

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
7TH APRIL 2009

Minutes of the Special Meeting of Flintshire County Council held in County Hall, Mold held on Tuesday, 7th April 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor: Q.R.H. Dodd (Chairman)
Councillor: C. Legg (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Eng. K. Armstrong-Braun, J.B Attridge, S.R Baker, D. Barratt, G.H Bateman. Mrs R. Dolphin, B. Dunn, Mrs C.A Ellis, E.F Evans, J.E Falshaw, Ms V. Gay, F. Gilmore, R.J.T Guest, R.G Hampson, G. Hardcastle, P.G. Heesom, M. Higham, Mrs C. Hinds, H.T Howorth, R. Hughes, H.T Isherwood, G. James, Mrs C.M Jones, R.B Jones, Mrs S. Jones, D.I Mackie, Mrs D.L Mackie, Mrs N.M Matthews, Mrs H.J McGuill, Mrs A. Minshull, E.W Owen, M.J Peers, P.R Pemberton, H.G Roberts, A.P Shotton, N.R Steele-Mortimer, Mrs C.A Thomas, W.O Thomas, D.T Williams, A. Woolley and Ms H. Yale.

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: L.A Aldridge, S.R Baker, R.C Bithell, C.S Carver, Mrs J.C Cattermoul, E.G Cooke, D.L Cox, P.J Curtis, R. Davies, Mrs A.J Davies-Cooke, A.G Diskin, Mrs G.D Diskin, C.G Dolphin, Ms A.M Halford, Mrs N. Humphreys, H.D Hutchinson, R. Johnson, Mrs N.M Jones, R.P Macfarlane, D. Mcfarlane, W. Mullin, T. Newhouse, N. Phillips, M.A Reece, I.B Roberts, L.A Sharps, D.E Wisinger and M.G Wright.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Finance, Director of Community Services, Democratic Services Manager and Principal Administration Officer.

138. PRAYERS

The meeting was opened with prayers said by the Reverend Anthapursha.

139. OLDER PERSONS CHAMPION

The Chairman had allowed Councillor V. Gay to make a statement to the Council in relation to her role as the over 50's champion. She had circulated documents for Members perusal and asked them if there were any issues to be raised if they would contact her and she would pursue them accordingly.

140. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

141. NHS REFORMS IN WALES

The joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Community Services which had been submitted to the meeting of the Council held on 31st March 2009 was resubmitted for Members consideration. To assist Members, the Chief Executive had also distributed additional information which included:-

- WLGA Briefing Paper.
- The North Wales Group Health Care Reform Transition Project Structure.
- Details of a Meeting held on 26th March 2009 which included the Transition Directors update.
- A letter from the Chief Officer of the Community Health Council including its response to proposals on the future of the Community Health Councils in Wales.

The Chairman reminded the Council that this item had been included on the agenda for the ordinary meeting of the Council which was held on 31st March 2009 but it was agreed that in view of the importance of this topic that it merited a special meeting which had been arranged accordingly.

The purpose of the joint report was to inform the Council of the latest development of the reform of NHS structures in Wales. By way of background it was explained that on 1st December 2008 the Welsh Assembly Government published "Delivering the New NHS for Wales; Consultation Paper 2". This document provided details of a proposed dissolution of 21 Local Health Boards and 7 NHS Trusts in Wales and establishment of 7 Local Health Boards. The document also provided details of the proposed model, membership and functions of the 7 new Local Health Boards in Wales. These 7 new bodies included the Betsi Cadwalader University Local Health Board to serve North Wales. A copy of the consultation paper together with a full set of supporting technical papers had been made available to Members. The stated aim of the Health Reform Programme outlined in the consultation document was to enhance the quality performance and accessibility of NHS services, ultimately improving the levels of health and wellbeing in Wales.

The Chief Executive reported that at a meeting of the Council's Executive on 17th February 2009 a response from Flintshire County Council was agreed for submission to the Welsh Assembly Government by the required deadline the 25th February 2009, a copy of which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. At the end of the consultation the Welsh Assembly Government produced a statement confirming the intention to proceed to establish six new Local Health Boards that were strategic and could make decisions, were innovative could act collaboratively and have at their core, responsibility to sustain the ethos and values of public service.

A copy of the Ministerial Statement was attached as Appendix 2 to the report now submitted. Following release of this statement the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) had written on behalf of the Leaders of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales to outline its view and a copy of that letter was attached as Appendix 3 to the report. An updated report was due to be considered at the WLGA Co-Ordinating Committee scheduled for 27th March 2009.

In speaking to his report the Chief Executive referred to the areas for which he felt the Council was now able to comment upon. He drew attention to the issue in how nominations would be sought for representation on the Board and to the contentious proposal to use the public appointment process.

In opening the debate the Leader of the Council indicated that it was not the intention to be confrontational towards the Welsh Assembly Government upon this issue. However, he referred to his considerable concerns on the consultation process a view which has been shared by Leaders of Councils throughout Wales. Their common view was that the proposals were inappropriate and unworkable. What was of major concern was that the decision had been taken on the proposals whilst consultations were supposed to be ongoing. As local government representatives Members of the Council took representations from local people who were very much concerned with these proposals. Members of various authorities acknowledged that there was a geographical difference between the sub-sections at the East and West of North Wales. The Leader also said that he had reservations with the suggestions that Directors of appropriate departments of Local Authorities could be involved with the work of the Board for up to five days per month. It would be extremely difficult for an Authority to allow an Officer who held such a key senior position to be allowed time away from the Council. With regards to the provision of the service he felt that the proposal did not address local issues which was a consistent feeling amongst Authorities. On representations he felt that the Welsh Local Government Association's paper was an excellent response. He duly moved the following proposal which was consistent with that adopted by Wrexham Borough Council:-

- 1) That the Welsh Local Government Association briefing paper on NHS Reform dated 1st April 2009 be endorsed.
- 2) That the Director of Social Services or other Officer not be nominated for selection on to the Local Health Board.
- 3) That no nomination be made for Member level selection on the Local Health Board but leave Members free to offer themselves individually as nominees if they wished to do so.

This was duly seconded by Councillor P.G Heesom.

Councillor A.P Shotton spoke in support of the motion and indicated that the concerns raised were shared across the Chamber. Councillor Shotton was particularly concerned at what he felt was a democratic deficit whereby there was little opportunity for input from Elected Members. He referred to the

uniqueness of various areas and specifically the position in Flintshire and its location to the English border and the close working relationship with specialist hospitals in North West regions. Authorities to the West of Wales had different arrangements. Following his comments Councillor Shotton suggested an addition to the proposal as follows:-

- “That the Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Assembly Government be requested to meet a cross party deputation to allow representations to be made for Flintshire to be treated as a special case”.

The mover and seconder of the proposal very much welcomed this addition and it became the substantive motion.

Councillor H.T Howorth felt there was a lack of intent from National Health Service for democratic representation in its operation. He indicated that the Community Health Councils had been abolished in England some years ago. He also referred to the active involvement of Social Services within the Health Service and thus the strong links with the role of Local Authorities.

Councillor P.G Heesom spoke in support of the points made by Councillor A.P Shotton and also commented upon the help and advice received from Councillor H.T Howorth. Members shared his view that issues relating to health was one of the most important things for local residents. Councillor S.R Baker supporting previous comments also commented upon the geographical scale of the region and the delivery with different needs in what was dispersed and predominantly rural or semi-rural communities. Councillor H. Isherwood supported by other Members also referred to issues on the North/South Wales divide and previous discussions regarding certain services whereby it appeared that they wished for them to be centred in South Wales when North Wales had close links with specialist hospitals in Liverpool and Manchester particularly.

A number of Members expressed their concern at the way the Welsh Assembly Government had dealt with this issue and felt that they had treated Local Authorities very badly. Councillor H. McGuill who had just arrived from another meeting in her capacity as the Council's representative on the Local Health Board, expressed her concern at the lack of consultation with Local Authorities. Councillor McGuill also expressed a view that strong representations should be made to Assembly Members so it was absolutely clear what Local Authorities felt on the process for the NHS Reforms. She was also concerned about cross border issues which she felt had not been addressed as part of the consultation.

The Chief Executive reflected upon the fullness of the discussion and the relevance of the points made. He reiterated the point that there was no realistic way in which a Senior Officer could be allowed to leave their duties at the Council, as suggested, to serve on the Board because they would most certainly not have the time to do so. The Chief Executive also reported upon the need for effective localised planning and service integration with partners, such as Councils, and the previously made point regarding the cross border movement of patients for specialist treatment notably in the North East Wales sub region. Taking on board points raised by Members he felt it was also appropriate to

pursue with the Welsh Assembly Government membership and operation of the Executive Board. He also took account of the comments regarding democracy and that Councils provided key complementary services including Social Services, Housing, Education, Public Protection and Health Promotion. It was necessary to develop joint working arrangements.

The proposal was put to the meeting and was carried unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Welsh Local Government Association briefing paper on NHS Reform dated 1st April 2009 be endorsed.
- (2) That the Director of Social Services or other Officer not be nominated for selection onto the Local Health Board.
- (3) That no nomination be made at Member level for selection onto the Local Health Board but leave Members free to offer themselves individually as nominees if they wish to do so.
- (4) That the Welsh Assembly Government be requested to meet a cross party deputation to allow representations to be made.

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Chairman

SUMMARY OF DECLARATIONS MADE BY MEMBERS
IN ACCORDANCE WITH FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S
CODE OF CONDUCT

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	DATE: 7th April 2009
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS
NO DECLARATIONS WERE MADE		