

Minutes



Council

Date: 29 September 2015

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors H Thomas (Chair), M Al-Nuami, O Ali, T Bond, R Bright, P Cockeram, M Cornelious, E Corten, D Davies, V Delahaye, C Evans, M Evans, C Ferris, D Fouweather, E Garland, J Guy, P Hannon, D Harvey, I Hayat, P Huntley, R Jeavons, C Jenkins, M Kellaway, D Mayer, C Maxfield, S Mlewa, R Mogford, R Poole, J Mudd, M Rahman, J Richards, M Spencer, C Suller, T Suller, K Thomas, R Truman, T Watkins, M Whitcutt, R White, D Wilcox and D Williams

Apologies: Councillors D Atwell, K Critchley, G Giles, R Hutchings, A Morris, E Townsend and K Whitehead

1. Preliminaries

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this stage

Mayor's Announcements

St Julian's School

The Mayor welcomed the Head of Physics at St Julian's School and four students who had been successful in the Supersonic Cymru Challenge at the end of last term.

The Mayor explained this engagement project was for students interested in science, technology, engineering and maths. It was based around the Bloodhound Supersonic Car Project and Key Stage 3 pupils were asked to design and virtually race their own car using their knowledge of science. More than 100 students took part and all student teams broke the Sound Barrier. The St Julian's team, calling themselves the 'Blood Army' won the race with a top speed of 1,051 mph.

The Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Education and Young People offered congratulations to the students and to everyone involved. Members applauded the Students' success.

Green Flag Award

The Mayor was pleased to announce that once again the Green Flag has been awarded to Belle Vue Park. The Mayor awarded the Certificate to the Cabinet Member for Streetscene and City Services. The Cabinet member paid tribute to the staff involved and members passed on their congratulations.

Stray Dogs

The Mayor announced that Newport's Public Protection staff had been awarded the gold standard by the RSPCA for provision for stray dogs. The Mayor passed on the Council's congratulations to the staff involved.

Jesus Cares Project

The Mayor was pleased to hear that the 'Jesus Cares' project had been awarded some £500,000 of Lottery Funding for the coming three years. This was good news for Newport as half of that money will be used in Newport by the project which provides funds for more than 200 agencies for food parcels, hampers, toiletries, baby and children clothes.

Georgian Rugby Team

The Mayor informed members that he had recently welcomed the Georgian Rugby Team and Members of the Twinning Association to the Parlour. He passed on best wishes to the team for the World Cup and their forthcoming match with New Zealand

Freedom of the City

The Mayor reminded members about the forthcoming ceremony and march through the City Centre to celebrate the granting of the Freedom of the City to the Welsh Guards.

2. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 28 July 2015 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

3. **Appointments**

It was reported that the Business Managers had been informed that the Chief Education Officer had taken a decision as Director of Education to exercise statutory powers at St Julian's and Caerleon Secondary Schools and appoint additional governors to support each school.

The Governors appointed were:

Caerleon: Sally Jenkins (Head of Children and Family Services) and Vanessa Griffin (Assistant Head of Education)

St Julian's: Debra Wood- Lawson (Head of People & Business Change) and Andrew Powles (Assistant Head of Education)

The following appointments were agreed:

Appointment Panel for the Head of City Services:

Councillors R Truman; D Davies; R Jeavons and R White

Process

Councillor Hannon raised some concerns about the reporting processes in relation to appointments made at Council. Both Business Managers explained the process which was custom and practice. No change was agreed.

4. **Police Issues**

The Mayor welcomed Superintendent Glyn Fernquest to the meeting. Superintendent Fernquest updated members on recent crime and antisocial behaviour figures and activity in the City. He mentioned changes in the way crime was recorded which had impacted on the figures. He also mentioned the proactive approach by the local police to prioritise crimes against individuals. Superintendent Fernquest was pleased to report on a reduction on burglaries.

Councillor Chris Evans was concerned about drug use in the city and the number of disused needles in a specific area. He mentioned the need for drug users to receive help. Superintendent Fernquest described action being taken such as drug intervention programmes and needle exchanges.

Councillor Huntley raised ongoing concerns about the 101 system. Superintendent Fernquest agreed there were concerns about the first point of contact process. He mentioned that work was ongoing with a view to improving the first point of contact with the project ending by April 2016.

Councillor Poole was concerned that a cage fighting event was coming soon in Newport and that there were significant issues last time. He also mentioned the favourable response to the consultation on proposals to reduce begging in the city. Superintendent Fernquest stated that the local police were aware of the events in the city and had plans in place

Councillor Truman was concerned about the impact of reductions in the Police funding. Superintendent Fernquest stated that police would do the best they could to provide the best possible service

Superintendent Fernquest agreed with Councillor Spencer that voluntary groups, such as the Community Speed Group, played an important role in supporting the police and the wider police family.

Councillor Guy and Councillor Mayer expressed concern about the impact of Cyber Crime. Superintendent Fernquest mentioned the support of fraud departments of the banks and other organisations and recognised this was a growing and highly technical area. There was a specialist department in the local force looking at this issue. Councillor Mayer was concerned that the national trading standards scam unit no longer dealt with this type of activity. This had been passed to the Citizens Advice Bureau.

5. **Notice of Motion : Outside Bodies**

Councillor Matthew Evans asked Council to consider the following motion for which appropriate notice had been given:

“This Council resolves that elected members should always be offered positions on outside bodies before members of the public, as is the case with LEA appointed school governors. This Council further resolves that where there are over 3 places available, Opposition members should be offered a place”

Councillor Fouweather seconded the motion.

Councillor Evans stated that the Opposition had asked for positions but to no avail. He mentioned some specific cases where unelected representatives were appointed in favour of

local elected members. He considered the protocol followed for LEA governors should be implemented for outside bodies. He also mentioned poor attendance of some people on outside bodies. He mentioned that the Opposition was trusted to fill some minor places but not others.

The Leader of the Council stated that amicable meetings and discussions were being held regularly between the Business Managers of the Administration and the Opposition.

He was reluctant to recommend that the Council considers changes part way through the municipal year but he believed that continuing amicable discussions could result in a proposal that could be considered by the Council.

The Leader suggested that discussions around these proposals continue between the Business Managers with a view to any proposed changes being reported back to the Council for implementation at the Annual General Meeting. He stated that he could give no guarantees but that he felt that some progress could be made

In the light of the statement by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Evans agreed to withdraw the motion

6. Improvement Plan 2014-2015 Review

The Leader of the Council introduced the report to Council and stated that it was an encouraging report which showed the Council was moving forward and had achieved some significant improvements.

He mentioned that the recently released All – Wales data shows that Newport City Council is the 3rd most improving Council in Wales

The Leader stated that 70 % of our indicators are showing improvements on the previous year and some 52% are above the Welsh Average and improving. Overall progress against the 14/15 plan is assessed as being 'good', with most improvement objectives performing well

The Leader of the Council stated it was important that this trend continues and that we continue to improve year on year and it was also important to target those areas where we remain in the bottom quartile

The Leader stated that overall it was important to recognise the efforts of staff and members in achieving these improvements

Councillor Fouweather agreed that good progress was being made but pointed out some specific areas in adult social services and youth justice where more progress needed to be made

Resolved

To note the content of the report and commend areas of successful service delivery

7. Senior Management Structure and Salary Conditions

The Heads of Finance and People& Business Change left the meeting during the discussion on this item

The Leader of the Council informed the Council that the Cabinet had considered this report and endorsed the proposals, which were effectively:

- The reduction of Heads of Service from nine to eight by removing the Head of Customers and Digital Innovation post and creating a new combined post of Head of Streetscene and City Services
- To advertise for an appointment to the new post on the same grade as the former Head of Customers and Digital Innovation post
- To recognise there is a need to review pay and to bring a report to the Council in June 2016 for consideration

The Leader mentioned that professional advice had been taken about the grading of the new post.

He mentioned that the plan would not incur an increase in the overall pay of the Chief Officers. He also mentioned the role that would be played by the Independent Remuneration Panel who would provide observations on proposed changes to pay to Chief Officers in the future

Councillor Matthew Evans moved an amendment to read “To advertise for an appointment to the new post on the grade of Heads of Service level 3”

Councillor Evans mentioned the original proposals reflected an increase of £15,000 and challenging times remained. He mentioned savings that had been made to services of a similar amount. He said that staff morale was important as well as money. He recognised the work of staff and referred to the reducing workforce. He considered this sent out the wrong message.

The Leader of the Council stated that the proposals had been subject to professional advice. He stated the post was a new post with more responsibilities than former post of Head of Streetscene.

The Chief Executive confirmed the scope of the new post held significant additional responsibilities than the previous post. He stated the former post had been difficult to appoint to and the cost of interim staff had been in the region of £180,000. The Chief Executive referred back to the advice of the Hay organisation on the issue of pay at this level.

Councillors Whitcutt, Al Nuaimi, Truman and Cockeram spoke in favour of the original proposals and against the amendment. Councillor Fouweather spoke in favour of the amendment.

Councillor Fouweather also mentioned that no Council Officer should be paid over £100,000. In response the Leader of the Council stated that the pay was governed by the market place and it was important to pay the right level of remuneration to appoint the right individuals to run the organisation.

In summing up Councillor Matthew Evans mentioned the need for officers to feel job satisfaction as well as money. He mentioned the need to be prudent at these times. The Chief Executive stated that surveys show that staff satisfaction had increased since 2012.

A vote was taken on the amendment and the amendment was **lost**

Following a vote on the substantive recommendations the following were resolved

- I. To agree the reduction to Heads of Service from 9 to 8 and a realignment of activities as set out in the report and endorsed by Hay Management Consultants in 2014.
- II. To agree the proposed duties and responsibilities and agree to the external advertising for the Head of Streetscene and City Services at the pay grade of HOS level 2.
- III. To acknowledge that Council will be asked to consider a report on Head of Service pay in June 2016. To agree the realignment of Heads of Service terms and conditions related to local holidays following bank holidays and the removal of Council paid professional subscriptions
- IV. To note the report has been endorsed by Cabinet on 1 September 2015.

8. **Annual Report by the Scrutiny Committees**

Councillor Mayor as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee for Learning, Caring and Leisure presented the Annual Report

He mentioned that some good progress had been made this year, within limited resources, but there was still more to do, and there was need to keep up the pace of improvement.

He mentioned:

- Scrutiny Improvement Group is working well and Members are committed to raising the profile of scrutiny in the authority
- The Committees are developing new, refocused work programmes and adopting new ways of working to sharpen our approach.
- Good Scrutiny is not just the responsibility of Scrutiny Members and Officers - Priorities and actions for next year are challenging but achievable, however we need support from across the authority to make these happen.

Councillor Mayer mentioned highlights of good progress this year included :

- Contribution to major projects feeding into the budget process e.g. Riverfront Theatre Delivery Model.
- Libraries & Community Centre projects praised by Cabinet for joined up working, positive impact of scrutiny working across Council depts.
- Working with colleagues across Gwent on the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge: secured investment from WG through the Scrutiny Development Fund to run the event, which was very well received; now working on a self-assessment toolkit looking at the characteristics of effective scrutiny.
- Working with the Fairness Commission – held an excellent member training session on applying principles of fairness to the policy process, now being rolled out
- Public Engagement Strategy is now complete and being implemented

Planned actions and priorities for 2015-16 focus on:

- Continuing to improve work programming and methods – e.g. looking at the right things at the right time, new techniques and technologies
- Improving public access to the scrutiny process – e.g. “authentic voices”
- Strengthening relationship with Cabinet – e.g. continue regular meetings and dialogue
- Training and development for scrutiny members – e.g. we are developing a programme of events and seminars
- Strengthening support for scrutiny by officers – e.g. consistent approaches across departments, improving external links

Resolved

To adopt the report

9. Annual Report by the Standards Committee

Councillor Guy presented the Annual report on behalf of the Standards Committee.

He mentioned the Chair's comments in the report reflected that the Standards Committee is committed to promoting high standards of ethical conduct among elected Members and officers in order to maintain public confidence in local government.

The Committee was pleased to report that, once again, no serious complaints of misconduct were referred to the Standards Committee by the Ombudsman during the past 12 months and no complaints were raised under the Local Resolution Protocol. The Council's proud record of never having any complaints upheld and sanctions imposed against individual Members has again been upheld, and long may this continue.

However there was no room for complacency and it is essential that these standards are maintained. The Standards Committee will be proactively reviewing all ethical standards policies and procedures as part of the forward work programme and will be re-assessing the need for all Councillors to undertake refresher training, in the light of proposed changes to the ethical standards framework in Wales and the Members Code of Conduct.

To assist Members in meeting their obligations under the Code of Conduct, the Committee has produced a Protocol for the Registration of Gifts and Hospitality. This is intended to provide general advice and assistance to Members in connection with the acceptance and registration of gifts and hospitality. The Committee has also recommended that the threshold for the registration of gifts and hospitality should be reduced from £80 to £25 in line with most other Welsh local authorities.

10. Recommendations by the Standards Committee

The Head of Law and Regulation presented recommendations by the Standards Committee in relation to acceptance of gifts and hospitality.

Resolved

To adopt the following recommendations by the Standards Committee;

- I. That the threshold of £80 for Members to register gifts and hospitality be reduced to £25.
- II. To adopt a protocol for Members Gifts and Hospitality

11. Questions to the Chair of the Cabinet

There were no questions to the Chair on this occasion

12. Questions to Cabinet Members

One question was submitted for the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services.

The question and answer are set out in the appendix to these minutes.

13. **Questions to Chairs of Committees**

There were no questions to the Chairs on this occasion

14. **APPENDIX: Questions to Cabinet Members**

<i>COUNCIL MEETING : 29 SEPTEMBER 2015</i>
Question to: Cabinet Member for Adult & Community Services
Question from: Councillor David Fouweather
Subject: Grant for Elderly Care
Question: The Welsh Government previously provided the council with a grant to assist with the cost of the care of the elderly in the community. This grant is no longer paid to the council but is instead given to the LHB. This funding is used to support Carer Connect, Community Connect and Step up Step down. How will you ensure that the LHB continue to support these groups and they continue to allocate the full amount of the grant to these schemes?
Answer: Thank you for the question. Councillor Fouweather is referring to the Intermediate Care Fund (ICF). In 2014/15 Welsh Government gave the grant on a regional basis (not directly to individual councils) and it was administered by Caerphilly Council with projects funded by the grant agreed and evaluated by a group of representatives from all local authority partners and the Health Board. All six had to agree where money was spent. We agreed to spend on those initiatives you referred to and Step-up, step down. Step up, step down has been a great success and has contributed significantly to reducing delayed transfer of care. When I was first appointed to this post we were told there were 80 individuals in hospital through our fault. We had no way of assessing those figures at the time so I put a process in place. For 2102/13 we found we were at fault in 13 cases and the Welsh average was 4. In 2013/14, the average in Wales was 5 and we were at 5. This year the Welsh average is 4.9 and we are down to 2.5 delayed transfers attributable to us. This is a remarkable achievement and the Step – up, Step down has helped so much. I welcome you raising this issue so people have an idea of how the funding is being used. As to future funding, we have been given an indication and hope that the funding will come next year. Decisions will be made by the partnership of 5 authorities and the Health Board as to where the money will be spent.

Supplementary: Councillor Fouweather stated he had visited the Community Connect and they do a great job and it would benefit members if they gave a brief presentation to members about the work they do in our communities, particularly with those who are isolated and with no family who can help. I am also impressed by the work being done in the GP surgeries. It is absolutely fantastic. If I see things that are good, I will say.