

Minutes



Council

Date: 26 September 2017

Time: 5.00 pm

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

Apologies: Councillors D Davies, C Jenkins, M Linton, M Rahman, T Suller and K Thomas

1. Preliminaries

i. To receive any apologies for absence

The Chief Legal Officer reported apologies for absence.

ii. To receive any declarations of interest

Cllr Trevor Watkins declared a prejudicial interest in item 12: Newport City Homes Governance Changes.

Cllrs Jane Mudd and Tracey Holyoake declared a personal interest in item 12: Newport City Homes Governance Changes.

iii. To receive any announcements by the Mayor

Dementia Friendly City Award

The Gwent Operations Manager for the Alzheimer's Society attended to formally present the Mayor with the Council's Dementia Friendly City Award, in recognition of the Council's work to raise awareness of dementia, develop support for people living with dementia and their carers, and encourage dementia friendly practices across the city.

Speaking of the award, the Leader of the Council highlighted the hard work of Council staff and partners in working towards the achievement, as well as the challenges that remained ahead. Work would continue to improve support and promote dementia awareness, including training being offered to all Councillors in the near future.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2017 were approved as a true record.

3. Appointments

Resolved

The following appointments were agreed:

Internal Appointments

Committee	No. of Vacancies / Replacements	Nominations Received
Corporate Parenting Forum Chair	1 replacement	Cllr Paul Cockeram to replace Cllr Gail Giles
BME Champion	1 vacancy	Cllr Majid Rahman
Biodiversity Champion	1 replacement	Cllr Laura Lacey to replace Cllr Roger Jeavons
SACRE: The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	1 replacement	Cllr Tracey Holyoake to replace Cllr Gail Giles. NB. existing SACRE Member Cllr Laura Lacey to take on the role of SACRE Chair.
Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships	1 replacement	Cllr Kevin Whitehead to replace Cllr Jan Cleverly
Performance Scrutiny Committee – People	1 replacement	Cllr Jan Cleverly to replace Cllr Kevin Whitehead
Licensing Committee	1 vacancy	Cllr Allan Morris (Independent Member taking up the Liberal Democrat vacancy)
Employee Partnership Forum	1 replacement	Cllr Paul Cockeram to replace Cllr Mark Whitcutt

Appointments to External Organisations

Organisation	No. of Vacancies / Replacements	Nominations Received
Welsh Books Council	1 vacancy	Mr Alun Prescott

Governing Body Appointments

Governing Body	No. of Vacancies / Re-appointments	Nominations Received
Bassaleg School	2 re-appointments	Cllr David Williams Cllr Richard White
Glasllwch Primary	1 vacancy	Mr David Cox
Jubilee Park Primary School	2 vacancies	Mrs Elizabeth Thomas Mrs Sally Mlewa
Marshfield Primary	1 re-appointment	Cllr Richard White
Milton Primary	1 vacancy	Mrs Ann Lewis
Rogerstone Primary	1 vacancy	Neil Upham
St Julians Primary	1 re-appointment	Mr Mark Jenkins
St Woolos Primary	1 re-appointment	Cllr Tracey Holyoake (from 21 November 2017 only)
Tredegar Park Primary School	3 vacancies	Cllr Trevor Watkins Mrs Jean Watkins Mrs Catharine Jones
Ysgol Bryn Derw	2 vacancies	Mrs Paula Halsall Ms Katy Rees

4. Police Issues

The Mayor welcomed Chief Inspector Michael Richards to the meeting. The Chief Inspector gave a brief update on current issues and operations in the city, before inviting questions from Members.

Councillor Morris asked a question around the challenge of providing successful diversionary activities for young people. The Chief Inspector recognised this challenge, highlighted the importance of early engagement and enforcement, and outlined the some of the current programmes in place such as the Mini Police initiative.

Cllr J Watkins echoed previous comments about activities for young people, and suggested that a multi-agency conference could be a positive step. The Leader of the Council agreed to raise this idea through the Public Services Board.

Councillors Cleverly, Hughes and Harvey raised concerns over illegal parking outside schools. Councillors Cleverly and Harvey also reported problems with accessing the 101

non-emergency number. The Chief Inspector highlighted the need for a multi-agency response to school parking, and the work being done to improve waiting times on the 101 number, but agreed to report the concerns back to the relevant teams.

Councillors Jeavons, Truman, Harvey and Routley asked questions relating to parking and the proposals to decriminalise parking enforcement. The Chief Inspector confirmed that, if decriminalisation of parking was agreed, there would be a transitional period to bring in the new arrangements. Enforcement by the police was ongoing and would continue throughout transition, if and when time enforcement powers were transferred.

Councillors C Evans, Dudley, I Hayat, Whitcutt and Hourahine thanked officers for recent operations and ongoing support in their wards.

The Chief Inspector provided some further explanation of police recruitment processes in response to a question from Councillor Critchley about the 'conversion' of Police Community Support Officers.

The Mayor thanked the Chief Inspector for attending.

5. **Notice of Motion: Sky Lanterns**

The Council considered the following motion for which the necessary notice had been provided.

"Sky lanterns, also known as Chinese lanterns, are dangerous fire hazards which can potentially have devastating consequences for people, buildings and animals. Newport City Council is one of only five local authorities in Wales to not put in a place a ban on the release of sky lanterns from council land.

This Council proposes that the Cabinet introduce the necessary provisions to support the motion that

1. The release of these lanterns should not be permitted on land owned by Newport City Council or permitted at events licensed, sponsored or supported by Newport City Council.
2. The Council should discourage organisations within the Newport City area from releasing sky/Chinese lanterns and look for more appropriate alternatives."

The motion was moved by Councillor Matthew Evans and seconded by Councillor Kevin Whitehead.

Following the presentation of the motion by the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Council clarified that Members of the Executive would vote but not speak on the motion, as any final decision on a ban would be a matter for Cabinet.

In debating the motion, the following points were raised by Members:

- That implementing a ban would make a powerful statement to the community and highlight the dangers posed by sky lanterns.
- The environmental impact of sky lantern debris, including fire risks and the negative impact on wildlife and biodiversity.
- The difficulties of imposing a ban if this were agreed.
- That the principle should be supported even if enforcement would be difficult.
- The possible role of Licensing Committee to look at the sale of lanterns and links with shopkeepers.

- By banning use of lanterns on Council land, the Council would be setting an example.
- The need to educate people of the dangers and highlight alternatives.

Following a vote the motion was carried.

Resolved

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6. Notice of Motion: Electrification of the South West Wales Line

The Council considered a motion for which the necessary notice had been provided. The motion was moved by Councillor Debbie Wilcox and seconded by Councillor Mark Whitcutt.

“That, having regard to the significant long term economic and environmental benefits of a modern transport infrastructure for the whole of the South Wales region, this Council:

1. Calls on the UK Transport Minister to immediately reverse the decision not to proceed with full electrification of the South West Wales line between Cardiff and Swansea, while exploring the feasibility of the extension of electrification west of Swansea.
2. Calls upon the Welsh Government to seek an urgent meeting with the UK Government to pursue additional capital funding to complete the electrification to Swansea and beyond.
3. Calls on the UK Government to extend the proposed petrol and diesel car ban to trains.”

The following points were raised by Members speaking in favour of the motion:

- The money that has already been invested in the project and previous support by national governments.
- The long term environmental and economic impact of the project.
- The need for a modern transport system for the region and all the benefits that brings.
- The reported uncertainty over whether the project would be continued into Wales at all.
- The disruption caused locally by works already undertaken for this project.

The following points were raised by Members speaking against of the motion:

- The other priorities for the area in terms of transport, for example the Ebbw Vale to Newport Line, the M4 relief road, and reducing local emissions levels.

- Electrification would still be delivered to Cardiff, therefore including Newport.
- The extra expense of continuing electrification past Cardiff.

Following a vote the motion was carried.

Resolved

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3. Calls on the UK Government to extend the proposed petrol and diesel car ban to trains.

7. Treasury Management

The Leader of the Council presented the report, prepared to comply with CIPFA's code on treasury management which requires that a year-end outturn position on treasury activities be reported to full Council.

The report confirmed that the activities of 2016-17 were in line with the strategy set and approved by Council, and that the Council pursued a policy of 'internal borrowing' to fund capital expenditure, for the reasons clearly set out in the report. The report also confirms that all prudential indicators and limits were complied with.

The Leader highlighted that the report referred to activities before the sale of Friars Walk, so the forward forecasts of borrowing requirements did not include the impact of this sale in terms of the Council's 'cash position' and management. In practical terms, the Council would now

- Be a net longer-term investor of funds as opposed to the day to day timescales currently
- Have moved from being 'maxed-out' on its strategy of internal borrowing to now having some headroom to carry on pursuing this strategy for another 12-18 months.

Resolved

1. To note and approve the Annual Report on Treasury Management for the financial year 2016-17.
2. To note and approve that 2016-17 Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management were in line with those set by Council in February 2016.

8. Chief Officer Pay

The Chief Executive presented the report, asking Council to review the current pay grade for the Chief Education Officer. It was confirmed that the necessary approval for this proposal had been received from the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

The report was moved and seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Resolved

1. To acknowledge the outcome of a re-evaluation under the Hay job evaluation scheme for the post of Chief Education Officer.
2. To revise the pay grade of the Chief Education Officer in line with the other Heads of Service.

9. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

Councillor John Guy, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, presented the report. He highlighted the progress made last year, under the stewardship of the previous Committee Chairs, to improve and modernise the scrutiny process.

The new Chairs and Committees were now working to embed these changes, implement the new committee structure and drive scrutiny further forward. The proposed priorities for the coming year were set out in the annual report for approval and adoption by Council.

Comments from Members related to:

- The need for Scrutiny Members to prepare properly for committee meetings
- The positive improvements in scrutiny over recent years
- The need for Members to make better use of scrutiny, for example to look at policy development issues.

Resolved

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

10. Improvement Plan Year End Review 2016-17

The Leader presented the report, highlighting the progress made against the objectives in the Improvement Plan over the last year. Overall progress had been assessed as “good”, with most improvement objectives performing well. The Leader also confirmed that this was the sixth consecutive year where the number of informal (stage 1) complaints had decreased since the recording process began in September 2011.

Resolved

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

11. Newport City Homes Governance Changes

The Leader introduced the report, asking Council to support changes to the governance arrangements for Newport City Homes, as was recommended by Cabinet on 13 September.

The proposed changes would require the Council to relinquish its one-third voting rights, as shareholder, and also its rights to appoint three local authority Board members. The Leader highlighted that the proposals intended to provide a more robust, modern and flexible governance framework, to enable NCH to develop and ensure a sufficient degree of legal

independence, and to meet the requirements of upcoming legislation. The proposals would bring the NCH governance rules in line with the national Model Rules approved by Welsh Government and the Financial Conduct Authority.

The Leader emphasised that the focus of NCH business was changing, away from the original stock transfer issues which the current rules were set up to govern, and Council was reminded of a similar process followed in the past for Newport Housing Trust, where the Council approved governance changes to support the organisation as it reached maturity.

The Leader concluded by highlighting the excellent work of Newport City Homes in partnership with the Council, particularly recently in supporting and advising residents following the terrible events of Grenfell Tower, and the other governance arrangements in place through the Public Services Board and the new Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.

In discussing the report, the following points were raised:

- Concerns that the remaining scrutiny structures would not have the same strength and impact as membership of the Board.
- A request that this should be referred to scrutiny for consideration.
- In response to questions, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing provided further detail on the background and reasons for the proposal, including the changing context and best practice for this area of business.
- The Cabinet Member and Legal Officer provided further explanation of the term “shareholder” in relation to the proposals, confirming that this did not encompass any financial interest.

Resolved

1. That the Council consents to the proposed changes in governance arrangements.
2. That the Council approves the proposed amendments to the rules to implement these governance changes.
3. That the Council’s corporate vote be exercised in favour of the proposed special resolution, whether in person or by proxy, at the Special General Meeting of Newport City Homes convened for this purpose.
4. That the Head of Law and Regulation be authorised to agree and complete a Deed of Variation to the Stock Transfer Agreement, to reflect these changes.

12. Questions to the Leader of the Council

The Mayor outlined the new process for Questions to the Leader of the Council, in accordance with the changes to Standing Orders agreed at Council in July.

Leader’s Announcements

In answer to the first question from the Mayor, the Leader made the following announcements:

- The Corporate Plan was currently out for consultation.
- Two new schools had been opened this term, including Ysgol Bryn Derw, the first school in Gwent specifically for young people with autism.
- Regeneration funding secured towards the extension of the National Software Academy.

- Newport has been officially announced as the host for the 2019 British Transplant Games.

Event Sponsorship

Councillor Matthew Evans asked how confident the Leader was that sponsorship would be attracted for the proposed City of Democracy festival, following the recent consultants' report, and Cabinet's decision in July to support the festival idea but not allocate funding to it.

The Leader outlined the work being done to attract sponsorship for this and other events, such as the food festival. The Leader highlighted the need to make the best of austere times, and continue to raise the ambitions and profile of the area, by looking at alternative funding sources and partnership approaches to major events.

In response to a supplementary question regarding future costs of similar projects, the Leader replied that consultants were sometimes required to support specific projects and provide specialist expertise, confirming that £55k had been spent on the City of Democracy project.

Appointments to Governing Bodies

Citing a quote from Jeremy Corbyn recently regarding "crony appointments", Councillor Kevin Whitehead requested that the current system of appointments to governing bodies be reviewed. The Leader thanked Councillor Whitehead for raising the issue, and agreed to look into the background and local position.

Railway Footbridge

Councillor Carmel Townsend asked for a commitment to secure funding for the new footbridge over the railway, due to the safety concerns associated with the subway. The Leader responded, asking the Chief Executive to look into the current position, and assuring Council that the administration would continue to lobby for progress on this issue.

123-129 Commercial Street

In response to a question from Councillor Phil Hourahine, the Leader agreed that the 123-129 Commercial Street development was excellent news for the city centre, building on the success of Friars Walk and extending regeneration to other parts of the city centre.

13. Questions to the Cabinet Members

There were no questions to the Cabinet Members on this occasion.

14. Questions to the Chairs of Committees

There were no questions to the Chairs on this occasion.