

Minutes



Council

Date: 25 April 2023

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors C Reeks, S Cocks, E Stowell-Corten, J Harris, 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, J Jones, G Horton, P Cockeram, D Davies, M Al-Nuaimi, M Evans, D Harvey, M Linton, D Mayer, R Mogford, J Mudd, M Spencer, C Townsend, T Watkins, K Whitehead, J Clarke, Y Forsey, P Hourahine, J Hughes, J Jordan, L Lacey, S Marshall, W Routley, A Morris, F Hussain and B Perkins

1. Preliminaries

1.i Apologies

Councillors Fouweather, Screen, Thomas Kellaway and Cleverly

1.ii Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of 28 February 2023 were agreed, subject to the following:

Councillor M Howells asked that the Question to the Chair of Democratic Services Committee be included in the Minutes, as they were omitted in the Agenda papers.

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, subject to the additional appointments set out below.

Councillor Routley seconded the report.

Resolved: That the following appointments be agreed.

Governing Body Appointments

Governing Body	No of Vacancies / Re-appointments	Nominations Received
The John Frost School	Re-Appointment	Charles Ferris
Charles Williams CiW Primary School	Vacancy	Liz Andrews
Pillgwenlly Primary School	Vacancy	Jack Littlejohns
Gaer and Maesglas Partnership School	Vacancy	Jack Littlejohns

Outside Bodies Appointment to Caldicot and Wentlooge Drainage Board

Councillors A Screen and P Drewett.

4. Police Issues

The Presiding Member introduced Superintendent Jason White, who provided council members with an update on Police issues within East, West, and Central Newport.

The Presiding Member congratulated Superintendent White on his promotion.

The Presiding Member invited the Leader to address Superintendent White.

The Leader congratulated Superintendent on his promotion.

The Leader referred to the recent introduction of a briefing note sent out to members from Chief Inspector Davies, which was very helpful. It highlighted where police contacts were and outlined the major issues across the city. There was support across the Chambers, councillors confirmed they found the briefing note very useful. The Leader asked if the Police intended to continue this. Superintendent White advised that this briefing format would continue but that there would be some officer changes; Carl Williams was remaining as Chief Superintendent and Superintendent White was replacing Vicki Townsend. Chief Inspector Davies was remaining in Newport but taking over the Superintendent's previous role. There was also the addition of Amanda Thomas who was dealing with neighbourhood side.

Questions to the Police raised by Councillors:

- Councillor Jordan wanted to pass on his thanks to Inspector Hannah Welty and the team who dealt with a robbery at a Newsagents in Bettws recently, which ended in an arrest. Millbrook School in Bettws was targeted by youths who had broken into the school causing damage. The Head Teacher was at school during one break in and raised the alarm; causing the youths to run away. One of the youths dropped her purse and was identified in this way. There were also break ins at the Flying Start building and Ifor Hael school. Councillor Jordan requested extra police presence on foot patrol around the area. The Superintendent agreed to extra police patrols as requested. The Detective Inspector confirmed that the police in Newport were very eager to quickly identify offenders and had a very good return rate in dealing with robberies and violent crime. The Superintendent stated that over the last 4-6 weeks in Newport Central and West the Police had identified and arrested 12 individuals and there was ongoing work around prevention and intervention. Concerning the burglaries at Millbrook and Flying Start, the Superintendent advised that the Police had heavily invested in a system called 'We Don't Buy Crime', which was geared towards crime prevention. Officers were helping to prevent crime and keep communities safe, giving crime prevention advice to reduce reoffences.
- Councillor M Howells referred to vehicle congregation and car racing on the Southern Distributor Road (SDR). Tesco in Spytty was a previous location for this, and officers

worked very hard with councillors to address this. Councillor M Howells stated that over the past six months this was happening again with youths congregating at the Velodrome and racing their cars. Councillor M Howells requested that the police therefore also respond to this, and confirmed he was happy to also meet with Newport Live to engage their support. The Superintendent was pleased to announce that calls had reduced in that area. The Superintendent confirmed that Former retired Chief Inspector Blakemore was the force leader of problem-solving orientated policing and was looking at particular issues around car meets across Newport and partnership work to resolve this within communities.

- Councillor Mogford mentioned that he was pleased to hear that Operation Harley was starting up again. Councillor Mogford went on to discuss e-scooters that were travelling around with impunity, and queried where did they fit on the priority list. The Superintendent confirmed an e-scooter was seized last week in St Julian's, and an individual was arrested with intent to supply using a scooter. This is a UK-wide issue, as this mode of transport was commonly being used for these types of offences. E-scooters are classed as motor vehicles and these tactics could be used to stop vehicles under Section 165 of the Road Traffic Act to seize the vehicle where no licence or insurance is held, The Superintendent confirmed that proportionality is considered concerning interventions. Building up the intelligence picture was also important, using the Neighbourhood Teams to build up intelligence to seize the vehicles under Section 59: using an e-scooter in an anti-social manner.
- Councillor Harvey wanted to apologise to Chief Superintendent Carl Williams for providing him with incorrect information. Councillor Harvey had apologised via email but wanted to set it at Full Council because it was raised here at the last meeting.
- Councillor Marshall mentioned that The Hub opened yesterday, promoting technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help people in the communities remain in their own homes under Operation Herbert. This has seen a reduction in police resources being utilised, for example when those with dementia need to be located or by using devices for welfare checks. Councillor Marshall asked if the police could come along to The Hub to see the technology and how this supports the police and Councillors to collaborate and help communities. Superintendent White welcomed the opportunity for police staff to attend The Hub and agreed that new technology was key to responsive policing. Police are now issued with laptops which has reduced the need to return to the station, helping them to remain visible in communities. Superintendent White confirmed that police could also now take virtual statements, as well as in person.
- Councillor Batrouni referred to the importance of the police having a physical presence in communities which reassures residents and asked Superintendent White to provide an update on visibility in the community. Superintendent White advised that whilst Newport was a large area to police, if there was a particular issue in a ward area officers would be task called and their visibility would be seen in these areas. He added that police cars are often seen attending priority calls, but less obviously visible to the public was the neighbourhood teams, road traffic officers, and joint firearms unit officers. The Superintendent confirmed that there are patrol plans in place, as well as other elements such as CSOs. Superintendent White confirmed that Operation Uplift meant that as a force, numbers in Gwent had increased by 167 officers and Newport had benefited from this.
- Councillor Jones referred to Deer Park House, an old building near Whitehead's Sports Facility. He went on to say the building was fenced off, but teenagers had smashed the fences down, causing antisocial behaviour including violence, fire, fighting and drugs, which spilled out into antisocial behaviour in Carnegie Court. Councillor Jones asked if the police be able to visit the premises. Superintendent White confirmed he would speak to the local inspector to ensure this was looked into.

- Councillor Adan mentioned the closures of residential properties linked with county lines and asked how many houses had been closed in the Newport area for this reason. The Superintendent stated that did not have the information to hand, but would email the details; however, Superintendent White was aware that one premises had been closed at the end of March in the Pill area of Newport and there was work underway to close a further location.

Councillor Morris mentioned that Lliswerry ward members had held a public meeting recently where residents expressed concern about antisocial behaviour in the Pontfaen shops. Councillor Morris had explained to residents that reporting each incident to the police meant that more information would be gathered and could be acted upon. Councillor Morris said that residents had said that they could not get hold of the police, therefore could the Superintendent advise alternative methods of contact. The Superintendent mentioned that all ward officers had mobile phones, and on the Gwent Police website were the details of local ward officers and how they could be contacted, rather than using the 101 service. The Superintendent confirmed that there are also dedicated patrols in that area and the police were working with partners and the community to put in place long term preventative measures such as engaging with youths. Councillor Spencer suggested that police can also be contacted via Face book. Superintendent White confirmed that this was resourced 24/7 and was very responsive.

5. **Notice of Motion: City of Sanctuary**

The Presiding Member invited Councillor Corten to present the motion with Councillor Clarke to second.

This Council is concerned by the UK government's illegal immigration bill which proposes to detain and later remove anyone who arrives in the UK on a small boat, meaning the Home Office will not consider any of their Asylum claims regardless of whether they have fled war or persecution for being a minority.

These people seeking sanctuary will then be deported back to the country they have fled from or a 'safe' third country. This third country could be Rwanda, or another country deemed safe by UK Government, but which may have a questionable record on human rights. The likely effect of this legislation will be to punish the most vulnerable people from across the world.

Questions have been raised surrounding the legality of the Bill and whether it is compliant with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and consistent with the 1951 Refugees Convention. The Prime Minister has also stated in writing that if you come to the UK illegally "You can't benefit from our modern slavery protections".

This Council also notes the language which has been used to support this Bill, which has the potential to cultivate and provide a platform for a culture of abuse, racism and even violence against refugees and minorities.

As an experienced dispersal area this council has made a firm commitment in our Corporate Plan to establish Newport as a City of Sanctuary. This Council and the people of Newport have welcomed and accepted refugees and asylum seekers. We have a proud history of integration and inclusion. Our city is a more interesting, diverse, and tolerant city because of this.

This Council calls in to question the action of the UK Government in bringing forward this legislation and calls upon the prime minister and his ministers to withdraw these proposals.

We call upon the Leader of the Council to write to the prime minister in the strongest possible terms to outline our concerns.

We would also request the Leader of the Council commits to ensuring that Newport City Council gives full support to all partners and stakeholders in Newport currently working towards City of Sanctuary status.

Comments from Councillors:

- Councillor Drewett gave an account of his family history as a descendent of immigrants. Councillor Drewett referenced an event held by the Red Cross at the Westgate Hotel two or three years ago, called Giving Voice. Asylum speakers spoke at this event about their experiences since their arrival in Newport and their appreciation of the warm welcome they received, of friendships they made, and the opportunities available. Councillor Drewett said that Newport had a proud tradition of supporting immigrants, and that he strongly supported the motion.
- Councillor Davies spoke of research into her own family history, where her ancestors had moved to the UK for economic reasons, and at other times to escape conflict and persecution. Councillor Davies stated that her story was not uncommon, and she was proud of her heritage. Councillor Davies reflected on current circumstances whereby Newport welcomed people from Ukraine and Afghanistan. Councillor Davies also referred to a current backlog on processing asylum applications, and therefore supported the motion.
- Councillor Lacey also supported the motion and echoed the comments of her colleagues. Councillor Lacey stated that in February the backlog for processing asylum applications had reached 160,000. Councillor Lacey was proud that Newport was working towards a City of Sanctuary status, which she felt recognised that Newport was a compassionate city that considered the contributions and rights of those who worked and lived in the city. Councillor Lacey fully supported the motion.
- Councillor Whitehead considered that this was an emotive issue that made it difficult to debate. Councillor Whitehead reflected that Newport was a diverse city with an amazing track record, however services that underpinned society are under pressure, with housing being a main concern. Councillor Whitehead suggested that a consultation process be held to involve residents. Councillor Whitehead summarised that as the Council has a duty to everyone, the issue should be debated in a fair and compassionate way; whilst this is a noble cause, consultation is needed with residents.
- Councillor Marshall mentioned that Newport has a proud history of integration and inclusion and he had found to be diverse and tolerant. Councillor Marshall noted the important work that the Council's international team is doing in supporting young unaccompanied people seeking asylum and through partnerships. Councillor Marshall stated that Newport had been a city of sanctuary for centuries, and therefore he called on the Leader to support the motion.
- Councillor Forsey supported the motion and echoed the comments of Councillor Marshall, appreciating the work of the Sanctuary Project. Councillor Forsey went on to provide statistics on applications as well as dispelling myths about application for UK asylum seekers. Councillor Forsey felt that seeking asylum was a fundamental right and hoped that people would open their hearts and borders to make a more inclusive society.
- Councillor Cocks referred to the Blue Plaque on a building in Cross Street in Caerleon which commemorated the child evacuees from the Basque country during the second world war. Councillor Cocks considered that the residents of Caerleon were proud of this.

- Councillor Reynolds voiced his objection to the Bill and considered the situations that refugees were in when fleeing their country, and therefore supported the motion.
- Councillor Mogford mentioned that it was important to debate the topic and listen to what was said, Councillor Mogford referred to the point in the motion regarding the Leader writing to the Prime Minister. Councillor Mogford asked if the Leader could write to the MPs of Newport in the first instance rather than bypass them and go directly to the Prime Minister. Councillor Mogford also added that Newport was a city with limited resources and queried the support that would be offered to residents in Newport who were in crisis.
- Councillor Al-Nuaimi fully supported the motion, stating that Newport was already a city of sanctuary. Councillor Al-Nuaimi referenced his time as Mayor in 2006, when he said he met with MPs to accept the status of Newport as a dispersal city. Councillor Al-Nuaimi supported the motion, stating that yesterday's immigrants were today's good citizens; however, he agreed that facilities were limited, and this had to be taken into consideration. Councillor Al-Nuaimi concluded that Newport had a duty of care for residents, as well as those who we were receiving sanctuary.
- Councillor Morris agreed with most comments already made and confirmed that he and his ward colleagues would be abstaining from voting on the motion in light of the pressures being faced by residents. Councillor Morris recommended that the Council should not send letter to Prime Minister. Councillor Morris felt that immigrants were, welcomed and supported by residents, and cited the congregation of a church he attends as an example of this, but concluded that the motion would have an impact on the people of Newport and therefore he would abstain.
- Councillor Evans echoed the comments already made regarding the pressures faced by residents and the detrimental impact and mentioned complaints that he received from residents regarding council services. Councillor Evans stated that Newport had offered sanctuary to over 450,000 people since 2015 through various schemes. Councillor Evans suggested that the Council hold a referendum for the residents of Newport to find out their views, and in the meantime, Council focus on providing better services for citizens.
- The Leader referred to the Standing Orders allowing the matter of the motion to be properly explained and clarified the motion to colleagues. The Leader pointed out that Objective 3, point 6 of the Corporate Plan stated that Newport would be a city of sanctuary, endeavouring to support asylum seekers and refugees from the global community to settle and become part of Newport's community. This commitment was embedded in the plan which was agreed in November 2022 by all members of the Council, including opposition leaders.
- The Leader went on to say that she is a proud Newportonian, who loves her city, community, and birthplace; and reflected on her positive experience at a diverse school. The Leader went on to say that Newport Council colleagues all loved their home, the richness and diversity of communities, and reflected on the privilege of the leadership role which offered the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds. The Leader noted that this involved welcoming refugees to our great city and listening to their stories of survival and resilience. The Leader commented that she would have the privilege of attending Maindee Primary School this week, which was a School of Sanctuary. The Leader explained that this meant that it was recognised as a school of welcome and safety, where the school forged empathy and cultural awareness. The Leader confirmed that there are around 520 pupils enrolled at the school, and approximately 93% of pupils spoke English as an additional language, with over 42 different languages being spoken amongst pupils. The Leader commented that the school had recently received accreditation for being the first School of Sanctuary in Newport. Leader had benefitted from cultural diversity growing up and looked to the children of Newport who also

experienced the same and children and it was for those children and their families that the Leader was proud to accept this motion.

- Councillor Reeks was proud to support the city and welcomed refugees coming through the correct channels. And added that even City of Sanctuary had a limit. The infrastructure was a crisis point and referred to the schools being at capacity. Councillor Reeks felt that there was a need to focus on day-to-day tasks of normal council functions and therefore did not support the motion.
- Councillor Jones mentioned that as a councillor, he was there to represent residents of Newport and agreed that it was a welcoming place. Councillor Jones also echoed the concerns regarding the shortage of facilities, which caused residents concern.
- Councillor Routley considered that it was imperative that the Council address homelessness, housing, and medical care and echoed the comments of colleagues and therefore objected to the motion.
- Councillor Hourahine also reflected on comments previously mentioned by council colleagues and strongly supported the motion.
- Councillor Batrouni thanked Cllr Stowell-Corten for bringing this motion forward for debate and supported the motion.
- Councillor Clarke supported the motion and outlined concerns in the Bill as well as the negative impact through Newport social media. Councillor Clarke was proud to live in Newport and proud of Newport citizens.
- Councillor Stowell-Corten was pleased to close the debate and put forward her closing argument and reminded everyone of the purpose of the motion. Councillor Stowell-Corten reflected on comments of colleagues and considered the plight of refugees and imagined how it would feel in their situation. Councillor Stowell-Corten took the opportunity to provide information, on the backlog of 138,000 applications and other statistic, facts and dispelling any myths councillors may have with regard to illegal immigrants, safer routes, and bespoke Visa routes. Also referred to comments from councillors in relation housing, schools at capacity, GP, and dentists under pressure. Newport was a dispersal area and we welcomed nurses, GPs and dentists who were former asylum seekers. Asylum Seekers were not jumping the queue and most displaced people stayed near a neighbouring country to return home at their earliest opportunity. Those did come to Newport did so because of links here. More than 30 languages spoken in Newport schools and areas of our city and Councillor Stowell-Corten was proud of this and that our children were tolerant, empathetic, and open-minded citizens. Many colleagues could trace their family members back to immigrants who formed a melting pot of cultures, languages and ideas that had melded to form a Britain and Newport that we all loved and worked in today. There were wars and conflicts that drove a human crisis. Children who fled war in Sudan today would be detained and deported. Fortunately, no one present today would need to seek sanctuary in the future.

Resolved:

- That the majority of Councillors voted in favour of the motion, Therefore the motion was carried.
- Councillors also called upon the Leader of the Council to write to the Prime Minister to outline the Council's concerns.

6. **Pay and Reward Statement**

The Senior Solicitor for Litigation explained to members of the Council the conflict of interest regarding the above item, relating to the Chief Executive and Senior Officers, therefore, at this juncture the Chief Executive and Senior Officers were asked to leave the Council Chambers.

The Presiding Member invited the Leader to introduce the report, which had two items for recommendation to full Council. This required colleagues to review and agree the annual Pay and Reward Policy and the alignment of Chief Officer Leave.

The Pay and Reward Policy for the workforce was an annual report that required adoption by the Council. The policy set out the internal mechanisms for remunerating Council officers and provided an update on any changes since the last adoption in 2022.

Any changes made during the last 12 months were supported by the correct democratic / officer processes where necessary and noted in the covering report.

When the Leader reported last that the Council's gender pay gap continued to compare favourably with other Councils across Wales and the UK, it was anticipated this was still the case when this Council refreshed its pay data later this month. The Leader was also pleased to report that the Council has seen a reduction in the ratio of pay between the lowest and highest paid officers, meaning there was less gap between them.

The report also outlined how the Council aligned the leave of officers, and other terms and conditions, as part of the Councils commitment to a single status agreement in 2015. In the 2022/23 pay award, all officers, other than Chief Officers, were awarded an additional day's annual leave as part of the pay award.

To ensure the Council's continuing commitment to have a single status approach, wherever possible, it was recommended that Chief Officers annual leave was also aligned to include the additional day's leave that other officers of the Council have been awarded.

Councillor Batrouni seconded the report.

Resolved:

That Council

1. Reviewed and agreed the Pay and Reward Policy in order to meet the statutory requirement for a pay policy statement to be approved and published by Council on an annual basis.
2. Reviewed and agreed the alignment of Chief Officer leave.

7. **Participation Strategy: Ward Meetings**

The Presiding Member invited the Leader to present the proposed Framework for the re-introduction of Ward Meetings as a valuable means of engaging with residents.

The report sought Council's approval for the framework setting out the frequency, order of business and provision of support for Ward Meetings to be adopted.

In May 2022, the Council made a commitment to support residents to become more involved in decision-making and encouraged more diversity in decision-makers through the adoption of a Participation Strategy.

Under this strategy, the Council aimed to build on the existing programme of engagement and consultation with the public to further increase participation in democratic processes.

Feedback from the Participation Strategy consultation indicated that residents wanted the Council to explore alternative methods of consultation and Ward Meetings were one of many ways that the Council was able to support wider public involvement in decision-making.

In developing the proposed framework, members of the Democratic Services Committee highlighted the key features that they considered to be an essential part of the arrangements for ward meetings; these features helped to ensure that residents have the opportunity to engage in important decisions, and to set their own agenda, reflecting the issues that were important to each community.

Defining an agreed framework for the ward meetings, that included two fully supported Ward Meetings each year per ward, recognises the Council's commitment to engaging with residents on key decisions that impacted their communities in a timely manner.

Utilising one of the regular ward meetings to focus on budget setting and supporting residents to engage with this process on a face-to-face basis would encourage rich and meaningful feedback shaping the outcome of the decisions being made.

In addition, a second supported ward meeting approximately six months after the budget setting ward meeting would provide a further opportunity to promote awareness of the Council's functions including a summary of progress against key objectives and projects.

Where Members wish to hold a third meeting in a year, administrative support would be provided for booking suitable venues within communities for ward meetings, but there would be no officer support at the meetings.

Importantly, both supported ward meetings would provide the opportunity for residents to set their own points for discussion; so, the community could help to set an agenda that provided a platform to discuss what matters in their own community.

Whilst the proposed framework would support meetings in each ward if required, it would remain within the remit of the ward member/s to determine whether the ward meetings were held in their own community.

Members may prefer to communicate with their residents in a different way, such as ward surgeries, casework, emails, or social media, for example.

Ward Meetings were an option that could be used to enhance communication but would not replace any of these other methods of engagement with communities that were open to Councillors.

The proposed framework supported the long-term development of greater engagement and involvement of residents so that the Council continued to involve and empower the community as part of decision making and democratic processes.

Councillor Al-Nuaimi was pleased that the Democratic Services Committee resolved to continue with the resumption of the Ward meetings following their interruption by the Pandemic, which caused their suspension. This Council had a proud record of pioneering the introduction of these meetings going back to more than 25 years ago. They were forums for debate and engagement with our residents, allowing them to have their say on matters in their communities, including policing matters and Council services delivery. However, Councillor Al-Nuaimi was a bit disappointed at what appeared to be restrictions governing the purpose of the Ward meetings, their timing and officer support for the third meeting.

In his own Ward Stow Hill, the Ward meetings were missed by residents during the last 3 years as forums for engagement and information.

Using the new format recommended in the report, both residents and Councillor Al-Nuaimi looked forward to the resumption of Ward meetings, for both participation and future engagement.

Councillor Evans Seconded the Motion.

Resolved:

Council received the report and approved the proposed framework for adoption, as listed in the report.

8. Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22

The Presiding Member invited the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Councillor Hourahine to present the 2021/2022 Scrutiny Annual Report to Council. The purpose of this report was to apprise Council and other interested parties of the role of the scrutiny committees, and their work during the 2021/22 municipal year.

Scrutiny was a function of Councils in England and Wales and was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, creating separate Cabinet and Scrutiny functions in Local Authorities.

The role of scrutiny was strengthened with the passing of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. This Act required the Committee to report annually to the Council on the work that carried out in the past 12 months and its future work programme. Since the introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act, Scrutiny also had a statutory role to scrutinise the work of the Public Service Boards.

The underlying principle of Scrutiny arrangements was ensuring that the decision-making process was open, accountable, and transparent.

The scrutiny function at Newport City Council was performed by four scrutiny committees comprising of Elected Members who were not part of the Council's executive. Three of these committees were concerned with performance under Place and Corporate, People, and Partnerships. Overview and Management Scrutiny considers policies, strategies and plans that are cross-cutting and impact upon the whole Council.

The annual report covered the period from May 2021 to April 2022 and was the final annual report of the five-year term leading up to local elections in May 2022.

During this time, there was a restructure which meant that the configuration of the Council changed, however this did not have a material impact on the service areas scrutinised by each Committee.

The Report highlighted the important work carried out by Scrutiny over the year, during which the four committees met on a regular basis.

Performance Committees considered regular updates on service plans for their relevant areas, and used this evidence base to scrutinise performance in a wider context. The Service plan updates included financial information, links with corporate goals, Wellbeing goals and work towards goals set externally to the Council.

End of year updates also included details on how the Council adapted and responded to the challenges faced by services and communities due to the pandemic, and how support was provided to residents and businesses.

A number of recommendations were made to Cabinet commending the quality of the updates, and to promote key achievements within Newport so that residents were informed of actions that provided support during and subsequently to the pandemic.

During this time Committees received reports on the Cabinet's responses to the Recommendations the Committees previously made to the Draft Budget proposals, including investments, as part of Scrutiny's remit of measuring and assessing the Authorities impact and value.

Outside of the cycle of performance review, the Performance Scrutiny Committees also considered reports on topics including In-House Residential Care in Newport aimed at increasing the local provision available for looked after children, the Economic Recovery Strategy detailing progress against the plan supporting Newport businesses and investment, and the wellbeing support provided to staff in this challenging period.

The Performance Scrutiny Committee for Partnerships considered the Wellbeing Plan Annual Report presented by the Public Services Board (PSB) and submitted their comments to be shared with the PSB. Similarly, the Committee also scrutinised the performance against the Wellbeing Plan 2020-21 and submitted recommendations to the Public Services Board for consideration. Partnerships Scrutiny also assessed the collaborative work between the Council and the Education Assessment Services, Shared Resource Service and Barnardo's as part of their agenda.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee considered and shaped key strategies setting out priorities for the Council over the coming years, including the Climate Change Strategy and Welsh Five-Year Strategy, as well as annual updates concerning safeguarding, risk management and digital services.

Significant progress was made against actions planned for the reporting period during this time, including revisions to make sure that scrutiny arrangements continued to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Equality Act 2010. This ensured that scrutiny continued to operate effectively considering recent legislative changes. This would also be a focus for Scrutiny in the next reporting period to recognise changes to arrangements for regional scrutiny of Public Services Boards.

Councillor Hourahine looked forward to Chairing the Overview and Scrutiny committee for the remainder of the Municipal year, working alongside committee members to provide an objective and productive challenge to the decisions of the local authority. Councillor Hourahine also took the opportunity to thank scrutiny colleagues, Cabinet Members, Officers of the Local Authority, and partners for their continued support.

Councillor Routley seconded the motion and congratulated all scrutiny members for their support.

Resolved:

Council agreed the content of the annual report as a basis for the work of the Scrutiny Committees in the coming year.

9. Questions to the Leader of the Council

Before commencement with questions, the Leader made the following announcements:

Opening of the new bridge

Last week the Leader was joined by the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS, and the Mayor, to officially open the new city centre active travel bridge.

The bridge replaced the old subway and provided residents and visitors with a safer, more accessible route across the railway line. It connected communities and the city centre, something residents were clear they wanted in responding to the active travel consultations.

It was a complex project led by Newport City Council in partnership with Welsh Government, Network Rail and Transport for Wales. The bridge was delivered on-site by contractors and sub-contractors that were all Welsh based companies, directly benefitting the local economy and communities.

The building of this bridge was yet another step forward in delivering wider regeneration plans for the city centre and greatly improved the public realm around this important transportation hub, making the area far more attractive for all users. The planting beds were sustainable thanks to a drainage system that captured and directed water straight to them.

Marathon

Newport City Council was pleased to welcome thousands of runners and spectators to the city just over a week ago for the ABP Newport Wales marathon and 10k. The weather wasn't the finest on the day, but it proved to be perfect for competitors with three new course records set.

Newport was on the small screen again when the race and highlights were televised last Friday. Well done to everyone who took part, to all the local volunteers and those that worked very hard to make the event a success.

Coronation

The Coronation weekend was fast approaching and so were the plans for community events. The highlight this year was the Big Lunch at Beechwood Park, taking place on Sunday 7 May from 12 noon to 4pm.

With support from Newport City Radio, the Beechwood Park Group and Newport Live, there would be live music, roaming entertainers, sporting, and craft activities for all the family.

The Leader was also pleased to announce that the Council would be able support street parties again this year. Applications were being processed and those successful would be supported with traffic management on the day.

More information about all the Coronation events was available on our website.

Wales National Armed Forces Day

After the coronation, the next major event was Wales National Armed Forces Day.

The Leader was proud to announce that Newport was hosting this year's event on Saturday 24 June with an actioned-packed schedule in place.

The day would begin at 10am with military displays along the riverside and organisations such as the Royal British Legion, the Royal Naval Association, Help for Heroes, Newport Veterans Hub, GAVO and many more, with stalls inside the theatre and arts centre.

There would be a parade in the city centre led by the Regimental Band and Corps of Drums of The Royal Welsh, and the Tigers Army Parachute Display Team would "drop in" somewhere in the city centre.

City centre activities would finish at 3pm but there would be a free, ticketed concert in Rodney Parade from 4pm to 6pm.

The Leader welcomed colleagues support for this prestigious day when the council, its communities, and people from further afield could show their gratitude to all those serving in the armed forces and veterans. Council colleagues would look forward to service people, veterans, residents, and visitors joining them on this prestigious occasion.

For more information and the latest announcements, the Leader suggested keeping an eye on the Council's website and social media.

Cost of living event and School poverty

On Wednesday 26 April, the Council would be hosting another cost-of-living event to offer support to Newport residents.

Taking place at The Riverfront Theatre and Arts Centre, members of the public could drop in any time between 10am and 6pm.

Hundreds of local people attended a similar event last November. The Council had again joined forces with organisations including Newport Citizens Advice, Age Cymru Gwent, Melin Homes, Newport Credit Union, Wastesavers and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

The event would be welcoming, inclusive and informal. People could pop in to have a chat with someone or just have a look around, and there would be free tea, coffee, and children's activities on offer.

In the same vein, the Council was also working with schools to make a difference to the lives of children from low-income households.

A new strategy was recently launched to provide bespoke, targeted, and universal approaches to tackling all aspects of poverty that impacted on children and their families.

The strategy was aimed at removing the barriers that could impact on a child's education. All schools received a presentation by Children in Wales about taking a whole school approach, and by working with a range of partners, there would be a wide offer of advice and support available for schools, pupils, and families.

The Leader had the privilege of attending St Julian's Primary School last week, where the children introduced the Leader to the Big Box Void. This was a mini supermarket, housed in a shipping container on the school site. The container and electrical white goods were provided by WG. Other schools in Newport had also signed up to this initiative. There were two aims for this initiative; to reduce food waste and to make food affordable for the community. It was stocked through donations from staff and family and other donations from the local shops. It was also supported and stocked by crops grown in the poly tunnels, which meant that children participated in the activities. The Leader passed on her thanks to Councillors D Davies and M Spencer for their involvement. The shop also stocked, nappies, toothpaste, sanitary products and other household items and it was a pay as you feel shop. There was a tremendous community effort from St Julian's Primary School and the Leader was proud of the effort that all schools were making in Newport.

Library, Museum and Art Gallery reopening

Since the last meeting of Council, the Newport Library, Museum and Art Gallery building in John Frost Square reopened after a major programme of Welsh-government funding work to create space for additional council teams.

Residents could now access a range of services in the heart of the city centre.

Making much better use of a council-owned building, the scheme included new office space; rooms where appointments with residents could take place and a much brighter and welcoming foyer.

Work was also underway on some unique artwork within the building. Urban Circle was successful in obtaining funding for the project which the Leader was looking forward to this artwork being unveiled very soon.

Questions to the Leader

Councillor M Evans:

One in seven people in Wales were employed by the Tourism Industry, which included thousands of Newportonians. Was the Leader therefore opposed or in favour of the Welsh Government's introduction of the Tourism Tax and could the Leader explain the reasons why.

Response:

The Leader felt that tourism was important an important aspect of the Welsh economy and hospitality was part of tourism. Newport had a great deal on offer, and we also supported the development of more bed spaces; there was the International Conventional Centre. We also had our heritage assets including the Transporter Bridge and Caerleon; our Roman History was second to none. In terms of tourism tax, which would be left to the discretion of each individual Local Authorities to consider, which was a key point as it enables the 22 Welsh Local Authorities to review this on a case-by-case basis. When it came to the concept of introducing a Tourism Tax, it was a matter for full council to debate.

Supplementary:

Other Councils in Wales have given their stance publicly on Tourism Tax, why have we not as yet.

Response:

The Leader would not give a statement until she had undertaken a full analysis of all the supporting evidence, including the financial information around this. The Leader did however, emphasized the excellent support shown by the Business Support Team for all businesses across Newport. Working with major businesses, small businesses, and SMEs. It was important to recognize that this council supported businesses. This was shown through the discretionary element for business rates along with the rebate from the WG. The information on the subject that Councillor Evans raised would need to be evidence based.

Councillor Morris:

Was the only way to make an appointment for the tip was by an online appointment.

Response:

The Leader advised that this was not the only way and that residents could also make the appointment face to face. Residents could go into the library museum and hubs to obtain the information.

Councillor Hourahine:

In January there were two days of public engagement in Newport, during the budgeting process. Did the Leader consider there to be any benefit to adopting such an approach for the distribution of funding.

Response:

Many councillors would be aware of the participatory budgeting work that the Council led over the last few years and the Leader thanked councillor colleagues for work done in terms of highlighting and endorsing applications made by residents.

This was a partnership arrangement with ABUHB and OneNewport Partnership. This was a way to enable communities to access resources that were not directed by the Council. This started this around the start of the pandemic. Colleagues would recall that at the end of the pandemic the Council introduced £0.5M of covid community recovery scheme distributed by participatory budgeting scheme. This year, the program aims was building stronger more resilient communities, improving people's health and wellbeing, addressing inequality, tackling climate change emergency, and making Newport a better place to live. Four programmes had been completed in participatory budgeting and the evidence had suggested this was a very good way of allocating funds. Partner organisations had also provided additional funds. This was an important way of enabling participation, it was also about citizens deciding where the public money went and helped to engage partners and community representatives to get involved. The Leader recently attended the Newport Women's Forum where success stories were highlighted. There was also project work taking place in Pill with some of the successful recipients of this funding. Not only was it an effective way of distributing funding, but it also helped to build social capital and make communities stronger and increases trust in funding organisations and amongst community groups. This had been popular and well over 1,000 people had taken part in these sessions and the Leader was proud of the Partnerships Team, who led the way with this and was an exemplar for the distribution of funding across the whole of Wales and the UK.

10. **Questions to the Cabinet Members**

There was one written question to the Cabinet Members.

Question 1 – Deputy Leader/ Cabinet Member: Education and Early Years

Councillor Routley

As the number of new housing developments in Newport rises, it is becoming increasingly clear that our existing schools are struggling to meet the demand.

As a Cabinet Member, what actions are you taking to alleviate the current and future pupil placement crisis that is affecting numerous families?

What measures will you and your administration take to address the emotional strain that parents are experiencing due to the high rate of application rejections?

Response from Councillor Davies

Offers of places in the September 2023 Reception year group were issued on 17th April, and whilst a high proportion of applicants were successful in gaining a place at one of their preference schools, a minority of primary schools for which the Council is the admission authority (2/37) were unable to meet the demand for places from pupils living in their catchment area. This is disappointing; however, parents are always encouraged to include multiple preferences when making their applications to increase their probability of receiving an offer that they are satisfied with. The School Admissions Team will continue to work with families without a current offer to secure an alternative school placement for their children and support them with this process.

Notwithstanding this, there is an overall sufficiency of places across in city within the primary sector, and therefore the Council continues to fulfil its legal duties in relation to statutory schooling; however, it is inevitable that this does not always correlate with parental preference. The development of a new school on the Whiteheads development, and the subsequent relocation of Ysgol Gymraeg Nant Gwenlli, will increase the overall availability of primary school places in the west of the city, and two new developer led primary schools will open on the east of the city over the next few years. All Newport primary schools perform to

high standards and our Home to School Transport policy supports primary aged children whose nearest available school is two miles or more from their home address.

In terms of the secondary sector, the published admission numbers of two secondary schools will formally increase from September 2023 to assist in meeting transitional demand, and again there is an overall sufficiency of places in the sector for the September 2023 Year 7 cohort. The projected future demand for secondary provision continues to be reported through and monitored by the Planning of School Places group, and data will be used to inform future capital projects.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on 16 May and was the Council AGM.

The Presiding Member took the opportunity to thank all councillors for their hard work, especially newly elected members for the work in their wards.