- Councillor Guy referred to scams targeting older people and asked was there any help from organisations to prevent this occurring. Supt M Richards advised that preventative work was published online but was aware that there was probably a lot of senior citizens that did not go online. With this in mind, he would meet with Councillor Guy to discuss an alternatives way to raise awareness.
- Councillor Rahman mentioned the drug issues around Morris Street which was discussed at the last council in January. Councillor Rahman was litter picking recently with John Griffiths AM and Jessica Morden MP. Drugs were found hidden on the weekend in places such as drains. Two PCSOs were seen in the area but with Summer approaching and a lack of police presence, this problem would increase. The Superintendent advised that he would contact Insp Cawley to look into this matter.
- Councillor Marshall referred to the recent space of burglaries in Gaer, and advised that it was difficult for victims to obtain communication from the police, could the Superintendent therefore take into consideration the deep concern from residents. Supt M Richards stressed that he was aware of the crimes and would focus on tacking the issue as a matter of priority.
- Councillor Jeavons asked if there was any update on speeding cars outside Tesco in Spytty. The Superintendent advised that there was nothing to update at present but would email Councillor Jeavons on any progress.
- Councillor Spencer referred to speeding issues within Beechwood Ward; near the park. There had been serious accidents around Chepstow Road, Maindee and Alway, cars had been written off due to the nature of the accidents. The Councillor reiterated to keep up any work being done in this area. This was noted by the Superintendent.
- Councillor Ferris mentioned that a resident recently opened door selling household goods, went inside the resident's house and allegedly took over £100. This was not only about the loss of money but it knocked the resident's confidence and they felt embarrassed and needed assurance. The Superintendent would speak with Councillor Ferris and contact the victim.
- Councillor Morris attended a public meeting recently due to a spate of fires in Alway, Ringland and Somerton, which might be linked. Victims felt abandoned by the police. The pattern of fires was troubling and getting out of hand. Supt M Richards was aware and this was an ongoing investigation, he was disappointed to hear that victims were not kept up to date and would contact his colleagues.
- Councillor J Watkins, reflected Councillor Ferris' concerns regarding door to door callers, which had also taken place in Caerleon selling paintings, although there had been no report of a crime. In addition, there was heavy traffic on the bridge into Caerloen, happening on a daily basis. It was also disappointing at a recent ward meeting there was no police or PCSO in attendance to represent Caerleon. Supt M Richards would look into police attendance at the next Caerleon Ward meeting.
- Cllr Hourahine supported Cllr Guy's query and referred to a recent seminar on money and pension service and warned that anyone could be scammed. The most vulnerable ages ranged between 45-60yrs, there was information that the Councillor was happy to provide the police and councillors. The Superintendent would also distribute the information.

□ Councillor Holyoake welcomed the police presence in Pill as residents walking past youths gathering outside shops on Commercial Street were intimidated. The mounted police presence was a positive move to engage with the community. Monthly meetings working well but some areas including outside Kwik Save, drug dealers congregated. Would this be watched by the police. The Superintendent would hold inspectors to account as Pill was a priority area for the police.

□ Cllr H Thomas referred to Superintendent mentioning that crime figures were down, this was in his opening remarks. Councillor Thomas wanted to know were less people reporting crime, as residents in Shaftesbury still complained about incidents. Supt M Richards advised that the reduction in crime had been more than likely been as a result of residents not reporting incidents and was sad to hear that people might not be reporting crime. There were less solved crimes than that recorded in the previous year.

□ Cllr Cockeram praised the work of the safeguarding team and the partnership with the police and hoped it would continue with no threat of any financial cuts. The Superintendent agreed and hoped that it may continue and was committed to the resource and could not see it being withdrawn

## 5. **Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan**

The Leader presented the report, explaining the key details around the administration's 2020/21 budget and highlighting the Council Tax increase underpinning that budget, at 6.95%.

The budget proposals were for the administration to decide; this was done at Cabinet in February. Whilst the budget agreed required a 6.95% Council Tax increase to fund it, full Council would review this and agree the Council Tax rate.

The background as to how on the budget and Council Tax position was that the draft budget in December was based on an a number of assumptions. The key one being the Revenue Support Grant Settlement, and other things such as provision for pay and contract price increases and investment to support increasing demand for essential services. A budget gap of almost £6m was anticipated in 2020/21 at that stage; however, these assumptions were updated once the draft settlement was received from Welsh Government on the 16 December.

At Cabinet in February, the better Revenue Support Grant gave around £7.3m more funding than assumed. Savings of around £5.2m had already been identified in the December position and a further two proposals totalling £300k were identified. Furthermore, further cost pressures were considered and approved in response to external influences, for example, an increase in the national minimum wage and an increase in the South Wales Fire Levy and the opportunity to remove the reliance on reserves in order to balance the budget. A 'balance in hand' of £3.9m allowed the administration to consider and respond to the public consultation feedback and to make decisions in terms of how to utilise the additional money available for the greater good of the City. Some of the investment decisions included investment in schools, youth services, bringing empty homes back in to use and making savings elsewhere in the council as outlined within the report, and reducing the draft proposed council tax increase down to 6.95%.

The final settlement was received two days ago, with no change to the Council's Revenue Support Grant to that included in the provisional settlement and assumed in the budget papers.

The Council's recommended net budget would increase from its current £281m to about £300m, an increase of nearly £19m. The increase was funded from increased Revenue

Support Grant of nearly £14m, proposed increased Council Tax income of just over £4m and an increase in the number of new homes paying Council Tax at nearly £1m.

It was well known that Newport's Council Tax is low compared to nearly all other Welsh Councils and indeed, across the UK. This had consequences on the Council's finances, in terms of ranking in Wales on its budget position against the 'standard spending assessment' – it is 19th worst funded currently but had the second lowest level of Council Tax in Wales.

The Council made significant savings over many years to balance the Council's budget as well as increasing Council Tax.

The report detailed the Council's medium term financial projections and the future uncertainties that were faced such as future grant settlements from Welsh Government, Brexit and the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review. As the date of the spring budget was confirmed for 11th March, it was hoped that this would provide more certainty on the medium term outlook for Welsh Government funding. For Local Government, much would depend on the decision taken by Welsh Government, in particular on NHS funding in Wales.

The usual Council Tax resolution, included The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent and Community Councils' precept requirements.

It was therefore proposed to recommend the Council Tax levels required to underpin the budget to protect the much needed services for the Council.

The report was seconded by Councillor Jeavons.

The following points were made in favour of the report:

- The difficulties faced by the council.
- The tough decisions taken as a result of austerity affecting the Council's financial position.
- The rise in responses by the public for this year's consultation process.
- The support for the youth services within Newport.
- Whilst there was an increase in Council tax by comparative figures, Newport was still the second lowest in Britain and third lowest in Wales.
- Newport residents facing financial difficulties in Newport were supported by the Council.
- The tax increase would directly support social services; including senior citizens and children services, schools and youth services.
- This was the best possible budget under the circumstances with the listening support of Cabinet, the Leader and Scrutiny.
- The budget was designed to improve the life of many, such as foster care benefits.

The following points were made against the report:

- The reduction of a cabinet member and the income generation from Newport Matters would make a cost neutral budget(?)
- That the precept for Police Crime Commissioner was not supported.

There were no votes against the proposals.

The conservative members, including the Chair abstained.

Resolved

1 To note that an extensive consultation exercise was completed on the savings over the medium term, including the 2020/21 budget proposals. Cabinet had taken these into account in recommending final details of their budget.

2 To note the Head of Finance's recommendations that minimum general reserve balances be maintained at £6.5million, the confirmation of the robustness of the overall budget underlying the proposals, subject to the key issues highlighted in section 7, and the adequacy of the general reserves in the context of other earmarked reserves and a general revenue budget contingency of c£1.5million.

3 To consider and approve a council tax increase for Newport City Council of 6.95%, a Band D tax of £1,197.88; and resulting overall revenue budget shown in appendix 1.

4 To approve the formal council tax resolution, included in appendix 3 which incorporated The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent and Community Council precepts

## 6. **Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy**

### 1. Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy

This 'Capital Strategy 2019/20 to 2028/29' was an update of the Council's capital strategy following the requirement placed on Local Authorities by the 'Prudential Code for capital finance in Local Authorities (2017)' to determine a capital strategy. Council was required to approve the strategy and the prudential indicators within it on at least an annual basis to be kept under review, updated and brought to Council as necessary.

The key areas contained were included in the report, such as the five year capital programme to 2022/23 and the longer term projection for capital financing costs.

The programme above was increasing the capital financing costs, included in the Council's MTFP, which was challenging in the current financial climate. Costs would continue to increase into the medium to long term. Compared to comparative authorities, the percentage of the capital financing costs as a proportion to the Council's total net revenue budget was high. Further work was planned to inform this issue.

The Council is involved in two types of treasury activity, borrowing long-term for capital purposes and short term for temporary cash flow and investment of surplus cash.

These activities were controlled by the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and various measures and limits were set by its Prudential Indicators to regulate/control the implementation of that strategy.

In terms of our borrowing strategy the Council had significant long term borrowing requirements but in recent years the strategy was able to fund its capital expenditure from reducing investments rather than undertaking more expensive additional borrowing, using 'surplus cash', known as 'internal borrowing'.

The capacity for being internally borrowed was fully used and new borrowing requirements would need to come from new external loans. In addition, as the Council reduced its reserves, it would need to replace this lower headroom for internal borrowing created, with new external borrowing too. This was an important and significant issue and again, as the capital strategy recommended, the council needed to maintain a sustainable level of capital spending in order to control new levels of borrowing, this would create and the revenue costs associated with that.

Given the very low returns from short-term unsecured bank investments, the Authority aims to diversify into higher yielding asset classes during 2020/21. This is especially the case for the estimated £10 million that is available for longer-term investment and which we are required to have invested in order to maintain our regulatory position. All of the Authority's

surplus cash is currently invested in short-term unsecured bank deposits and local authorities. This diversification will represent a change in strategy over the coming year.

The strategies are very comprehensive and the report provided a useful summary of the key messages.

Given the increasing risk and very low returns from short-term unsecured bank investments, the Authority aimed to diversify into higher yielding asset classes during 2020/21.

The report was seconded by Councillor Jeavons.

Councillor C Evans advised that the Council should lead by example if there were any environmental impacts, as this was paramount. Additionally it was not made clear whether the Council would invest ethically.

Councillor Hourahine agreed with Councillor C Evans and also mentioned that this was considered the most important document put before council. The legacy of the Council should be left behind and the new Cabinet Member post for Sustainable Development was a positive move forward.

The vote was unanimous.

#### Resolved

- To approve the Capital Strategy (Appendix 2), including the current capital programme within it (shown separately in Appendix 1), its associated Prudential Indicators and the borrowing requirements/limits needed to deliver the current capital programme, noting the increased revenue costs in the MTFP for the increased borrowing.
- To approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators, the Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for 2020/21. (Appendix 3).
- To note the comments made by Audit Committee on 29 January 2020 (paragraph 6 and 7).

### 7. **National Non Domestic Rates: Discretionary Relief - High Street Relief Scheme 2020/21**

The Leader presented the report, in which the Welsh Government had again made available grant funding for billing authorities to deliver in 2020-21, the High Street Rate Relief Scheme to reduce the rate burden on qualifying high street retail properties. The Welsh Government agreed to reimburse the Council in full for any awards made under the scheme and it was envisaged that around 400 businesses would again benefit from reduced rates by way of this relief.

The scheme was identical to the retail rate relief schemes that operated in previous years, and would deliver reduced rates to qualifying properties which were broadly retail in nature. As well as rate relief of up to £2,500 for each qualifying property.

The report was seconded by Councillor Jeavons.

The vote was unanimous.

#### Resolved

The Council resolved to adopt the Welsh Government's Wales High Street and Retail Relief Scheme for 2020-21 by making the appropriate determination and decision, as required by Sections 47(1)(a) and 47(3) respectively of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, and set out in the Appendix to this report.

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

- The Leader gave the following announcements, before proceeding with questions:

The launch of the Western Gateway Website and prospectus went live on Wednesday this was an exciting collaboration of which the Council was a key member.

This was launched by Cabinet Ministers in November last year, and was the UK's third powerhouse after the Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine.

The Western Gateway went one step further than the regional powerhouses formed to date - stretching across south Wales and western England.

All partners focussed on inclusive and clean economic growth on a large scale.

The new prospectus outlined the emerging vision and the key ambitions for the economic partnership, developed through discussions between the partnership's local authorities, businesses, LEPs and city regions. It set out the scale of the Western Gateway's ambitions and identified the emerging strategic priorities of connectivity, innovation and a co-ordinated international approach to trade and investment.

It came ahead of a full vision document for the partnership, following the completion of an Independent Economic Review later this year that would provide an evidence base across the countries, area and regions of the partnership. ([www.western-gateway.co.uk](http://www.western-gateway.co.uk))

- It gave the Leader great pleasure to confirm that work to restore the historical Market Arcade was now underway. The Council worked very hard to secure funding from the Heritage Fund, Cadw and Welsh Government for the project. It had been a complex scheme and fortunately restoration work began last week. This would make a huge difference to the city centre, benefiting not only the businesses in the arcade but also those in the surrounding area. The arcade would remain open and was due to be completed next year. It included the restoration of the shopfronts and refurbishment of the glazed canopy. Importantly, the council would be helping to protect an important part of the city's heritage.

- The ambitious Solar panel project was progressing well, making a considerable contribution to the Council's aim to become a carbon-neutral organisation. Working in partnership with Egni Co-op, roof-mounted solar panels were being installed on council buildings across Newport.

Following a detailed feasibility study, with support from the Welsh Government Energy Services, Sustainable Communities Wales and the Wales Co-operative Centre a plan was drawn up to install 6,000 solar panels across 21 sites at zero cost to the council. Once installed, the solar panels would generate more than 1.9 million units of clean renewable electricity per year.

Work had recently been completed at Parklands and Blaen-Y-Pant Residential Care Homes, where 129 solar panels were installed across both sites. Most of the electricity generated would be used on site reducing the council's carbon emissions by 348 tonnes per year. Some electricity would also be exported onto the grid for use in the city.

The council was determined to take a lead on tackling the climate crisis and by working with Engi Co-op we would achieve a 20 fold increase in the amount of renewable energy installed on our buildings.

- The Leader acknowledged the considerable efforts made by council staff in response to Storm Dennis. Whilst Newport was lucky enough not to be hit as badly as other parts of Wales and the UK, we still received more than 100 requests for assistance over that weekend.

Preparations had been made for the forecast conditions and staff worked around the clock from Friday to Monday morning. Almost unprecedented levels of rain fell on ground that was already saturated and into rivers already swollen because of Storm Ciara. Despite the significant call on resources, the council teams dealt with every call and reported incident at some stage during the weekend.

Most of the requests were for sandbags, but crews also dealt with highway flooding, road closures and fallen trees. The Leader thanked all those who were out in such horrendous conditions to help residents and ensure safety on our roads and within council facilities.

Finally, the Leader mentioned two events recently attended, one was the LGBTQ+ event for younger people. The other was the first meeting of the black and minority staff network at the Civic Centre both were an honour and a privilege.

#### Leader's Questions

□ Councillor M Evans understood that the Leader was attending a conference in Cannes, France in March, called Mippin and what did the Leader hope to achieve, who was paying for it and what promotional work was being undertaken prior to attending.

Yes, the leader was attending as part of the Cardiff Capital region in March and made it clear that it was funded by the Capital Regen and not the Council. Part of this was speaking at the event and attending 10 Downing Street. Representing the Capital regen on several events. The purpose was to stand proud and speak open and honestly about the improvements being made in the city. Newport deserved to sit round the table with investors.

#### Supplementary:

Councillor M Evans supported the Leader attending but referred to the city region being Cardiff 'centric but there was nothing on social media about Newport being promoted at the event. Could the Leader give an update on her return on what was achieved.

The Leader answered and advised that Cardiff CC was promoting itself. An investment prospectus was being developed for Newport similar to Cardiff and the Leader would talk to key sites and provide a full report to Council on her return.

□ Councillor K asked was the Leader in a position to improve the aesthetics of the Malpas Road and Shaftesbury M4 roundabout entrance to Newport, in particular, near the old Sainsbury's site.

The Leader referred to the economic growth strategy and master plan, a lot was being done in the background as part of this. There was also work planned to within the area. The old Sainsbury's site was in private ownership and the Leader would speak with key stakeholders on improving the site. The site had the potential to provide 230,000 Sq Ft office accommodation, homes and other public facilities. The local was key and had benefits with links to public transport and M4. Anticipating that planning permission would be granted later this year and development would commence in the autumn. It did take time for projects to get underway but the benefits would be positive.

#### Supplementary:

Councillor Whitehead asked was talks with the Fear family invested in the old Sainsbury's site ongoing.

Leader advised that it was ongoing.

□ Councillor C Townsend mentioned that recent figures had shown that Newport had the second largest rough sleepers in Wales and asked that with the recent clean up

operation, could the Leader commit to updates on a quarterly updates be provided on homeless provision as well as additional efforts to provide accommodation for those living on the streets.

The Leader advised that she was able to provide an update from today, after a meeting with Julie James AM. The Council had employed a rough sleeper outreach worker and was most successful element of the project was working with third sector and humanitarian groups. The officer was engaging with rough sleepers on a daily basis which made monitoring of the situation more effective. Also mapping exercise to see where individuals and groups were located and could speak with them more regularly. Re-housing has been identified through working with the housing association and partners such as Housing First and Pobl. This was a time consuming process because of the vulnerability and would share with colleagues some case studies:

One person was rehoused and mental and physical health improved on a daily basis and was now volunteering with housing charities.

A second person who engaged regularly with co-ordinators and seeking voluntary support work with mental health sector. In terms of housing first, numbers were low but level of work was quite progressive.

Newport City Council was therefore working really hard with partnerships to help tackle homelessness.

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

### i. Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member for City Services

Councillor Mogford asked the following question that had been submitted:

'Will the Cabinet member give an update on how the City has coped with recent flooding throughout Newport and importantly what initiatives and preventive measures should be taken so going forward we are less adversely impacted by storms of these magnitudes.'

The Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member for City Services responded:

City Services staff worked on a shift rotation from Friday afternoon until the Monday morning carrying out preventative action and responding to requests for support. Over 120 separate incidents were dealt with, mainly consisting of:

- Sandbag requests (over 1,000 residents were supplied with sandbags)
- Blocked gullies
- Traffic signal failing (due to water ingress)
- Falling Trees

Three roads were closed for a short period of time: A48 Penhow, Coast Road Marshfield and Cardiff Road near Pont Ebbw.

Flood defences were deployed where required including the closing of Gwastad Gate at Malpas Brook. Following the event, river bridges and critical culverts have been inspected and there are no immediate structural concerns, but officers are also working with NRW to address any debris accumulating at river bridges.

To address flooding at the Redrow site, the developer plans to install additional, temporary flood defences to protect the development; a meeting with Council officers is being arranged to explore permanent solutions.

Welsh Government has also set up a number of funds for financial assistance:

- Support for councils – through the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme
- Support for households – support for those affected by flooding is to be provided via Emergency Assistance Payments.
- Support for businesses – Business Wales are offering advice and support companies affected and they will refer them to the Development Bank for Wales if they need loans.

Significant flood defence works have already been carried out in Shaftesbury, and officers are currently working with NRW to develop plans for further flood mitigation works at Stephenson Street. The Council is committed to working in partnership with NRW and WG to review and improve flood defences and through its role as a sustainable drainage approval body, NCC will also ensure that new developments over 100 square meters will comply with the new regulations.

Supplementary question:

Councillor Mogford expressed his thanks to everyone involved.

ii. Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Councillor J Watkins asked the following question that had been submitted:

‘Primary Head Teachers recently wrote to you outlining their serious concerns on matters including the state of school buildings and the funding of schools, what has been your response to their letter?’

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills responded:

The Newport Association of Primary Head Teachers wrote to Cabinet expressing their views on the budget consultations for 2020/21. The views of Head Teachers are always considered within the wider context of budget consultation. This year more than three and a half thousand responses were received from citizens and organisations across the city regarding a range of service issues. As a Cabinet we listened carefully to the public and made a decision to invest a further £10.4 million pounds into our schools to further support the education of children and young people.

Minor works and repairs should be managed within existing school budgets. However, the re-development and larger scale capital maintenance of schools where appropriate, is financially supported through additional funding streams, allowing schools to receive significant investment without using their delegated budgets.

In 2019 Cabinet took a decision to invest £24.5 million pounds into the 21st Century Schools Band B project. This scheme will provide a total of £70 million pounds worth of investment in to our schools estate which will bring ‘once in a lifetime change’ to a number of Newport schools over the next four years.

In 2018/19, as Cabinet Member for Education I requested a ring fenced allocation of £1.1 million pounds to support school capital maintenance. Cabinet supported this request and in turn this supported 23 individual school building projects across the city.

In 2019/20 the council was awarded a further £1.8 million pounds to offset capital expenditure across schools. The full £1.8 million was re-invested across the school estate. Maintenance work is currently underway on the identified projects at High Cross Primary, Llanmartin Primary, Milton Primary and Lliswerry High schools. The Council has recently received notification of a similar grant totalling £2.1m for 2020. Work is currently underway to confirm how this can be spent to best and maximum effect.

I would also like to take this opportunity to assure you that Cabinet Members and Officers of the council are working tirelessly to look for every funding opportunity available to the city, ensuring that we are maximising every penny. Some excellent examples of our success include:

1. The Council has successfully submitted two bids to Welsh Government in relation to the 'Reducing Class Sizes' grant. An amount of £520,000 has been awarded to undertake a project at Maesglas Primary School, and £580,000 has been allocated to a project at St Woolos Primary School. These projects are underway and are scheduled for completion by September 2020.

2. In 2019 the Education Service was advised that a grant funding application to Welsh Government's Integrated Care Fund had been successful. As a result, an amount of £300,000 was awarded to support the expansion of Ysgol Bryn Derw through refurbishment of an annexe building within the school grounds. Notably, this represented the first time across the Aneurin Bevan Health Board area that an Education project had been awarded funding from this source. The amount of money allocated to the project was later increased to £430,000, and the work was completed in January 2020.

3. Notification that Welsh Government had approved a funding application of £5.8m in relation to a specific Welsh-medium Capital Grant to enable the establishment of a fourth Welsh-medium primary school. This is one of the largest allocations given to any project across Wales. This funding will be used to open a brand new school for Pillgwenlly, a fourth Welsh Medium Primary and an expanded Tredegar Park Primary.

So to conclude, you can see that Cabinets' response to consultation feedback from Head Teachers both this year and in previous years has been robust.

Supplementary:

Councillor J Watkins asked did the Cabinet Member acknowledge that the concerns raised by the Primary School Head Teacher's were real.

Councillor Giles was aware of the concerns and issues that were identified by Head Teachers and a priority list was put in place but addressing issues was difficult with financial cuts faced by the Council. Every penny raised or funding provision for Education was put back into the schools.

Councillor R Mogford asked the following question that had been submitted:

'Given the fact that a number of Newport secondary schools are burdened with significant debt (Caerleon Comprehensive for example has a £1.2 Million debt and rising, due to what some might say is inadequate funding). How does the Cabinet member propose that these debts be paid down, over what timescales at what real cost to the pupils, teachers and other staff that continue to be affected by ongoing cut-backs.'

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills responded:

Schools budgets were delegated to Governing Bodies to manage efficiently and effectively. Schools can apply for a temporary licensed deficit providing they have a deficit recovery plan which outlines the actions the Governing Body intends to take forward in order to reach a balanced budget. Cllr Mogford will be fully aware of the plans to reduce Caerleon Comprehensive Schools debt as he sits on the Governing Body at Caerleon Comprehensive and is responsible for such decisions and actions.

It is within the gift of the Governing Body to determine how they will manage their budget and to consider how they will reduce their spending if they need to. Governing Bodies should consider which cost savings have the least impact on learners.

Incidentally, Caerleon Comprehensive School received £4.9 million pounds of funding last year. Caerleon Comprehensive School has always received the third highest school budget within the city. The two secondary schools ahead of Caerleon Comprehensive, receiving larger budgets have a higher number of Key Stage 4 learners and a higher proportion of pupils with Additional Learning Needs and pupils entitled to Free School Meals. Most would agree that this is right and fair.

The local authority has established deficit recovery support and challenge meetings for those schools currently in deficit. Schools meet with the local authority every six weeks to discuss their deficit recovery plans and how they are progressing. The first priority is for schools to ensure that they do not continue to overspend and are tackling their 'in-year deficits'. The majority of schools with a deficit have provided reassuring plans to address this. Remaining deficits can be addressed over a much longer timeframe. In some cases this may be between 5 and 7 years. It is important that we support schools on a case by case basis.

You will also be aware that this evening, Cabinet has asked full council to agree a schools funding increase from £96.5 million to £106.5 million. This significant increase will support schools cost pressures and may also support some of the deficit budgets situations. Whilst I am very pleased that Cabinet colleagues have committed this £10 million pound increase, it's important to note that any additional funding will not replace diligent financial monitoring required to keep schools budgets balanced.

Supplementary:

Councillor Mogford mentioned that as a role of governor he worked hard on behalf of the schools and authority to reduce the deficit, therefore what would the Cabinet Member do about the debt once the deficit was reduced.

As previously mentioned schools in deficit were asked to meet with the local authority every six weeks. This allowed consistent channels of communication where schools could ask for support or the local authority could offer assistance. In many circumstances, finance officers had visited schools to support school business managers with their budgets, accurate forecasting and the production of deficit recovery plans. Human resource officers supported schools with benchmarking information and officers from the Business Improvement Team have supported school financial reviews. These reviews provided useful recommendations for low impact costs savings. Moving forward, it was our aim to ensure all schools were provided with a financial review and bespoke support. A permanent model of support was currently being designed within Education Services to ensure that best practice was shared effectively.

#### 10. **Questions to the Chairs of Committees**

#### 11. **Democratic Services Committee Minutes**

The Minutes of the above Committee from 24 October 2019 and 20 February 2020 were noted, along with the following recommendations, which was presented by Councillor M Evans in the absence of the Chair of Democratic Services Committee.

The Chair advised that a composite agreement be made on the first three points put forward from the two previous meetings.

The Minutes were seconded by Councillor R Mogford and unanimously carried.

Resolved:

24 October 2019  
Chair of Council

That the Council should not appoint a Chair of Council/Presiding Member.

20 February 2020

Review of the Constitution Revised Officer Scheme of Delegation

That the Council agreed to the proposed amendments to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and recommended that it be adopted as Part 3 Appendix 3 of the Constitution at Council.

Support for Councillors in their Ward Work

That the Council agreed that the current arrangements in relation to ward meetings should continue.

Scheme of Allowances

That the Council noted and agreed the new Scheme of Allowances.

At the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on 20 February 2020, it was recommended that after very careful discussion and consideration the Committee recommended that Council, should submit a response to the Boundary Commission to the effect that the draft proposals were broadly accepted but that Bettws and Beechwood should continue to be three member wards because of the particular social and economic issues in those areas and the amount of work generated for their ward Councillors.

The Boundary Commission was debated separately and the following comments were made:

Councillor Clarke supported the additional ward members for Beechwood and Bettws.

Councillor M Evans did not support the extra Ward member for Beechwood.

Resolved:

20 February 2020

Boundary Commission Review of Electoral Arrangements – Draft Proposals

That the Council agreed to the above recommendation made by Democratic Services Committee.

The meeting terminated at 6.40 pm