

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
28TH JANUARY 2020

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 28th January 2020.

PRESENT: Councillor Marion Bateman (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Bernie Attridge, Janet Axworthy, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, Geoff Collett, Bob Connah, David Cox, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, Robert Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Mared Eastwood, Carol Ellis, David Evans, Veronica Gay, George Hardcastle, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Cindy Hinds, Dave Hughes, Kevin Hughes, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Joe Johnson, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Tudor Jones, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Hilary McGill, Billy Mullin, Ted Palmer, Mike Peers, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Ian Roberts, Tim Roberts, Kevin Rush, Paul Shotton, Ralph Small, Ian Smith, Carolyn Thomas, Owen Thomas, Martin White, Andy Williams, David Williams, David Wisinger and Arnold Woolley.

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Sian Braun, Patrick Heesom, Rita Johnson, Tony Sharps and Aaron Shotton.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Senior Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer, Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), Chief Officer (Housing and Assets), Chief Officer (Social Services), Chief Officer (Education and Youth) Corporate Finance Manager, Senior Finance Managers, Revenues Manager, Democratic Services Manager, and Team Leader – Committee Services.

86. TRIBUTES TO THE LATE PETER EVANS, FORMER DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE MANAGER

Members across the Chamber paid tribute to the late Peter Evans, the former Democracy and Governance Manager. They commented on the way in which he worked, with dignity and respect and he had been an asset to both Flintshire County Council and the former Delyn Borough Council. He always provided welcome advice to Members, particularly at meetings of Planning Committee. They commented on his unique sense of humour and the qualities of Peter that made him a true gentleman. He would be missed but remembered with great fondness.

The Chief Executive and the Deputy Monitoring Officer also paid their respects to Mr Evans, his positivity, integrity, friendship and support that he had provided.

87. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th December were submitted and approved as a correct record.

88. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members declared personal interests:

Councillors Axworthy, Bibby, Dunbobbin, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Dennis Hutchinson, Paul Johnson and McGuill – agenda item number 9 – Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2022/23.

Councillors Palmer and White – agenda item number 11 – Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Financial Business Plan.

Councillors Chris Dolphin and Rosetta Dolphin and Councillor White – agenda item number 15 – Notice of Motion.

89. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

In presenting her communications, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, the Chair highlighted a number of events, commenting in particular on the pantomime at Canolfan Dewi Sant, Errys, and the Mayor of Holywell's Christmas Carol Service.

90. PETITIONS

None were received.

91. WELCOME TO COUNCILLOR TIM ROBERTS

The Chair welcomed Councillor Tim Roberts following his election at the Trelawnyd and Gwaenysgor by-election on 12th December 2019. Councillor Roberts made an appropriate response.

92. COUNCIL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2020/21 STAGE TWO

The Chief Executive introduced the Council Fund Revenue Budget 2020/21 Stage Two report which set out the strategy for reaching a legal and balanced budget. The Provisional Settlement was out for public consultation and would be finalised on 25th February prior to the approval of the Welsh Government (WG) Budget for all public services.

The report covered:

- The latest local financial forecast for 2020/21;
- A summary of the stage one work on the budget;
- An assessment of the Provisional Settlement and the impacts and implications for the Council;
- The work in hand on the limited range of local options at stage two to contribute to reaching a balanced budget for 2020/21;
- The open risks which needed to be taken into account in setting the budget; and
- The steps to close the budget and ongoing work for the medium-term.

The report advised that there was a high degree of confidence that a legal and balanced budget could be recommended to Council at the meeting on 18th February. A special meeting of Group Leaders was scheduled to take place prior to that Council meeting.

Since the last meeting in December, the impact of the latest changes had been to increase the budget gap to meet the expenditure requirement for 2020/21 by £0.181M to £16.355M.

The Corporate Finance Manager provided full details on the Provisional Settlement, as detailed in the report. He explained that the provisional AEF (Revenue Support Grant and share of National Rates Pool) for 2020/21 was £199.386M which, when compared to the adjusted 2019/20 figure of £192.212M represented an increase of 3.7%. The all Wales average increase was 4.3%. The provisional allocation represented a cash uplift of £10.406M over the 2019/20 allocation of £188.980M.

There were three transfers into the Settlement:

- Teacher Pension Grant (£1.978M);
- Nursing Care (£0.081M); and
- Teacher Pay (£0.608M).

There was no additional funding confirmed at this stage to support a funding 'floor'. A funding floor was a guaranteed level of funding for councils who came under the all-Wales average change in the annual Settlement. A floor had been a feature of the Settlement for many years. Given the variations in the annual uplift from council to council, a floor had been called for by a number of councils. If granted, it would be funded by WG over and above the quantum it had committed to invest in the Settlement for 2020/21 thus far. The group of North Wales Leaders had made the case for a floor to be set at 4%. If granted, that would improve Flintshire's position by 0.3%. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) had also supported the call for a floor. A decision was awaited and there could be no assumption at this stage, prior to the finalisation and approval of the WG budget.

Details on specific grants awarded were outlined in the report. Most grants would be at the same level as 2019/20 or would be increased for indexation. There would be several significant uplifts to specific grants within Education and Social Care. The precise allocations for Flintshire were unknown, including whether the terms and conditions of grant would be sufficiently flexible for the Council to be able to allocate the funds against planned budget expenditure to assist in the closure of the remaining budget gap – further details would be made available at the Council meeting on 18th February.

The full year impact of the Teacher Pensions Employer Contributions was an increase of £3.391M and would need to be included in the budget calculations and met from the uplift in funding received in the Settlement. That cost pressure had not been funded at source with the base budgets of Governments as requested. On teacher pay, the additional costs incurred in 2019/20 from the annual pay award effective from September 2018 had been part-funded by a one-off specific grant from

WG. That grant was made for the current financial year only and was not set to be continued into 2020/21. The additional cost of £0.375M would need to be included in the budget calculations and also met from the uplift. This cost pressure had also not been funded at source from within the base budgets of Governments. The option remained to share cost burden with schools, as the employers of teachers, as a fall-back position. An amount of £0.081M for Funded Nursing Care had been transferred into the Settlement for funded nursing care which was previously the responsibility of the Health Board but had transferred to the Council.

Details were also provided on the work that was ongoing on a limited range of local solutions to contribute to closing the remaining budget gap alongside the contribution to be made by an improved Local Government Settlement. These included employer pension contributions, social care commissioning and single person discount – review of entitlement.

The Chief Executive said there could be some additional benefits in the Settlement but they would need to be added to the reserve to cover the in-year risks as outlined. He provided details of the timetable for the closing stages of the annual budget setting process as outlined in the report. He also added that a full review of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy was underway which would set out the budget forecast and the requirements for 2022/22 – 2023/24. The update would be reported to Members early in the summer with early engagement planned in a series of workshops.

Councillor Roberts moved the recommendations and thanked all Members of the Council for the way in which the budget had been approached, including the work of the cross party working group which formed the basis of a lot of the WLGA submission to WG. The budget had been reported to each Overview and Scrutiny Committee and no further proposals had been put forward following those meetings. He also thanked officers for their work on the budget and the continuing work on the local solutions; he also thanked everybody involved in the work undertaken on the Clwyd Pension Fund actuarial review. He thanked WG for the improved Settlement, and UK Government for providing WG with an improved Settlement. He supported the request for a funding 'floor' which was also supported by North Wales Leaders and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). There were still substantial risks in the budget, particularly teachers' pension's contributions and teachers' pay and he said that who announced the rise, should fund the rise.

It was Cabinet's intention to propose a Council Tax rise at below 5%.

Councillor Banks seconded the recommendations. He paid tribute to the Council Tax payers of Flintshire who had stood by the Council in its battle to protect frontline services. However, they could not continually be expected to make up the shortfall from the Settlement from UK Government funding. He called for a three year forecast from WG to help provide stability and assist the Council with long term planning.

Councillor Peers welcomed the joint working that had taken place on the budget. He commented on the report where it stated '*WG might fully fund the next annual teachers' pay award*' and reiterated the remarks of the Leader in that WG

announced the award, but do not provide the funding for it. On the additional £10.406M that Flintshire would receive, once the total cost of teachers' pay and teachers' pension employer contributions had been taken out of that figure, it reduced by £3.76M to an actual increase of £6.54M so it was not an uplift of 3.7%. It had been expected that teachers' pay and teachers' pension employer contributions would have been fully funded by WG. He commented on the section of the report which stated that the Council had no choice in recent past but to set Council Tax at a higher level than had been planned in the previous two years and said this was the only way in which the budget could be balanced due to the lack of funding from WG.

On Council Tax, he said the WG had set a guideline of an average increase of 7.1% across Wales as part of its budget calculations for a sufficiency of funding for local government and questioned whether the strategy of WG was to put additional burden onto the tax payer. He also welcomed the funding as a result of the actuarial review of the Clwyd Pension Fund.

Councillor Richard Jones said UK Government had provided WG with £592M and Flintshire had expected 2% which would have equated to almost £12M, not £10.406M. He reiterated the earlier comments that WG had been expected to pay for the teachers' pay and teachers' pension employer contributions which had not happened. He also said there had been no formal meeting between the North Wales Leaders and the Minister, and no changes had been made to the funding formula. It was his opinion that UK Government had done what was expected, but WG had not.

He commented on the resolutions on the budget item from the County Council meeting in December where the Leader of the Council stated he did not wish to see a Council Tax rise above 5% and did not want cost pressures to be shared with schools for teachers' pay and pension contributions. In response to a comment on the amount of new funds available to help balance the budget being £6.54M, the Corporate Finance Manager confirmed the figure should read £6.646M. Councillor Jones asked for confirmation that the additional 0.3% on the funding floor for Flintshire's position would see an improvement of £580K, which was given. He concurred with previous views that local residents could not continue to be expected to fund the budget gap by large increases in Council Tax.

The Chief Executive said that Council Tax analysis data would be provided at the next meeting of County Council, including comparisons with other local authorities.

On being put to the vote the recommendations were carried.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the budget forecast for 2020/21 be re-noted, and the open risks which need to be taken into account in setting the budget be noted;
- (b) That the impacts and the implications of the Provisional Local Government Budget Settlement be noted;

- (c) That the work in hand on the remaining local options to contribute to reaching a balanced budget for 2020/21 be noted;
- (d) That the professional advice that, based on the financial strategy we have been working to be noted, and that there is a high degree of confidence that a legal and balanced budget can be recommended to Council on 18th February; and
- (e) That a full and final report with recommendations to set a legal and balanced budget be reported to the Council meeting on 18th February.

93. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 - 2022/23

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) introduced the Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2022/23 report which covered investment in assets for the long term to enable the delivery of high quality and value for money public services.

Assets included buildings such as schools and care homes, infrastructure such as highways, IT networks and waste transfer stations and assets not owned by the Council, such as works to improve and adapt private sector homes. The proposed capital investments outlined within the report were closely aligned to portfolio service business plans and the Council Plan.

The Council had limited capital resources from Welsh Government (WG) to support Council priorities, needs and liabilities. However, it had the powers to fund Capital schemes by borrowing; this was temporary and ultimately the cost and repayment of any borrowing was charged to the Council's revenue budget. Schemes funded by borrowing were carefully considered due to the long-term impacts on the Council's revenue budget.

The report divided the Council Fund Capital Programme into three sections:

1. Statutory / Regulatory – allocations to cover regulatory and statutory works;
2. Retained Assets – allocations to fund infrastructure works necessary to ensure service and business continuity; and
3. Investment – allocations to fund works necessary to remodel services to deliver efficiencies outlined in Portfolio business plan and invest in services as outlined in the Council Plan.

The Chief Officer provided details of each of the tables within the report which were supported by explanations on each table.

In response to a question from Councillor David Healey, the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) confirmed that the works on Castell Alun High School was for a three storey extension, not two as outlined in the report.

Councillor Roberts moved the recommendations of the report, citing all of the exciting opportunities outlined in the Capital Programme. He said it demonstrated that the Council was being ambitious and showed what the aims of the Council were.

He commented in particular on the successful Hwb Cyfle adult day centre project which had recently opened in Queensferry, the investment in Marleyfield Residential Home in Buckley and the proposals for many schools in the county.

Councillor Banks seconded the recommendations of the report which he welcomed, particularly the smaller schemes of scheduled resurfacing of the all-weather pitch at Elfed High School, and the Flintshire Food Enterprise initiative.

Councillor Peers also welcomed the report which saw schemes across the county. He commented on the Council's limited capital resources and felt this needed to be brought to the attention of WG. On school building works, he asked if the £1.5M budget for the toilets in schools was part of a 15 year programme as the report stated £100K per annum. On improvements to the Standard Yard Waste Transfer Station, he hoped some money could be saved on this scheme as it had been determined that the new road initially identified was not actually needed.

On the joint archive facility, he asked if ownership was on a 50:50 basis with Denbighshire as the funding was not equal. On the County Hall campus, he asked for details on what was the huge potential for the site as outlined in the report, as there were no details in the capital receipts section of the report.

The Chief Executive said the need for increased Capital was regularly discussed with WG. On school toilets, a challenging discussion would be needed on how the schools backlog could be dealt with. On the joint archive facility – the development would be on Flintshire's land and funding arrangements would be proportionate to the size of the Councils, their budgets and the local population. Capital receipts would not show yet for County Hall as a longer term masterplan had not yet been agreed.

The Chief Officer explained that design work was still ongoing on the improvements to the Standard Yard Waste Transfer Station and any savings achieved would go back into the Capital Programme to be utilised for other schemes. On toilets, some schemes would be addressed through the Councils school modernisation programme or incorporated within other refurbishment programmes.

Councillor Richard Jones welcomed the works on Castell Alyn and Marleyfield Residential Home. On schools, he asked if the schemes in the Strategy were part of a wider strategy to remove mobile classrooms.

On the prudential borrowing for the Growth Deal, he asked what the cost of that borrowing would be, and felt this was something that could be brought to a future meeting of Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chief Executive advised that on the Growth Deal there was unlikely to be any prudential borrowing until future years and the detail would be discussed fully at a later date.

In response to a question from Councillor Jones on the cost of prudential borrowing, the Finance Manager explained that full details were provided in the Resource Implications of the report.

Councillor Palmer welcomed the report and commented on the impact that capital schemes had on communities, such as the re-opening of Holywell high Street which had been a positive impact.

Councillor Rush thanked the Council for the investment in the Glan Aber School in Bagillt which would be of great benefit to all.

Councillor McGuill asked who was leading on the Flintshire Food Enterprise and where were the hub locations. The Chief Officer explained that the scheme was in conjunction with Flintshire County Council, Clwyd Alyn Housing and Can Cook and the hubs were located across Flintshire, with some being in Clwyd Alyn Care Homes. He was the Officer leading the scheme for Flintshire.

In response to a question from Councillor Carver on the energy output at the former landfill sites in Buckley, the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) said he would provide Members with the details.

Councillor Dunbar thanked officers and the Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Transportation for the speedy remedy to the car park problem at Wepre Park. Councillor Dunbobbin expressed his thanks for the modernisation works that had taken place at Connah's Quay High School.

Councillor Ellis asked for clarification on the following wording in relation to Theatr Clwyd 'there may be a need to consider low and sustainable levels of long term borrowing to ensure the scheme is delivered but options will need to be outlined for revenue when Welsh Government confirm their level of support'. The Chief Executive explained that this was a project currently estimated at £35M; £25M had been formally requested from WG, and £5M from the Arts Council for Wales. That left an amount remaining of approximately £5M. There were substantial amounts of charitable donations that were available which would help to minimise the cost to the Council.

On being put to the vote the recommendations were carried.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the allocations and schemes in Table 3 for the Statutory / Regulatory and Retained Assets sections of the Council Fund Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2022/23 be approved;
- (b) That the schemes included in Table 4 for the Investment section of the Council Fund Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2022/23 be approved;
- (c) That the shortfall in funding of schemes in 2020/21 and 2021/22 in Table 5 at this point in the approval process allows flexibility, be noted. Options including a combination of future capital receipts, alternative grants (if available), prudential borrowing or the re-phasing of schemes will be considered during 2020/21, and included in future Capital Programme reports.

94. CAPITAL STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2020/21 TO 2022/23

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the Capital Strategy Including Prudential Indicators 2020/21 to 2022/23 report which provided an update on the Strategy, including why a Strategy was needed, its key aims and the content of each of its sections.

Councillor Banks moved the recommendations of the report which were seconded by Councillor Mullin.

In response to a question from Councillor Peers, the Chief Executive explained that the Council did not have any PFI schemes.

On being put to the vote the recommendations were carried.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Capital Strategy be approved; and
- (b) That the following be approved:
 - The Prudential Indicators for 2020/21 – 2022/23 as detailed within Tables 1, and 4 – 7 inclusive of the Capital Strategy; and
 - Delegated authority for the Corporate Finance Manager to effect movements between the separately agreed limits within the authorised limit for external debt and the operational boundary for external debt (Table 6 of the Capital Strategy).

95. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 30 YEAR FINANCIAL BUSINESS PLAN

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) and the Strategic Finance Manager – Commercial and Housing, introduced the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Financial Business Plan report, which included proposed rent increases which had been considered at Cabinet on 21st January 2020.

A presentation was delivered which covered:

- 30 year Business Plan;
- Welsh Government Rent Policy 2020/21;
- Proposed Rent Uplift 2020/21;
- Other Income;
- Service Charges 2020/21;
- Revenue Efficiencies;
- Revenue Pressures;
- Capital Programme Delivery;
- Draft Capital Programme 2020/21;
- HRA Capital Funding 2020/21;
- HRA – Considering Value for Money; and
- Reserves

Councillor Attridge moved approval of the recommendation. He provided details of a comment he had made at Community and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the cumulative effect of rent increases and other service charges. For tenants who were struggling, including residents in sheltered housing, assurance had been given from the Chief Officer that those charges were covered by housing benefits. A lot of work had been done over recent years to ensure that tenants were getting value for money which was pleasing to see.

Councillor Dave Hughes seconded the recommendation and said he was very proud of what had been achieved and officers would seek to build on the current levels of ambition. The rent policy had been set by WG for 5 years, which was the maximum amount that could be charged and landlords should consider value for money alongside affordability for tenants, taking into account the full cost of living in a property as part of their rationale of setting rent increases.

Councillor Peers commented on the 30 Year Financial Business Plan Summary that was appended to the report and said in 2020/21, expenditure was 65% of the income, increasing in year 10 to 67% of income. He asked how this related to the Welsh average. The Chief Officer said that when that information became available it would be shared with Members.

In response to a question from Councillor Carver, the Finance Manager confirmed that the transitional uplift to tenants who were currently under target rent was £2 per week as it had been in previous years.

Councillor Richard Jones commented on the many people who struggled with car parking at sheltered accommodation properties as it was not always elderly residents that occupied such premises. He suggested that investment in car parking should be considered.

The Chief Officer said that a review of sheltered accommodation was taking place, including in the wider context. Car parking generally was also being dealt with under the WHQS and a detailed evaluation matrix had been agreed at Community and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee as to what was the need and how parking could be accommodated in various places.

In response to a comment from Councillor Hinds on water charges now being billed directly to residents, the Chief Officer explained that this had been a specific requirement of the water company and was out of the Councils control. Councillor Gay said she had attended a drop in session and was informed by the water company that by billing tenants direct, it would enable residents to access help via a number of schemes; if billing was to continue through the local authority those options would not be available to tenants.

Councillors Palmer and Rosetta Dolphin welcomed the works undertaken on Council properties as part of the WHQS.

On car parking, Councillor Ellis asked if colleagues in Housing and Highways worked together, citing an example of where she had been told a scheme did not

score high enough for residents only car parking spaces when the road in question was adjacent to a school and was causing issues every day.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Financial Business Plan be approved.

96. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2019/20

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2019/20. A summary of the key points were set out in the report.

Members of the Audit Committee received a copy of the report on 20th November and recommended it to Cabinet. Cabinet received the Mid-Year report on 17th December 2019 and recommended it to Council for approval.

Councillor Banks moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Chris Dolphin.

Councillor Peers asked for additional information on the two new long term loans that had been taken out from the Public Works Loans Board in 2019/20. The Corporate Finance Manager explained that there was a need to borrow to fund the Capital Programme and she could provide further details if required. Interest rates from central government had been low which meant that fixing long term re-payments offered financial value to the Council.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2019/20 be approved.

97. LOCAL GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS (WALES) BILL

The Chief Executive introduced the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Bill report which summarised the provisions of the Bill and details of the Council's responses. Many of the aspects in the Bill had previously been debated by Members during their draft stages.

Appended to the report were papers of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Council, as the Councils representative body.

Councillor Roberts supported the views of the WLGA and the previous position as outlined by the Council which should form the basis of the response, which was seconded by Councillor Carolyn Thomas. He said particular aspects would need to be dealt with at the time when the Bill was enacted. He particularly welcomed the provision in the Bill for voting for 16 and 17 year olds.

Councillor Bithell concurred with the comments of the Leader and said he would welcome some aspect of political education being delivered in schools.

Councillor Tudor Jones said Flintshire was a progressive local authority which had been demonstrated in the Council Chamber throughout the afternoon. However, he expressed his concern that if the report was approved today, it would prevent the Council commenting in the future on the voting system. He supported the vote being extended to 16 and 17 year olds but said they would be expected to use two different voting systems. He agreed with the single transferable vote system but commented on the system for County Council elections where the person with the majority of the votes won. However, some of those seats had very low majorities, with one example being a Councillor being elected with 24% of the vote; he felt this would be difficult to explain to young people. A single transferable vote would see the achievement of a 50% majority. He did not feel that the Council should align itself to the views of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

The Chief Executive said this was a topic which prompted a wide range of views in the Council Chamber and also at the WLGA. The WLGA and the Council believed there should be a uniform voting system for all local authorities regardless of what voting system was used which would help to avoid confusion. Councillor Jones said he disagreed with that view as people would only be concerned with the system that was in place where they resided.

Councillor Richard Jones commented on the change of name of the Audit Committee to Governance and Audit Committee and said he felt the reporting of performance measures should remain where they currently were, at Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chief Executive explained that two Committees could operate with parallel roles and further thought would be given on that element of the Bill.

Councillor Roberts said a debate would take place on a voting system once the Bill had been enacted.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Council responds to the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Bill, building on the positions that had previously been taken and aligning with the position and views of the Welsh Local Government Association.

98. APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the Appointment of an Independent Member to the Standards Committee report, which, following a recruitment process for a vacancy, recommended that Mr Mark Morgan be appointed.

An Independent Member could be appointed for between four and six years in their first term, and, if reappointed, for a maximum of four years in their second term. So that the retirement dates of the Independent Members was staggered, officers recommended that Mr Morgan be appointed for the maximum period in his first term and until 27th January 2026.

Councillor Woolley moved the recommendation of the report which was seconded by Councillor Paul Johnson.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was carried.

RESOLVED:

That Mark Morgan be appointed to the Standards Committee until 27th January 2026.

99. NOTICE OF MOTION

Prior to the Notice of Motion being introduced, the Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that a response to the Notice of Motion had been received from the Chief Executive of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board which he would read out once the Notice of Motion had been introduced.

Councillor Attridge explained that the Notice of Motion was in the names of himself, Councillors Brown, Ellis and Hardcastle.

Councillor Ellis introduced the Notice of Motion as follows:

“We call on Welsh Government to make BCUHB accountable in their care of patients and staff. After many years in so called Special Measures the crisis with the District Hospitals remains a worry.

A twelve hour wait at Wrexham Maelor is not unusual it's the normal wait time. People lying on trolleys waiting to go into Majors is normal. Waiting for beds to move patients out of A and E to the Wards is impossible as there are no beds. No beds no sheets no pillows no Doctors and Nursing Staff cut.

Staff are under growing pressure and have been heard to say they are fearful of the situation getting worse as the Hospitals cannot cope with the numbers such as two Doctors to see eighty patients in A and E with a staff reduced from 15 to 12. We feel people may be put at risk due to lack of provision. Ambulance Personnel unable to sign over patients to the A and E staff as there is no room.

Flintshire has a growing population the LDP shows the growth we can expect, however Health provision is not keeping up it cannot cope Flintshire needs more GP's, more Nurses and Consultants and surely in this day and age a sick person should be able to have a bed with a pillow and blanket and been seen in a reasonable time by a Doctor. In short this County needs its own Hospital”.

She added that in 2008 many Members from across the Chamber had been against the introduction of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and had fought hard against the closure of community hospitals. The current situation proved that view was right. She said BCUHB had been in special measures for almost 5 years, that it was too big and could not be managed. She had been inundated with calls from residents across the county outlining their experiences and concerns. She commented on the reducing staff numbers, the lack of pillows and blankets, beds not being available and basic provision of food and drink not being made available to people who had been waiting for up to 24 hours. She felt the residents of Flintshire were being let down and called for a hospital within the county.

Councillors Brown and Attridge spoke in support of the views expressed by Councillor Ellis, with Councillor Attridge providing details of his own personal experiences at the Wrexham Maelor Hospital.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer read out the response from BCUHB.

Councillor Roberts said it was distressing to hear the examples being given across the Chamber and concurred that the performance of BCUHB was getting worse. He proposed an amendment to the Notice of Motion, which removed the words "In short this County needs its own Hospital" from the last sentence, and added in the following:

In responding to this Notice of Motion, we can all recognise that these can be emotive issues. We know that all public services are under a great deal of pressure, and need support. But, there are some fundamental questions which now need to be asked.

Flintshire County Council should call on Welsh Government to urgently review the following issues:

- 1. Is there sufficient capacity in Wrexham Maelor, Glan Clwyd and the Countess of Chester hospital?**
- 2. Does Flintshire need a district General Hospital of its own?**
- 3. Why is the performance of A and E so poor in the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board in comparison to the rest of Wales?**
- 4. What measures can be put in place to urgently improve the performance of A and E by way of GP walk in centres, extended hours at minor injury units, improved access to GPs and improved community services?**
- 5. What is the level of investment that Welsh Government will be providing for patients in North Wales to stabilise and then improve performance?**

I move that we formally send these concerns to Vaughan Gething, the Minister for Health and Social Services.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor McGuill. Councillor Ellis, as mover of the Notice of Motion, accepted the amendment which became the substantive Notice of Motion.

Councillors Peers, Gladys Healey, Rosetta Dolphin, Andy Williams, Richard Jones, McGuill, Butler, Bithell, Hinds, Gay and Carver all spoke in support of the Notice of Motion with many providing examples of personal experiences.

Councillor McGuill said the problems started with people not being able to access GP appointments and she suggested that BCUHB look at the provisions in the community hospitals in Mold, Holywell and Deeside and consider keeping them open from 7am – midnight, 7 days a week with X-Ray facilities being available at each one. She advised Members that there was a special meeting of Social and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10th February where BCUHB would be in attendance. She urged Members to forward any questions to her so they could be considered at the meeting.

The Chief Executive explained that the primary reason for the special Social and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting was following the problems the previous year with contractual arrangements with the Countess of Chester Hospital. Since receiving the Notice of Motion, BCUHB had also been asked to address the concerns at the same meeting. For that meeting, he suggested the following for the agenda:

- (1) to provide assurance over contractual arrangements with the Countess of Chester Hospital and service continuity;
- (2) to provide a response to the Notice of Motion being considered today; and
- (3) to consider questions submitted by Members in advance of the meeting.

Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny could then discuss the situation over a number of meetings and then produce a report to be sent to BCUHB and the Minister.

On being put to the vote, the amended Notice of Motion, as below, was carried.

BETSI CADWALADER UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD (BCUHB) CRISIS

We call on Welsh Government to make BCUHB accountable in their care of patients and staff. After many years in so called Special Measures the crisis with the District Hospitals remains a worry.

A twelve hour wait at Wrexham Maelor is not unusual it's the normal wait time. People lying on trolleys waiting to go into Majors is normal. Waiting for beds to move patients out of A and E to the Wards is impossible as there are no beds. No beds no sheets no pillows no Doctors and Nursing Staff cut.

Staff are under growing pressure and have been heard to say they are fearful of the situation getting worse as the Hospitals cannot cope with the numbers such as two Doctors to see eighty patients in A and E with a staff reduced from

15 to 12. We feel people may be put at risk due to lack of provision. Ambulance Personnel unable to sign over patients to the A and E staff as there is no room.

Flintshire has a growing population the LDP shows the growth we can expect, however Health provision is not keeping up it cannot cope Flintshire needs more GP's, more Nurses and Consultants and surely in this day and age a sick person should be able to have a bed with a pillow and blanket and been seen in a reasonable time by a Doctor.

In responding to this Notice of Motion, we can all recognise that these can be emotive issues. We know that all public services are under a great deal of pressure, and need support. But, there are some fundamental questions which now need to be asked.

Flintshire County Council should call on Welsh Government to urgently review the following issues:

- 1. Is there sufficient capacity in Wrexham Maelor, Glan Clwyd and the Countess of Chester hospital?**
- 2. Does Flintshire need a district General Hospital of its own?**
- 3. Why is the performance of A and E so poor in the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board in comparison to the rest of Wales?**
- 4. What measures can be put in place to urgently improve the performance of A and E by way of GP walk in centres, extended hours at minor injury units, improved access to GPs and improved community services?**
- 5. What is the level of investment that Welsh Government will be providing for patients in North Wales to stabilise and then improve performance?**

I move that we formally send these concerns to Vaughan Gething, the Minister for Health and Social Services.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion from Councillors Attridge, Brown, Ellis and Hardcastle, which included the amendment proposed by Councillor Roberts, be supported.

100. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None were received.

101. QUESTIONS

None were received.

102. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance, and one member of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.30 p.m. and ended at 6.08 p.m.)

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Chair