

MINUTES OF WLGA MEETINGS

Purpose

1. For Members to review the minutes of the WLGA meetings specified and for any relevant matters arising to be reported, other than where those updates are provided by the agenda and specific reports.

Background

2. The following minutes are appended:

Annex A Draft minutes of the WLGA Council meeting held 25th November 2019.

Annex B Minutes of the WLGA Audit Committee meeting held 9th April 2020.

Recommendations

3. **That Members:**

- 3.1 **Receive and approve the minutes of the WLGA Council meeting held 29th November 2019;**
- 3.2 **Receive and note the minutes of the WLGA Audit Committee meeting held 9th April 2020.**

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Annex A

Draft Minutes WLGA Council, Council Chamber, City Hall, Cardiff Friday 29th November 2019

Cllr G Collier (Blaenau Gwent)	Cllr P Fox OBE (Monmouthshire)
Cllr H David (Bridgend)	Cllr R Greenland (Monmouthshire)
Cllr P Marsden (Caerphilly)	Cllr R G Jones (Neath Port Talbot)
Cllr N George (Caerphilly)	Cllr C Clement-Williams (Neath Port Talbot)
Cllr S Morgan (Caerphilly)	Cllr A Taylor (Neath Port Talbot)
Cllr S Elsmore (Cardiff)	Cllr D Wilcox (Newport)
Cllr S Merry (Cardiff)	Cllr J Mudd (Newport)
Cllr H Thomas (Cardiff)	Cllr D Wilcox (Newport)
Cllr E Dole (Carmarthenshire)	Cllr R Jeavons (Newport)
Cllr H Evans (Carmarthenshire)	Cllr D Simpson (Pembrokeshire)
Cllr D Jenkins (Carmarthenshire)	Cllr N Prior (Pembrokeshire)
Cllr M Stephens (Carmarthenshire)	Cllr R Harris (Powys)
Cllr E ap Gwynn (Ceredigion)	Cllr A Davies (Powys)
Cllr R Quant MBE (Ceredigion)	Cllr M Dorrance (Powys)
Cllr S Rowlands (Conwy)	Cllr A Morgan (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Cllr G Edwards (Conwy)	Cllr R Bevan (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Cllr N Smith (Conwy)	Cllr R Lewis (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Cllr H Evans OBE (Denbighshire)	Cllr M Webber (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Cllr I Roberts (Flintshire)	Cllr R Stewart (Swansea)
Cllr D Butler (Flintshire)	Cllr A Lewis (Swansea)
Cllr C Thomas (Flintshire)	Cllr M Sherwood (Swansea)
Cllr D Hughes (Flinshire)	Cllr A Hunt (Torfaen)
Cllr D Siencyn (Gwynedd)	Cllr R Clark (Torfaen)
Cllr N Jeffries (Gwynedd)	Cllr L Burnett (Vale of Glamorgan)
Cllr D Meurig (Gwynedd)	Cllr M Pritchard (Wrexham)
Cllr LI Medi (Isle of Anglesey)	Cllr T A Edwards (Wrexham)
Cllr I Williams (Isle of Anglesey)	
Cllr Kevin O'Neill (Merthyr Tydfil)	

WLGA Officers in Attendance:

Dr Chris Llewelyn, Chief Executive.
Naomi Alleyne, Director of Social Services and Housing
Jon Rae, Director of Resources
Dr Tim Peppin, Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development
Daniel Hurford, Head of Policy Improvement & Governance
Jonathan Lloyd, Head of Employment
Dilwyn Jones, Communications Officer
Lee Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

Other Officers in Attendance:

Nerys Hurford, Welsh Translation
Ceri Reeves, Labour Group

Apologies for absence:

Cllr N Daniels (Blaenau Gwent)
Cllr H Williams (Bridgend)
Cllr C Green (Bridgend)
Cllr B Jones (Caerphilly)
Cllr P Bradbury (Cardiff)
Cllr R Goodway (Cardiff)
Cllr C Weaver (Cardiff)
Cllr P Lewis (Conwy)
Cllr J Thompson-Hill (Denbighshire)
Cllr M Perfect (Flintshire)
Cllr G Thomas (Gwynedd)
Cllr L Mytton (Merthyr Tydfil)

Cllr G Hopkins (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Cllr C Lloyd (Swansea)
Cllr M Thomas (Swansea)
Cllr N Moore (Vale of Glamorgan)
Cllr B Gray (Vale of Glamorgan)

Associate Members

Cllr M James (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority)
Cllr J Curtice, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Item 1 Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies noted as above.

Item 2 Minutes of the WLGA Meetings

Members received the minutes of the WLGA Council 27th September 2019 and the minutes of the WLGA Executive Board meeting held 25th October 2019.

Resolved that:

- 2.1 The minutes of the WLGA Council held 27th September 2019 be approved**
- 2.2 The minutes of the WLGA Executive Board meeting held 25th October 2019 be approved**

Item 3 Leader's Update

The WLGA's outgoing Leader Councillor Debbie Wilcox (the Baroness Wilcox of Newport) gave a valedictory address to Council and thanked members for the support during her leadership and said what a privilege and honour it was to represent local government, councillors and staff throughout the councils across Wales. She also thanked the officers and staff of the WLGA for their hard work and support and said that she felt that much had been achieved over the last two and a half years.

Councillor Wilcox mentioned that the Provisional Local Government Settlement, due to be announced in December, looked as though it would be very positive and possibly the best for a decade.

Councillor Wilcox recognised that although contentious, especially in relation to Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs), the Local Government and Elections Bill, meant that local government's arguments over local government reform had prevailed.

She also noted Welsh Government's that WG's restoration of the Improvement Grant and the investment in the WLGA's Digital Unit and creation of a Chief Digital Officer post were all welcome.

She stressed her commitment to advancing diversity and equality and called for zero tolerance of abuse and harassment of councilors. She called for leadership and the challenging of inappropriate behaviour within local government, noting that the WLGA was supportive of the LGA-led Civility campaign.

Despite 10 years of austerity Councillor Wilcox said she was proud of the incredible work local government does in supporting the people and communities of Wales.

Finally, she noted that relations between the WLGA/local government and WG had improved significantly in recent years.

The Leader once again thanked Council for the support during her leadership and said what a privilege and honour it was to represent local government, councillors and staff throughout the councils across Wales.

Item 4 Recognition of Leader and other Office Holder changes

The WLGA's constitution states that the leader of the largest political group becomes the Leader of the Association. The Labour Group is the largest political group and the Chair of the Group, Councillor Anthony Hunt, announced that Councillor Andrew Morgan, Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, had succeeded Councillor Debbie Wilcox as Leader of the Labour Group, and therefore Leader of the WLGA.

Councillor Morgan said he was proud to be the new Leader of the Association and would work with all parties reflecting all views to ensure the voice of local government is heard across Wales, especially by Welsh Government. He stressed that local government is always stronger when members lobby and work together. Cllr Moran acknowledged that Baroness Wilcox had raised the profile of local government and said he wanted to continue doing the same, particularly with the press and media, so everyone understands the role of local government and the important services councils are responsible for providing.

The change in WLGA leadership also resulted in other changes to WLGA office holders as below:

- WLGA Leader - Cllr. Andrew Morgan (Labour, Rhondda Cynon Taf)
- Presiding Officer – Cllr. Huw David (Labour, Bridgend)
- Deputy Presiding Officer – Cllr. Jane Mudd (Labour, Newport)
- Education Spokesperson – Cllr. Ian Roberts (Labour, Flintshire)
- Workforce Spokesperson – Cllr. Philippa Marsden (Labour, Caerphilly)
- Management Sub-committee - Cllrs. Jane Mudd and Philippa Marsden
- Partnership Council – Cllr. Jane Mudd (Labour, Newport)
- Finance Sub-Group – Cllr. Carol Clement-Williams (Labour, Neath Port Talbot)
- LGA Executive – Cllr. Rob Stewart (Labour, Swansea)

Resolved that:

- 4.1 Members acknowledged Councillor Andrew Morgan as the new Leader of the WLGA**
- 4.2 Members noted the Labour Group nominations for committee vacancies**
- 4.3 Members were appointed to the vacant Spokespersons roles and to the Senior Office holder vacancies**

Item 5 WLGA Financial Statements 2018/19

WLGA's auditors, Bevan Buckland LLP, gave an overview of the WLGA's audited accounts for 2018-19. They gave a clean audit opinion and stated they were a clear and true account. It was noted that the accounts had been looked at in depth by WLGA Audit Committee in October 2019.

Resolved that:

- 5.1 Members approved the WLGA Financial Statements 2018/19.**

Item 6 Welsh Government Draft Budget/Draft Local Government Settlement

Councillor Hunt thanked all members for their combined lobbying efforts over the last six months and said they were showing results.

He said that Welsh Government would publish its Draft Budget and Provisional Local Government Settlement Draft on 16th December and understood, informally, that the average settlement increase could be at least 3%.

Members welcomed what could be the best Local Government Settlement for over twelve years but remain cautious until publication in December. There was a discussion about the principle of applying a floor mechanism in the settlement within the historical range, as long as it was funded from outside the settlement. Members also said the range across the Settlement, from highest to lowest, is an important consideration

Resolved that:

- 6.1 Members noted the changes to the Welsh Government Budget timeline.**
- 6.2 Members offered comments in relation to operation of a floor.**
- 6.3 Members noted the ongoing work to reform local government finance in Wales.**
- 6.4 Members noted the concerns of the Finance Minister over the fair treatment of care leavers with council tax arrears.**

Item 7 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill

The Head of Policy gave a verbal overview of the recently published Bill (18th November) alongside the written report. He highlighted the broad nature of the Bill and its alignment with the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Bill. He also mentioned that the Bill was light on detail which would be covered in regulations. The constraints on Ministerial powers, included in Part 5 of the Bill, were also covered.

Members discussed the Bill and acknowledged there is much to welcome in the Bill. Members supported the proposals to extend the franchise to 16 and 17 year-olds and to improve performance and governance based on self-assessment and peer review. The proposal to give councils a General Power of Competence was also welcomed.

Members were concerned, given the far-reaching nature of the Bill, that some aspects would not get enough scrutiny as a result of the proposed passage of the Bill through the Senedd. Members were clear that any financial burden as a result of the Bill should not be borne by local government.

Members disagreed with the proposed reforms to allow councils to adopt different voting systems and that consistency was needed across all councils. Opinion was divided over the issue of Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). Some members were reassured to note that the term 'mandation' was not being used and the inclusion of the ability of councils to veto the adding of any further functions or services to CJCs. Membership of and sub-committees of CJCs continued to cause concern for some as was the issue of which footprint CJCs would work across. It was noted that the Minister has written to the WLGA seeking views from authorities on the footprints that CJCs might cover.

Given the varied views on the issue of CJCs, in an attempt to come to a WLGA position, a motion was proposed that the resolutions adopted by WLGA Council 27th of September and by WLGA Executive Board (25th October) be merged. The motion was voted on but not supported by WLGA Council.

A subsequent motion was proposed and approved:

"Whilst we welcome the new and revised approach to local government by the present Minister, the WLGA has fundamental concerns over the principle of mandation which is seen as undermining local democracy but will continue to engage and seek to co-produce the Corporate Joint Committee proposals."

Resolved:

- 7.1 Whilst we welcome the new and revised approach to local government by the present Minister, the WLGA has fundamental concerns over the principle of mandation which is seen as undermining local democracy but will continue to engage and seek to co-produce the Corporate Joint Committee proposals.**
- 7.2 Members agreed that member authorities will submit views to feed into the WLGA's evidence on the Bill and submit their own evidence to the Assembly's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee in due course.**

Item 8. Brexit Update

A Brexit Update is a standing item on the WLGA Council agenda but given the forthcoming UK General Election Councillor Stewart asked Members simply to note the report.

Resolved that:

8.2 Members agreed to note the report.

Item 9. Update on Pay Negotiations 2020/21

As these discussions are in abeyance until after the General Election in December Members were asked to note the report.

Resolved that:

9.1 Members agreed to note the report.

Item 10. Highways and Transport Update

Councillor Morgan updated Council on the latest situation regarding the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) - and the potential impact on local authority home to school transportation. Members noted that an exemption for a further two years will assist some, but not all, local authorities and the financial implications for authorities and schools.

Members were broadly supportive of working with Welsh Government on proposals for a 20mph default speed limit and to ban pavement parking but, particularly in relation to pavement parking, stressed the need for local discretion and for potential financial implications to be recognised.

Resolved that:

- 10.1 Members noted agreed there should be further engagement with the UK Department of Transport with regard to PSVAR and the impact on home to school transport.**
- 10.2 Members agreed to support, in principle, the proposals for a new 20mph default speed limit in residential areas.**
- 10.3 Members agreed to support, in principle, the proposal on pavement parking to add obstruction of the highway to the list of contraventions where civil parking enforcement (CPE) can be used.**

Item 11. Town Centre First Policy

Councillor Stewart reported that the initiative was a good step forward and would help Welsh Government. Local authorities and other bodies channel more money to town centres.

Members agreed with the positive nature of the policy but highlighted a number of caveats, including that sometimes the space businesses need is not available in town centres. Members added that local authorities need the flexibility to decide where money is spent locally.

Councillor Rowlands invited Members to come and see the work Conwy is doing to encourage town centre development.

Resolved that:

11.1 Members agreed to support the Town Centre First principle and for the WLGA to be a co-signatory.

Item 12. National Youth Arts Ensembles

Councillor Thomas said National Youth Arts Wales had approached the WLGA with the aim of securing an all-Wales agreement to provide funding for the National Youth Arts Ensemble and there were a number of questions for Members to consider.

The Chief Executive reported that Welsh Government were carrying out a feasibility study into the provision of music services. The findings from the study will be brought back to WLGA Council when available.

Resolved that:

12.1 Members agreed that the WLGA should approach authorities individually rather engage in a collective funding arrangement negotiated and funded annually by the WLGA

Item 13. Papers for information

Commission on Justice in Wales

Resolved that:

13.1 Members agreed to note the information report.

Item 14: Supporting Tourism

It was also announced that WG were about to announce a review of major events in Wales and that the WLGA had been asked to work closely with those undertaking the review.

Resolved that:

- 13.1 Members agreed to continue to engage with Welsh Government, Visit Wales and other tourism partners to discuss an enhancement of local government's role in tourism.**
- 13.2 Members agreed to consider the adverse impact of tourism, especially in relation to holiday homes.**

Annex B

MINUTES WLGA Audit Committee

Thursday 9th April 2020 – with all participants via Microsoft Teams due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Present:

Councillor Linda Evans (Carmarthenshire) – Chair
Councillor Rosemarie Harris (Powys)
Councillor Christopher Weaver (Cardiff)
Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill (Denbighshire)

WLGA Officers in Attendance:

Dr Chris Llewelyn, Chief Executive
Naomi Alleyne, Director Social Services & Housing
Jon Rae, Director of Resources
Daniel Hurford, Head of Policy
Graham Jones, Interim Head of Employment
Mari Thomas, Finance Policy Officer
Lee Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

Others Present:

Mr Harri Lloyd Davies – Partner, Bevan and Buckland LLP

Apologies:

Councillor Maureen Webber (Rhondda Cynon Taf) had problems connecting via the meeting link.

Item 1 Welcome and apologies for absence

1. Councillor Linda Evans welcomed everyone to the meeting of the WLGA Audit Committee.
2. Apologies for absence were recorded as above.

Item 2 Draft Minutes of WLGA Audit Committee 10th October 2019

3. Members received a copy of the Draft Minutes of the WLGA Audit Committee meeting held earlier in October 2019.

4. Resolved that:

- 4.1 The minutes of the WLGA Audit Committee meeting held 10th October 2019 were deemed as accurate.

4.2 Members noted paragraph 4.2 of the draft minutes relating to the Treasury Management Scheme is still outstanding as just as it was about to be done the markets crashed. Once the markets stabilise the funds will be transferred.

Item 3 WLGA External Auditors Planning Report

5. Members received an update on the external auditors' (Bevan and Buckland) proposed audit plan for the audit of the Welsh Local Government Association for the year ending 31 March 2020.
6. Harri Lloyd Davies (Bevan and Buckland) introduced the report and drew attention to page 4 and which noted that materiality (the targets within which they are accurate) has initially been set at £100,000 – as in previous years.
7. Attention was drawn to the *Areas of audit risk and focus* from page 8 onwards which were discussed. *Revenue Recognition* is high risk for the Association as it has a number of funding sources. *Management Override of Controls* while usually high is less of a concern for the WLGA as there is no staff incentive to commit fraud. *Pension liability* is a medium risk with the pension fund currently in surplus but there is no knowing the effect of the current pandemic which could result in a fund deficit with employers asked to make increased contributions. In relation to *Grant Debtors* it was suggested that they be paid the month due.
8. An additional risk not accounted for in the report is the recent coronavirus pandemic and the huge immediate impact it has had globally. This could not have been anticipated and it is difficult to know the medium and long term impact at this stage. The Association is exposed to some risk in relation to grant funded teams equating to £90k a month. A few big grants have been signed off but a small number have not.
9. Members acknowledged the uncertainty caused by the pandemic and asked whether the WLGA will be able to continue to support local authorities. The Chief Executive's expectation was that that would continue even it was on a reduced capacity.
10. In terms of audit planning, there may be more certainty when it comes to signing off the accounts.
11. The Director of Resources suggested that, due to the current pandemic, the Audit Committee Work Plan be slimmed down and a meeting of the committee take place over the summer to discuss.

12. Resolved that:

12.1 Members discussed and agreed the Auditors' Audit Planning and Interim Report.

Item 4 WLGA Strategic Risk Register

13. Members received a copy of the updated Strategic Risk Register with seven risks identified under key headings, the causes and effects, the level of risk attached to each and the further actions identified to address or ameliorate the risks.
14. A paper accompanied the Register giving an overview of the risks added and mitigation measures undertaken, planned or ongoing.
15. It was reported that, generally, there had not been much movement in the scoring of risks. The risk related to *Financial Stability* has been increased and decreased in relation to *Information Management* as a result of GDPR training and multi factor authentication. *Business Continuity* has been identified as a risk, particularly at the current time. Recruitment of a Head of Communications is likely to be affected and will impact on the strategic communication agenda.
16. It was acknowledged the current crisis and uncertainty – which is changing by the day - affects all risks. No assessment has been made of which will be most delayed, most are very important so difficult to decide which to delay or drop.
17. The WLGA Strategic Management Team reviews the register quarterly, the last time being March 13th. A key change reported has been in the ownership of individual risks. Previously Chris, as WLGA Chief Executive, took ownership of most of the risks but this has now been changed. A number of WLGA senior officers, in addition to Chris, have now been given responsibility for some of the risks on the register.

18. Resolved that:

- 18.1 Members received and noted the Strategic Risk Register**
- 18.2 Members requested an update of the Strategic Risk Register at the October 2020 meeting of the Audit Committee.**
- 18.3 Members agreed that the Strategic Risk Register should be reviewed by Strategic Management Team.**

Item 5 WLGA Business Continuity Plan

19. Members received a copy of the WLGA Corporate Overview Business Continuity Plan which is designed to enable the WLGA to identify the key actions required to reduce the impact and resolve any issues which would otherwise pose a significant risk to the key business operations in the event of a severe disruption. The aim is to ensure minimum disruption to members and maintain business flow.
20. The plan has been used for the current crisis now that there is a national lockdown and Local Government House has had to close. Staff have been able to work remotely from home and suppliers have been paid.

21. The Association is still very much in the response phase and not has an opportunity to reflect on how effectively plans and systems have worked but this time has essentially turned out to be a trial run of how the Association will potentially operate once the accommodation review is implemented.

22. Resolved that:

22.1 Members approved the WLGA's Business Continuity Plan

23. Any other business

24. The WLGA Budget – A paper went to the WLGA Management Sub-Committee at the end of February and was due to go to full WLGA Council at the end of March which had to be postponed due to the pandemic. The Budget was subsequently sent to all Council members and approved electronically. A 3% increase in subscriptions was agreed. It was positive to see the Association's constitutional obligations could be fulfilled electronically.

25. The LGA advised that a virtual Council could be held. This suggestion was discussed first with Group Leaders and then all Leaders agreed the approach for the budget approval.

26. The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and hoped that everyone would stay safe during these difficult times.