

22nd October 2021

MINUTES OF WLGA MEETINGS

Purpose

1. For WLGA Executive Board members to review the draft minutes of the WLGA meetings specified.

Background

2. The draft minutes of the meetings listed below, are appended in date order:
 - 2.1 WLGA Executive Board 24th September 2021

Recommendations

3. Members are asked to:

- 3.1 **Approve the draft minutes of the WLGA Executive Board held 24th September 2021**

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2.1 Draft Minutes WLGA Executive Board

WLGA Executive Board
Friday 24th September 2021
10:00 to 12:30 via Zoom



Present:

Chair: WLGA Presiding Officer, Cllr Huw David (Bridgend)

Blaenau Gwent – Cllr Nigel Daniels
Caerphilly – Cllr Philippa Marsden
Cardiff – Cllr Huw Thomas
Carmarthenshire – Cllr Emlyn Dole
Ceredigion – Cllr Ellen ap Gwynn
Conwy – Cllr Charlie McCoubrey
Denbighshire – Cllr Hugh Evans
Flintshire – Cllr Ian Roberts
Gwynedd – Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn
Isle of Anglesey – Cllr Llinos Medi
Merthyr Tydfil – Cllr Lisa Mytton
Monmouthshire – Cllr Richard John
Neath Port Talbot – Sub Cllr Leanne Jones
Newport – Cllr Jane Mudd
Pembrokeshire – Cllr David Simpson
Powys – Sub Cllr Myfanwy Alexander
Rhondda Cynon Taf – Cllr Andrew Morgan
Swansea – Cllr Rob Stewart
Torfaen – Cllr Anthony Hunt and Cllr Richard Clark
Vale of Glamorgan – Cllr Neil Moore
Wrexham – Cllr Mark Pritchard

Additional Members

Cllr Carol Clement-Williams, Deputy Finance Spokesperson (Neath Port Talbot)

Apologies

Neath Port Talbot – Cllr Edward Latham
Powys – Cllr Rosemarie Harris
Brecon Beacons National Park – Cllr Gareth Ratcliffe (Associate Member)

WLGA Officers in attendance:

Dr Chris Llewelyn, Chief Executive
Naomi Alleyne, Director of Social Services & Housing
Jon Rae, Director of Resources
Tim Peppin, Director of Regeneration & Sustainable Development
Daniel Hurford, Head of Policy Improvement & Governance
Sharon Davies, Head of Education
Jonathan Lloyd, Head of Employment
Simon Wilkinson, Regulatory & Frontline Services Policy Officer
Lee Pitt, Democratic Services Officer
Emily Griffiths, Senior Support Officer

10:00

Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance & Local Government

Item 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

1. The Deputy Presiding Officer welcomed Leaders to the meeting and the apologies for absence were accepted and recorded as above.

Item 2. Minutes of WLGA Meetings

2. Members reviewed the draft minutes of the:

- 2.1 WLGA Executive Board 16th July 2021
- 2.2 WLGA Management Sub-Committee 20th August 2021

3. **Resolved that:**

- 3.1 **Members approved the draft minutes of the WLGA Executive Board 16th July 2021**
- 3.2 **Members noted the draft minutes of the WLGA Management Sub-Committee 20th August 2021**

Item 3. WLGA Leader's Update

4. The Leader noted that he and Cllr Huw David have been meeting with Welsh Government Ministers and officials and continue to make the case for additional social care funding. The Leader noted that Ministers are receptive to further funding and that officials are drafting options to be considered.

Item 4. Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

5. The Director for Social Services & Housing, Naomi Alleyne introduced the report to update members on commitments made and arrivals completed under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) in Wales to date, and to provide information on the announcement on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), including the support package available to support resettlement and integration. The Report also updated members on other pressures currently being experienced in the area or immigration and asylum where the active involvement of local authorities is requested.
6. It was noted that it is a fast-moving situation and numbers were accurate at the time the report was written. It was reported that the UK Government has increased the funding package to support Afghan arrivals under Operation Warm Welcome and that although all 22 councils in Wales have offered support with accommodation, the UK Government are asking local authorities to consider making further pledges and the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership team are continuing to support authorities.

7. Members reported that the Home Office had been bypassing authorities and approaching hotel operators directly to accommodate asylum seekers and not taking account of where premises are located and the potential wider community cohesion impacts.
8. Members were clear that communities are wanting to help with supporting asylum-seekers but some towns are very small which presents issues of scale and asked for flexibility. Members also asked that contact numbers for support be shared with authorities to ensure the process runs as smoothly as possible.
9. **Resolved that:**

- 9.1 Members noted the contents of the report**
- 9.2 Members agreed that a letter be sent from the WLGA to the Home Office requesting that the Home Office works constructively with local authorities to support asylum seekers, particularly in relation to the procurement of hotels.**

Item 5. The Spending Review and the Local Government Finance Settlement 2022-23

10. Cllr Carol Clement-Williams, the Deputy Spokesperson for Finance and Jon Rae, Director of Resources presented the paper. An error in the table of meetings was noted - the Joint COSLA, NILGA, LGA and WLGA Finance Event is the 12th of November and not the 12th of October.
11. Jon noted the focus is currently on the Welsh Government budget and a survey of financial pressures is currently with Treasurers and findings will be shared with Leaders at a future Executive Board meeting. Jon also reported the WLGA are programming in a number of regional finance seminars for Senedd members in the coming months.
12. Jon noted that the report contains an overview of the recent UK Government health and social care announcement and highlighted the consequential for Wales as key.
13. Jon noted that Cllr Hunt had attended a meeting of the 'Tax Engagement Group' and highlighted the consultation on a local tourism levy and the current consultation on local taxes for second homes.
14. Members also recalled that it was previously suggested that the WLGA should convene its own finance forum with membership drawn from FSG. Furthermore, it was mentioned that there should be representation from rural areas on the 'Tax Engagement Group'.

15. Cllr Morgan asked for the WLGA to reaffirm its position and mentioned if there are cuts in spending to UK Government departments as a result of the Spending Review, funding could be taken back from the Welsh Government. Members felt it important that the UK Government made it clear that the £700m announced for Wales be new money and end up as a cash consequential or the Welsh Government Budget. £150m of the £700m could go overnight in additional National Insurance employers' contributions – for local government it comes to £50m for health close to a £100m in addition to the other bodies Welsh Government funds (e.g. PHW, NRW). He also said that authorities had to evidence their ask, stake a strong claim and speak with one voice with regard to social care. It was noted that the WLGA should still be lobbying hard around dealing with legacy coal tips. The Leader noted that money should not be taken from Welsh schools and hospitals to deal with the issue of legacy coal tips. Forty percent of legacy coal tips are in Wales and the Barnett formula only results in five percent of funding. Cllr Morgan requested that a letter be sent to the UK Government regarding the issue.

16. **Resolved that:**

- 16.1 Members noted the content of the report**
- 16.2 Members agreed that a meeting of WLGA Finance Forum should take place prior to the main FSG meeting**
- 16.3 Members agreed that a letter be sent from the WLGA to the UK Government asking that long term funding be made available to make Wales' coal tips safe**

Item 6. Corporate Joint Committees Update

17. Daniel Hurford, Head of Policy Improvement & Governance presented the report updating members on the latest developments regarding the establishment of corporate joint committees.

18. Members welcomed the funding for the first year to establish the committees and recalled that the Welsh Government had said that CJs would not be a cost for authorities. Members were again clear that local authority resources should be used on local services and not to fund the ongoing burden of CJs.

19. **Resolved that:**

- 19.1 Members noted the content of the report**

Item 7. Protocol for National Park Authority Nominations

20. Cllr Morgan, Spokesperson for Transport, Environment and Climate Change and the Leader of the WLGA, moved the motion to endorse the updated protocol to govern nomination of Members onto National Park Authorities (NPAs) which was seconded and agreed by Leaders.

21. **Resolved that:**

21.1 Members approved the updated protocol and agreed to adhere to the contents.

Item 8. Electoral Reform

22. Daniel Hurford, Head of Policy Improvement & Governance, presented the report to update members on a range of electoral reform matters and seek views on consultations relating to Local Elections Rules (in Wales) and the UK Elections Bill

23. It was noted that proposed reforms would mean that candidates' personal statements at next year's local elections would need to be made available on council websites. Local authority officers have significant administrative concerns and feel there are organisational and personal risks with these proposals. It was proposed that these reforms should be postponed or revised to remove the expected duties on local authorities and that the Welsh Government commissions a separate national website, with self-loading responsibilities for candidates with national management, such as the model for Police and Crime Commissioner Elections, where website arrangements are provided by the UK Government. Members endorsed the concerns of officers and were concerned about the risks to authorities during the heightened political sensitivity of elections.

24. It was proposed that the WLGA supports the views of electoral administrators and that the Welsh Government reconsiders these proposals and reflects on the concerns and alternative proposals for hosting candidates' statements online.

25. **Resolved that:**

25.1 Members noted the updates on Electoral Reviews, Electoral Pilots and Parliamentary Review;
25.2 Members agreed that the WLGA responds to the Welsh Government's Local Elections Rules consultation supporting the responses of local authority electoral

administrators and focusing on Nomination Papers (paragraphs 21-25), Statement of Party Membership (paragraphs 26-30), and Candidates' Personal Statements (paragraphs 31-39); and

25.3 Members considered and endorsed the Welsh Government's position (as per paragraphs 46-47 and Appendix 1 of the report) in response to the UK Elections Bill.

Item 9. Public Protection Pressures

26. The Chief Executive presented the paper to update members on the continued service pressures faced by Public Protection Services as the recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic gets underway. He reflected that the paper provides opportunity to discuss an area of service Leaders have particular concerns about. It was noted that the service is one that has been underfunded for a number of years. Chris reported that officers are working on the ground and there needs to be recognition and strategic direction from Welsh Government on what services need to be the priority and a focus for authorities along with flexibility for enforcement activity.

27. Members were clear that the responsibility for statutory services is with local government, and they are accountable for any failings which is high risk for authorities and the Welsh Government needs to be clear about where work should be focused. It was also noted that Port Health Authorities are being set up in both Anglesey and Pembrokeshire which will also draw away council staff. Members mentioned that authorities are currently relying heavily on temporary staff who need to know if funding will continue for their posts after March 2022.

28. **Resolved that:**

28.1 Members noted the content of the report

28.2 Members agreed that the WLGA should write to the Welsh Government with their concerns to be followed up by an evidenced business case in support

Item 10. Emergency Management: Reflections from the pandemic and future demands

29. The Chief Executive presented the report to update members on the role of local governments civil contingencies / emergency management services during the pandemic; and to consider a report from the Local Government Civil Contingencies Managers Group (appended to the paper).

30. He noted that Covid-19 has highlighted that the current Civil Contingencies Act is ineffective in dealing with a global pandemic and bypasses local political structures. It was reported that the Welsh Government are reviewing the Act and that WLGA need to be part of the process. He reported that there is no capacity in the system and demands are continuing.

31. **Resolved that:**

31.1 Members noted the content of the report

Item 11. Local Government Digital Strategy

32. Cllr Jane Mudd, WLGA Spokesperson for Digital & Innovation, introduced the report, an update on the Local Government Digital Strategy and the work of the Local Government Chief Digital Officer and team.

33. Sam Hall, the Chief Digital Officer, noted that the team is ready and willing to work with councils to provide digital support.

34. A concern that health and social care is together was raised and that capacity and resources should not be lost to health.

35. **Resolved that:**

35.1 Members noted the content of the report;

35.2 Members approved the draft Local Government Digital Strategy.

Item 12. Welsh Language Standards 2020-2021 Annual Report

36. Cllr Ellen ap Gwynn, WLGA Welsh Language Spokesperson introduced the report noting that the Welsh language standards in the WLGA have been retained. Cllr ap Gwynn was pleased to report that the number of WLGA staff who are fluent Welsh speakers is increasing.

37. **Resolved that:**

37.1 Members endorsed the WLGA Welsh Language Standards 2020-2021 Annual Report for publication

Item 13. PRIVATE: WLGA and Welsh Government Cabinet meeting 6th October

12:30 The Presiding Officer closed the meeting.