

# Minutes



## Council

---

Date: 23 April 2024

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors C Reeks, S Cocks, E Stowell-Corten, J Harris, A Screen, L James, T Harvey, M Howells, P Bright, 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, J Cleverly, P Cockeram, D Davies, M Al-Nuaimi, D Fouweather, D Harvey, M Linton, D Mayer, R Mogford, J Mudd, M Spencer, K Thomas, C Townsend, K Whitehead, 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 Evans, Watkins, Clarke, Forsey, Peterson and Kellaway.

#### 1.ii Declarations of Interest

None received.

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

No announcements.

### 2. Minutes

Minutes of the last meeting held on 29 February 2024.

Item 4 Council Tax and Budget 2024/25: Councillor Reynolds referred to page 15, under Comments of Councillors on substantive motion. It refers to Councillor Clarke commending Councillor M Howells on the alternative budget. Councillor Reynolds suggested this should read Councillor Clarke commended Councillor M Howells on producing an alternative budget.

### 3. Appointments

To consider the proposed appointments set out in the report.

In Councillor Clarke's absence, Councillor Harvey moved the appointments set out in the report, as agreed by the Business Managers as set out below.

Councillor Reeks seconded the report, which was unanimously agreed.

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

### **Governing Body Appointments**

<b>Governing Body</b>	<b>Appointments/ Resignations</b>	<b>Name</b>
Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed	Resignation	Elin Maher
Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed	Appointment	Janice Dent
Llanwern High School	Appointment	Tim Harvey
Lliswerry High School	Resignation	Roger Jeavons
Lliswerry High School	Appointment	Nazrul Islam
Lliswerry High School	Disqualification	Glen Wilkins
Lliswerry High School	Appointment	Allan Morris
Pentrepoeth Primary School	Appointment	Joseph O'Connell
Milton Primary School	Disqualification	Mark Moore
Milton Primary School	Appointment	Laura Lacey
Ringland Primary School	Resignation	Stacey Drew
Ringland Primary School	Appointment	Meryl Echeverry
High Cross Primary School	Appointment	Bev Davies
Ysgol Gymraeg Nant Gwenlli	Resignation	Jonathan Gibbons
Ysgol Gymraeg Nant Gwenlli	Appointment	Lucy Binnerley

#### **4. Members Schedule of Remuneration 2024/25**

The Presiding Member invited the Leader to present the report the Council which set out the Members Scheme of Allowances for 2024/25 as set out in the annual report of the Independent Remuneration Committee.

The Council was required to adopt and publish a scheme of allowances for Members for the current municipal year, based on the salaries prescribed by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, known as "the IRP".

The IRP was the statutory body set up by Welsh Government to determine the appropriate level of remuneration paid to elected members in Wales.

The IRP published its Annual Report in February of this year, and the Council was required to formally adopt those recommendations and approve the allowances for 2024/25.

There was no discretion regarding the amount of the salaries as they were fixed by the IRP.

The IRP determined that the basic annual salaries for elected members for 2024/25 should be re-based at £18,666 to take account of inflationary increases and to ensure that remuneration was linked to average salary levels. Senior salaries were also increased and re-set in line with relevant comparators.

The increase in basic salaries took effect from 1 April 2024 and backdated payments would be made to Members. Any changes to additional remuneration for senior salaries were payable from the date of appointment of the post-holders at the Council AGM on 21 May 2024.

Councillor Reeks seconded the report.

There were 34 for, none against and four abstentions

**Decision:**

Council approved and adopted the Members Schedule of Remuneration for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 1.

**5. Pay and Reward Statement**

The Presiding Member invited the Leader to introduce the Annual Pay and Reward Report.

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 2023.

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

It was noted by Council that the report also provided the previous in-year decision to align the apprentice programme rates of pay to that of the Foundation Living Wage rates. This critical change was in line with the Council's aspiration to be a Living Wage City. This change also enabled the successful recruitment of an additional 20 apprentices over the last quarter using grant funding through the Levelling Up Fund.

Offering and employing entry level roles such as apprentices was important for the authority in its ongoing recruitment and retention strategies and an important intervention as part of our new People Plan for the Council's workforce.

Councillor D Davies seconded the report.

The vote was unanimous.

**Decision:**

Council 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.

**6. Strategic Equalities Plan 2024 - 2028**

The Presiding Member invited the Leader to present the Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2024 -2028, this was the fourth plan provided by the Council.

Under the Equality Act (2010), local authorities in Wales were required to develop and publish Strategic Equality Plans (SEPs) that set out the objectives they wanted to achieve over a four-year period.

This plan set out the strategic vision and priorities for the next four years and contained Equality Objectives that supported the Council to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Council's Equality Objectives were developed in partnership with key internal and external stakeholders and were subject to extensive community engagement. The involvement of grassroots communities ensured that whilst the Plan delivered a strategic vision for equality in Newport, it also ensured tangible outcomes for communities.

The SEP for 2024 -2028 was reviewed by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at their meeting in March and also at Cabinet in April.

The last four years presented significant challenges to staff and communities across Newport, including unprecedented difficulties caused by the global pandemic, international conflict, and the cost-of-living crisis.

These events also disproportionality impacted specific groups and further highlighted the inequalities that existed within communities.

The Leader added that as a listening Council, we must learn from the emerging challenges communities faced and continue to strive to deliver equitable public services for all residents.

The SEP presented an opportunity to build on achievements as an employer and service provider, look to the future, and identify priorities to advance equality for everyone who lived or worked in Newport.

The Equality Objectives within this SEP was built on the work delivered in previous plans and identified clear outcomes the Council was working towards, and the actions taken to deliver equitable public services.

The Equality Objectives struck a good balance between internally-focused objectives based on self-reflection, such as a commitment to improving representation at all levels of the organisation and externally-focused objectives aimed at improving equality in key areas of our society, including ongoing commitment to improve community cohesion across the city.

Members were also aware of the recent unanimous council motion to adopt care experienced as a protected characteristic. The Leader was proud to say this was embedded within the delivery of this plan.

This Plan represented a positive step forward for Newport City Council and supported the Council to deliver a vision of a more equal Newport, where everyone was treated fairly, and the needs of residents from all backgrounds were considered.

The Leader thanked Cabinet Members including Councillor Dimitri Batrouni, the Cabinet Member for Organisational Transformation, and Councillor Laura Lacey in her role as LGBTQ+ Champion for their contributions to this area of work.

Councillor Batrouni seconded the report.

#### Comments of Councillors:

- Councillor Batrouni thanked all the staff involved in producing the Plan. Councillor Batrouni also thanked the Council's champions: Councillor Lacey as mentioned above, Councillor Harris, Welsh Language Champion, and Councillor Hourahine, Anti-Poverty Champion. Councillor Batrouni also thanked Councillor D Harvey and the members of the Strategic Equalities Group (SEG) for their robust and challenging support in holding the Council to account to drive equality across the Council and city.
- Councillor Cocks added that in recent years, due to the cost-of-living crisis and austerity, equality had diminished and was not improving. This should be a key factor in all the decisions the Council made to support change and the production of a user-friendly version of this report, as recommended by Performance Scrutiny Committee – People, would allow Members and officers across the Council to keep equality at the fore of their work.
- Councillor Reeks welcomed and supported the report and referred to digital inclusion access under point 2 of the objectives. Councillor Reeks felt that the Council should

ensure that all groups including older people were fully catered for and could access services.

The vote was unanimous.

**Decision:**

Council agreed the adoption of the attached Strategic Equality Plan for 2024 to 2028.

**7. Amendment to Constitution - Scheme of Delegation for Assets**

The Presiding Member invited the Chair of Democratic Services Committee, Councillor Mogford to present this item, which was considered by the Committee at their meeting on 18 March which reviewed the Scheme of Delegation for Assets, Part 3 of the Constitution. Part of the Democratic Services Committee work programme was to review the Council's constitution.

The Committee reviewed the arrangements for delegated decisions noting that: the values of certain asset transactions had been in place for some time and were no longer aligned with current asset values, were out of step with other delegated decisions contained within the constitution and practice at other local authorities.

Councillor Mogford outlined the proposed amendments to the scheme of delegation supported by the committee, outlined in detail in the report. These were:

- To acquire, purchase and dispose of interests in land and property at a value up to £100,000.
- To enter into, amend or surrender leases of land and property up to £100,000.
- To deal with licences, permissions, wayleaves, easements and other legal interests in land or property.

The Committee noted that the relevant Cabinet Members and Ward Members would be consulted where there was a direct or wider impact on the community or residents arising from any proposed decision.

The Committee also noted that these delegations did not override any duty to ensure compliance with the Council's rules relating to capital or other financial controls and policies.

Councillor Lacey seconded the report.

Comments of Councillors:

- Councillor Lacey fully supported the changes. With reference to the Scheme of Delegation increasing to £100K, it should be noted that previously, it was only £1,000, which was a large increase to bring Newport City Council into line with other local authorities. There were no changes to the consultation with Cabinet and Ward Members. Councillor Lacey thanked Democratic Services and Officers who contributed to the changes.
- Councillor Fouweather referred to the report where it stated that there would be no changes to Ward Member consultation. It did however say in the report that Ward Members would only be consulted if it was considered to have wider implications for the ward. Councillor Fouweather asked who made the decision on what was considered as having wider implications for the ward. Councillor Fouweather was concerned that decisions were being taken away from Ward Members and being picked up by officers.

- Councillor Hourahine agreed with Councillor Fouweather that this point was made at committee regarding full consultation with Ward Members and therefore sort clarification.
- The Monitoring Officer provided advice on these points. Ward Members have never taken decisions on property transactions, meaning that they did not have decision-making powers; Cabinet Members did and still would do so in many cases. The aim of this was to take minor decisions into the hands of officers, and Members were free to concentrate on larger strategic property transactions. With regard to who determined consultation with Ward Members, officers would consult with Ward Members and Cabinet Members to seek clarification on whether these transactions would be contentious in the community. In preparing the report, this was benchmarked against a selection of local authorities in Wales and the aim of this was to bring Newport in line with the majority of councils in Wales.
- Councillor Fouweather added that officers would not necessarily know the wider impact on the ward and that it was therefore important that Ward Members were still consulted on everything regarding their ward, whether it was £1,000 or £100,000.
- Councillor Routley proposed that this be revisited by Democratic Services Committee and brought back to the Council at a future meeting.
- The Monitoring Officer advised that members could bring forward a motion to this effect however the changes regarded minor issues such as wayleaves or an amendment to a licence. Officers were obliged to consult Ward Members and there was a safeguard around consultation for suitable matters.
- The Leader suggested that there was a risk of undermining the recommendations of the Democratic Services Committee, where this item was discussed in detail.
- The Monitoring Officer asked if Councillor Routley was seeking to put forward an amendment. In response Councillor Routley requested that this be withdrawn.
- Councillor Mogford reminded colleagues that this was a recommendation by Democratic Services Committee to be taken to Council and agreed that this could be reviewed at a later date by the Committee.

There was one vote against the decision.

**Decision:**

Council approved and adopted the amendments to the paragraph 10.9 of Part 3.3 of the Officer Scheme of Delegation within the Council's Constitution, as set out within the report.

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

Before commencement of questions, the Presiding Member invited the Leader to make the following announcements to Council:

**International Women's Day**

The Leader reflected on the International Women's Day events that took place across the city including at The Place and the Riverfront Theatre.

The Leader was proud to announce that eight young women, represented the city and their country, at a recent International Women's Day event. The young women from the city's youth clubs travelled to Scotland to join others from the four home nations.

It followed the success of last year's festival in Blackpool, organised by the United Youth Alliance, where Newport youth club members represented Wales.

The group, accompanied by four staff, were the guests of Dumfries and Galloway Council for the weekend. As well as attending a gala dinner, the young people attended a conference with keynote speakers and took part in workshops.

This was a prestigious event, and it reflected well on the young people and youth clubs, that they were invited to participate again.

The Leader thanked the young women and youth workers, for being such great ambassadors for Newport.

It was also important that thanks were noted to the generosity of Dumfries and Galloway Council, the only cost for Newport City Council was for providing the coach to Scotland.

Newport's youth and play service played a valuable role in the lives of young people in the city by finding opportunities such as this to help them broaden their experiences as well as providing free activities for all ages throughout the year.

The Leader also thanked Councillor D Harvey for the role that she played in this venture.

### **Caerleon partnership**

The Council was working in partnership with Cadw and Amgueddfa Cymru to maximise the potential of Caerleon's Roman heritage.

This part of the city was widely recognised for its rich culture and historic assets including the National Roman Legion Museum, the Fortress Baths, and the Amphitheatre. It was a tourist destination and popular for school trips.

Together, the three organisations were developing a vision for Caerleon and exploring options to deliver an improved experience across all the Roman sites for both the community and visitors.

People living and working in Caerleon would be invited to join Roman Caerleon – Working in Partnership and help represent local views.

The partnership was committed to ensuring that the opportunities offered by our Roman heritage benefitted residents and businesses as well as visitors.

It was important that local people and other stakeholders were a part of this process to help more people discover the history, landmarks, and treasures of Caerleon.

### **Business decarbonisation**

The Council recently launched the Net Zero Newport decarbonisation programme which provided free energy-saving advice and grant funding to help local organisations reduce their energy costs and carbon emissions.

The free advice and match-funded grants up to £30,000 were available to local businesses and community groups with buildings in the Newport area. The Leader hoped Council colleagues would spread the word in their wards. This scheme could assist organisations to establish baseline carbon emissions, implement emission reduction plans and actively funds projects aligned with sustainability objectives.

It was designed to help stimulate growth in Newport's low carbon economy and supported the city's journey to net zero by 2050 by investing in local businesses and community groups, people, and skills.

The programme offered free technical advice to explore low carbon project ideas and opportunities and a free plan identifying opportunities to reduce carbon emissions through energy saving and renewable energy measures.

Grants were available up to 50% of the total eligible project costs, up to a maximum grant of £30,000.

At the end of March, the Council held an energy saving event in the Riverfront Theatre which was hugely successful. Visitors were able to find out more about the programme as well as receive general tips on how to save energy, money, and the planet.

### **Sporting success**

Finally, many congratulations to Newport City FC who reached the final of this season's FAW Dragon Signs Amateur Trophy on Saturday. They defeated Ardal Northeast Leaders 5-4 in an exciting match in Newtown.

The Leader asked colleagues to join her in wishing the Steelmen good luck, they had a great season and were in contention for promotion.

This weekend, Rodney Parade was hosting the final of the men's JD Welsh Cup, the third oldest cup competition in the world.

On 5 May, Cardiff City would meet Wrexham in the final of the women's Bute Energy Welsh Cup.

Finally, the Leader noted that the city centre would be buzzing next Sunday when runners of all abilities were taking part in the ABP Newport Marathon cheered on by hundreds of spectators. It promised to be another great day!

### **Leader's Questions**

#### Councillor Reeks:

As the makeup of city centre had changed and a number of shops had declined, this had an effect on the number of public toilets available for general use. One resident recently found themselves locked out of Friars Walk public toilets, because they were out of order. They were unable to use the Indoor Market facilities as these were for customers only. Eventually facilities were located in the library. The Welsh Government (WG) placed a duty on Local Authorities to provide a local toilet strategy, that had to be reviewed within a year of the last Council elections. Currently, when accessing this strategy by the website, it was dated 2020. Could the Leader therefore advise why this had not been reviewed, and if it has, why the website had not been updated and whether the provision of more available toilets would feature in the City Centre Placemaking Plan, when it was released.

#### Response:

The Leader advised that Councillor Reeks rightly highlighted the changes across the city centre as well as town centres across the whole of Wales, and there had been a shift from retail to more leisure and hospitality-based activities and the reintroduction of more residential accommodation.



This had an impact on facilities that were available, and the Leader recognised what Councillor Reeks said regarding the availability of public toilets. The Leader agreed that Local Authorities were required to have a local toilet strategy.

The Placemaking Plan consultation would provide an opportunity for residents who could see where there were gaps and identify things that were missing from the city centre, put forward their ideas and suggestions. The Leader welcomed this and hoped that Councillor Reeks would also contribute to this as well as other colleagues.

With regard to future reviews of any strategies, there would be an opportunity for these to go to Performance Scrutiny Committees, where they would be scrutinised by cross-party groups of elected members and any suggestions would be welcomed that might be put forward.

Councillor Whitehead:

Councillor Whitehead regularly canvassed residents regarding questions that should be put to the Leader at Council. There had been rumours that there were going to be four-weekly bin collections instead of three-weekly, therefore could the Leader clarify whether this was the case.

Response:

The Leader thanked Councillor Whitehead and the residents of Bettws for raising this as an issue. There was discussion across the public domain and other Local Authorities in Wales had considered moving to four weekly collections. The Leader confirmed that these discussions were not taking place in Newport regarding four-weekly collections, and hoped this would provide residents of Bettws with some reassurance.

As well as this assurance the Leader hoped that Councillor Whitehead could advise residents on how well the Council was doing in terms of recycling in Newport, which was why it did not have to move to a four-weekly bin collection. Newport was well on track for meeting its recycling targets.

The Leader thanked all residents who worked hard to recycle and manage their refuse. The Leader also thanked businesses for their outstanding efforts of recycling since the legislation changed.

The Leader once more confirmed that the Council would not move to four-weekly bin collections and thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their hard work meeting the rigorous targets set by Welsh Government.

Councillor Morris:

Could the Leader, with the appropriate Cabinet Member, look at the way that the Council recycled, particularly with terraced houses. Councillor Morris asked if the Council could follow this model and look at trying to be more customer-focused for those living in terraced houses.

Response:

The Leader thanked Councillor Morris and agreed that it was right that the Council needed to think about how this looked. This had been trialled previously and the relevant information would be available within scrutiny reports.

The reality in providing alternative systems was that it could cost the Council ten times as much and the system in place was currently efficient, effective, and helped Newport meet its recycling target. It was also the envy of other Local Authorities. The Council was running an incredibly efficient system. The Leader thanked the Director, Head of Service and Cabinet Member for meeting the recycling targets. This would however be reviewed and if Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships would like to put forward any alternatives, they would be considered by the Cabinet.

Councillor Spencer:

Councillors recently had an update on partnership working at regional level, regarding economic wellbeing and growth. Could the Leader update Council on the progress of the regional strategic partnership, through the Public Service Board (PSB), which focussed on community wellbeing and explain how Newport recently launched the delivery plan aligned with this.

Response:

The Leader was pleased to advise colleagues that Newport was now part of the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (SEWCJC). Partnership working was key to everything that the Council did, whether this was through economic duty, the Regional Partnership Board or the PSB and they all came together to fulfil their duties under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Across the whole of the region, public and third sector partners had a commitment to becoming a Marmot region and were focussed on addressing inequality.

Each of the five Local Authorities that formed the SEWCJC was required to develop their own local delivery plan. This was done in Newport through consultation with stakeholders and working with partners. Councillors received regular updates from One Newport Partnership, who were key partners. The new Local Delivery Plan aligned to the wellbeing plan that was being developed by the PSB around three key themes, which were economy and culture, communities, and environment. This would help make a fairer and more equitable Gwent and would make Gwent more climate ready.

Around economy and culture, the Council was focussing on education and skills and fair work to help people out of poverty and fulfil Newport's ambitions to become a Living Wage City. Newport was working together with partners to establish a commitment to community wealth building projects and was also committed to the revitalisation of the city centre through the Place Making Plan.

Newport was also developing a sports strategy, cultural strategy and had put together a diverse events programme, which reflected the diversity of the city and attracted people to visit.

Across the community there was an opportunity to increase volunteer work to develop resilience as well as addressing poverty and inequality.

The Council was committed to supporting Newport's integrated wellbeing networks and tackling significant issues such as homelessness through collaboration and strategic approaches. Part of this was the Pill Master Plan, which colleagues had been involved in and was regularly reported back to Council.

Sustainable and affordable food was also promoted across the city and the Leader also mentioned the work of Safer Newport, which was part of the communities programme.

The third aspect of the plan was the environment, with the overarching aim of tackling the climate and nature emergency which was being faced as well as protecting and preserving our environment for future wellbeing generations.

This concluded the meeting of full Council. Date of next meeting for Council would be the Council AGM on Tuesday 21 May 2024.

**Decision:**

Council approved and adopted the amendments to the paragraph 10.9 of Part 3.3 of the Officer Scheme of Delegation within the Council's Constitution, as set out within the report.