



SPECIAL COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 27TH JULY 2021 AT 5.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor C. Andrews - Mayor
Councillor J. Gale - Deputy Mayor

Councillors:

M. Adams, E.M. Aldworth, A. Angel, P.J. Bevan, C. Bezzina, A. Collis, S. Cook, C. Cuss, W. David, D.T. Davies, M. Davies, N. Dix, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, A. Gair, N. George, C. Gordon, L. Harding, D. Havard, A. Hussey, M. James, V. James, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, B. Jones, S. Kent, G. Kirby, A. Leonard, P. Leonard, C. Mann, P. Marsden, B. Miles, B. Owen, T. Parry, L. Phipps, D.W.R. Preece, J. Pritchard, J. Ridgewell, J. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Scriven, G. Simmonds, J. Simmonds, S. Skivens, E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas, A. Whitcombe, R. Whiting, L. Whittle, T.J. Williams, B. Zaplatynski

Together with:-

C. Harrhy (Chief Executive), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services and Housing), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), S. Pugh (Communications Manager), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

WEB-CASTING FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Executive reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, C. Bishop, D. Cushing, K. Dawson, C. Elsbury, C. Forehead, E. Forehead, J.E. Fussell, R. Gough, D. Hardacre, D. Harse, A. Higgs, S. Morgan, G. Oliver, Mrs D. Price, M.E. Sargent and W. Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D.T. Davies declared a personal interest only in [Agenda Item No. 3 – Formation of a Gwent Public Services Board](#), in that he is the County Borough appointed representative of

the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service to the Gwent Public Services Board. As such there was no requirement for him to leave the meeting when the item was being considered.

STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF COUNCIL

With the permission of the Mayor, the Leader addressed Council and congratulated two local athletes on their recent achievements at the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020. Members were advised that Lauren Williams from Blackwood achieved a silver medal in the taekwondo final on Monday, a fitting reward for her hard work and dedication over many years. The Leader also wished Lauren Price from Ystrad Mynach the very best of luck on Wednesday when she makes her Olympic debut in the middleweight boxing competition.

Members were pleased to hear of the successes of these inspirational athletes and congratulated them both on their achievements.

The Leader was also pleased to announce that the Council has been shortlisted in two categories for the prestigious Local Government Chronicle Awards 2021. Caerphilly Council has been shortlisted in the top category of Council of the Year, which is an amazing achievement as Caerphilly is the only Welsh local authority to be shortlisted and one of only five authorities across the whole of the UK. The Council have also been shortlisted in a separate category for their acclaimed partnership work with Castell Howell, who have been instrumental in the free school meals logistics over the past 12 months.

The winners will be announced in November 2021, but in the meantime the Leader congratulated everyone who has worked so hard to achieve these accolades and contributed to the growing list of achievements for the Council.

3. FORMATION OF A GWENT PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

Consideration was given to the regional report which outlined the formation of a Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) from Autumn 2021 and is being presented to multiple Member forums across each of the five local authorities. The views of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on the formation of the Gwent PSB were reflected in the report, which also gave further information on the proposals for Local Delivery Groups in each of the constituent local authority areas, together with information on the proposed regional scrutiny and continued scrutiny within the Council arrangements both pre and post 2023.

Council were reminded of the All-Members Seminar held on Monday 19th July which provided an engagement opportunity to explain the strategic drivers for the creation of a Gwent PSB and how local delivery arrangements would continue, and which also outlined forthcoming wellbeing planned engagement activity taking place across the county borough over the summer.

Council were provided with an overview of the strategic drivers and rationale for forming the Gwent PSB. These include improved and strengthened governance and accountability arrangements, structured partnership working and strategic oversight, and will enhance the work being carried out on many important matters that are already delivered at a regional partnership level (such as tackling violence against women, and substance misuse)

It was explained that the forthcoming regional well-being assessment and well-being plan will make best use of capacity across the region while still maintaining local accountability, local planning and assessment, and the delivery of local activity, but there will be a benefit of alignment and stronger strategic direction. A regional scrutiny committee is being developed

that will scrutinise the work of the Gwent PSB and the development of the new wellbeing plan, which is a requirement under legislation, but it may provide an option for the scrutiny of other regional partnership activity in the future. Committee services officers across the region are working on this task and the new scrutiny committee will include elected members from the constituent authorities. Both Audit Wales and Welsh Government have strongly encouraged the merger of PSBs to align responsibilities and integrate delivery work with other partnership boards.

The Gwent PSB will have its first meeting on 1st October 2021 and Caerphilly Council will be providing the support and facilitation for the first two years, there after cycling around the five local authorities. The Gwent PSB will be supported by 5 local delivery groups in each local authority comprising staff from the member organisations, importantly with sufficient seniority to take decisions and direct resources. Community planning will continue at the local authority level and at the community area level within the county borough, so local scrutiny of the current well-being plan will continue until 2023, when the Gwent Well-being Plan will come into force. Thereafter, local projects will continue to be scrutinised at a local level by local authority; the Caerphilly Local Delivery Group will have the dual responsibility of delivering local projects and contributing to any regional projects in the Gwent Well-being Plan.

The Caerphilly PSB took the decision to merge at its March 2021 meeting and heard representations from the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee (VSLC) and the Community Council Liaison Committee (CCLC) that were considered and debated at the time. The report before Council was scrutinised by Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 15th July 2021 and relates to the implications for local and regional delivery, the continuation of the existing Well-being Plan and the arrangements for the creation of the new Gwent Service Board. Its purpose is to engage Members on the delivery arrangements and particularly those local arrangements which had been finalized.

A report was taken to Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee on 17th June 2021 and a further report taken to Community Council Liaison Committee on 21st July 2021 to engage on the proposed delivery arrangements. The discussion at the VSLC centred around ensuring that the third sector would continue to be involved in the new delivery arrangements, and this assurance was given by Officers at the meeting. The discussion at the CCLC included questions on the views of town and other community councils across the region, and it was reported that there had been no objections but that other areas had requested that a representative sits on the local delivery group, as already happens in the Caerphilly area. Members were informed that two merged PSBs already exist in Wales (RCT and Merthyr, and Conwy and Denbighshire) and the Gwent PSB will be the third merger of its kind. It was confirmed that the merger had not been mandated by WG but it was suggested in order to clarify the complexity of the landscape.

It was moved and seconded that Council note the covering report which included the views of the Partnership Scrutiny Committee, together with the full set of recommendations in the appended report for the delivery of the Gwent PSB, and provide any views on the recommendations, noting that the decision to form a Gwent PSB has been taken by the constituent partners across the region, in collaboration.

Council discussed the report in detail and one Member queried the incentive for Caerphilly to participate in the Gwent PSB. Whilst the Member observed that the report and decision of the Caerphilly Public Service Board was for noting only, they indicated that their Group were unhappy with the proposals, in particular the lack of opportunity to attend the Caerphilly PSB meetings and scrutinise the decision taken, and therefore explained that their Group would not support the recommendations regarding the formation of a Gwent PSB. Another Member raised concerns around public engagement and consultation and asked if these could be included in the report recommendations.

In response, it was emphasised to Members that the Caerphilly Public Services Board holds its meetings in public and that all papers and agendas are on the Caerphilly PSB website and in the public domain. There is a regular agenda item to take questions from the public. The new Gwent PSB has many public services members and that Caerphilly is one of 5 authorities that will sit on the Gwent partnership board. Members were advised that detailed engagement has taken place and that concerns around local delivery were taken on board which had led to the engagement programme being set up throughout the summer to ascertain how local issues can continue to be dealt with as a priority. Members were also referred to the detailed report which maintains a focus on local issues. Discussion took place regarding public attendance at Caerphilly PSB, and it was confirmed that the Caerphilly-nominated representatives for the PSB are the Leader and Chief Executive. Confirmation can be sought from the Chair to attend and the opportunity for elected Members to attend and put any questions to the PSB is advertised. It was also confirmed that the meetings became public from October 2019.

A query was received on the reasons for the change to a regional Public Services Board, together with the rationale for the nominated representatives when taking into account the lack of elected Member representatives, and it was suggested it would be more conducive to have a greater number of representatives on the PSB. Members were advised that a report was previously presented to Council on the formation of the Caerphilly Public Services Board which included details of the delegated representatives from Caerphilly and would have been agreed by Council and furthermore included in the annual membership lists presented to AGM.

In terms of the need for change, it was explained that across many public service boards, many partners such as the police and fire service are attending numerous meetings and so there is an element of duplication across authorities which is not the best use of the resources available. One main reason for change is because of strategic high-level items that need to be dealt with at a regional level (such as climate change and electric vehicles) and therefore the merger will see better use of collective resources to deliver the best outcomes for communities. It was emphasised that moving to a regional footprint will not dilute the local requirements and the local investment that the Council will continue to make, and this point has been identified in the report presented to Members as this was one of the key messages raised by all of the Council's partners. It was explained that the move to a regional PSB is all about gaining a balance, making sure that the resources available are used in an appropriate and efficient way, whilst maintaining the issues that are important at a local level and being tackled under the appropriate governance structure.

It was also clarified that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established a statutory board and hence the proposals to move to a regional PSB grew out of that Act. It was reiterated that the emphasis and recognition on local delivery remains and so the delivery groups that sit below the PSB will continue to look at the issues of vital importance to residents, but that the Gwent PSB will create a greater strategic level of focus and work in a more dynamic and efficient way whilst avoiding duplication and making better use of resources. In response to a further query, it was also confirmed that the Leader and Chief Executive of each of the 5 local authorities would be the nominated representatives to the Gwent Public Services Board.

Questions were also received on the establishment and composition of regional service boards in other authorities and the savings that could be made through a collaborative approach by potentially reducing the number of local councils through reorganisation. It was explained that participation in regional service boards would be a decision for each local authority. Clarification was also provided on the differences in governance arrangements between English and Welsh local authorities, with the current WG position being that the 22

unitary authorities in Wales will remain but that the work on partnerships is an area that councils need to develop. Members were advised that a report will be presented to Council in due course which will reinforce the regional partnership framework and ensure that the Council has appropriate and robust governance arrangements in place around all of the spaces that they occupy in this partnership area.

A Member asked if the move to a regional PSB would result in financial savings across each of the local authorities. It was explained that the Public Services Board does not have a dedicated budget, and so all partners are bringing their existing budgets from their own organisations. Each organisation targets its budget in certain areas, and it is expected that through this collective approach and where there are collective priorities, resources will be pooled to ensure that these outcomes are maximised that can be achieved together.

Members were also advised that another collaborative area of working that has a budget is the Regional Partnership Board and discussions are taking place with Welsh Government regarding the duplication of work across this area and how it can work more efficiently with the Gwent PSB. Overall, it was emphasised that the development of the regional PSB has produced a solid foundation for partnership working and maximises collective working with partners and opportunities for best practice to achieve greater value for money and more effective outcomes for communities. Learning from partners across the region, and the way in which they have delivered projects, will provide better outcomes. As an example, the work in Caerphilly on early years provision can be shared across the region, and everyone can benefit from shared ideas and pooled resources. A Member raised a point that bringing ideas together across multiple partners is the way we need to be going.

Following discussion and consideration of the report, and with it observed that the report was for noting and the views of Members would be provided to the Gwent Public Services Board, it was

RESOLVED that: -

1. The report be noted and the views on its content as part of engagement with elected members be noted.
2. The full set of recommendations in the appended report be noted:

Recommendation 1: To note the proposal to move to a regional PSB as outlined in the report and the importance of maintaining strong local partnerships.

Recommendation 2: To note the requirement to establish regional Scrutiny and to receive further details on this as appropriate.

Recommendation 3: The local assessment of well-being to be agreed by 5th May 2022 will be added to the forward work programme for sign off.

Recommendation 4: To note the proposed changes to terms of reference, and to make any relevant changes to committee structures, terms of reference and constitution.

Recommendation 5: To support the development of Local Delivery Groups and ensure that these are considered in local Scrutiny work programmes.

Recommendation 6: To note the developing arrangements to establish Regional Scrutiny.

Recommendation 7: To continue to support Scrutiny of the current Well-Being Plans to

2023 through existing local partnership Scrutiny arrangements.

3. The appended report and covering report presented and the views of Council on the recommendations above be noted.

That the decision to form a Gwent PSB has been taken by the constituent partners across the region, in collaboration be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.44 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2021 they were signed by the Mayor.

MAYOR