

WLGA Council

Draft Minutes

26 November 2021

Via Zoom

PRESENT:

Cllr Nigel Daniels (Blaenau Gwent)
Cllr Dai Davies (Blaenau Gwent)
Cllr Huw David (Bridgend)
Cllr Hywel Williams (Bridgend)
Cllr Phillipa Marsden (Caerphilly)
Cllr Nigel George (Caerphilly)
Cllr Emllyn Dole (Carmarthenshire)
Cllr Linda Evans (Carmarthenshire)
Cllr David M Jenkins (Carmarthenshire)

Cllr Sarah Merry (Cardiff)
Cllr Susan Elsmore (Cardiff)
Cllr Russell Goodway (Cardiff)
Cllr Ellen ap Gwynn (Ceredigion)
Cllr Ray Quant MBE (Ceredigion)
Cllr Charlie McCoubrey (Conwy)
Cllr Goronwy Edwards (Conwy)
Cllr Hugh Evans OBE (Denbighshire)
Cllr Christine Jones (Flintshire)
Cllr Billy Mullin (Flintshire)
Cllr Nia Jeffreys (Gwynedd) - **Sub**
Cllr Dilwyn Morgan (Gwynedd) – **Sub**
Cllr Llinos Medi (Isle of Anglesey)
Cllr Ieuan Williams (Isle of Anglesey)
Cllr Lisa Mytton (Merthyr Tydfil)
Cllr Richard John (Monmouthshire)
Cllr Sara Jones (Monmouthshire)
Cllr Edward Latham (Neath Port Talbot)
Cllr Leanne Jones (Neath Port Talbot)
Cllr Carol Clement-Williams (Neath Port Talbot)
Cllr Jane Mudd (Newport)
Cllr Roger Jeavons (Newport)
Cllr Mark Spencer (Newport)

Cllr David Simpson (Pembrokeshire)
Cllr Neil Prior (Pembrokeshire)
Cllr Paul Miller (Pembrokeshire)
Cllr Rosemarie Harris (Powys)
Cllr Aled Davies (Powys)
Cllr Andrew Morgan (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Cllr Robert Bevan (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Cllr Rhys Lewis (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Cllr Maureen Webber (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Cllr Rob Stewart (Swansea)
Cllr Andrea Lewis (Swansea)
Cllr Louise Gibbard (Swansea)
Cllr Anthony Hunt (Torfaen)
Cllr Richard Clark (Torfaen)
Cllr Neil Moore (Vale of Glamorgan)
Cllr Lis Burnett (Vale of Glamorgan)
Cllr Mark Pritchard (Wrexham)
Cllr David A Bithell Wrexham)

Apologies

Cllr Eluned Stenner (Caerphilly)
Cllr Huw Thomas (Cardiff)
Cllr Lynda Thorne (Cardiff)
Cllr Nigel Smith (Conwy)
Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill (Denbighshire)
Cllr Ian Roberts (Flintshire)
Cllr Michelle Perfect (Flintshire)
Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn (Gwynedd)
Cllr Dafydd Meurig (Gwynedd)

Cllr Gareth Thomas (Gwynedd)
Cllr Rachel Powell (Powys)

Item 1: Welcome, apologies for absence and International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women

1. Apologies were given as detailed above.
2. Cllr Mudd, WLGA Equalities, Anti-Poverty and Migration Spokesperson, reminded members that yesterday (25th November) was International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women, also known as White Ribbon Day, which started 16 days of action to raise awareness of and address violence against women. Several councils are taking action and colleagues across Gwent are undertaking the #30Challenge to raise awareness of the 30 children every day in Gwent that are affected by incidents of domestic abuse at home where the police are called.
3. Cllr Mudd reported meeting with Equality Cabinet Members met on Tuesday to make the White Ribbon pledge and noted it is important that WLGA Council do so too. She asked that everyone turn on their cameras to take a screen shot for twitter so that collectively members can make the White Ribbon **Promise to never commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women.**

Item 2: Minutes of WLGA Meetings

4. **Resolved that:**
 - 2.1 **Members approved the draft minutes of the WLGA Council AGM, 24th June 2021;**
 - 2.2 **Members noted the draft minutes of the WLGA Audit Committee, 7th October 2021; and**
 - 2.3 **Member noted the draft minutes of the WLGA Executive Board, 22nd October 2021.**

Item 3: WLGA Leader's Update

5. Cllr Morgan, WLGA Leader, reported that discussions with the Welsh Government regarding the forthcoming draft budget and local government were positive especially in relation to social care pressures faced by authorities being recognised by the Welsh Government. He reported that senior WLGA office holders and spokespersons meet weekly with Welsh Government Ministers to discuss social care and it was noted there is agreement on the scale of the pressures. Cllr Morgan noted that years two and three of the Comprehensive Spending review show reduced funding for the Welsh Government which could be challenging for authorities and there will be global/generalised figures for those years when the draft budget is published. Cllr Morgan thanked Cllrs David and Hunt for all their work and in lobbying on behalf of authorities during budget discussions.

Item 4: WLGA Draft Financial Statements 2020-21

6. The Director of Resources, Jon Rae, introduced the report and indicate the Statements reflect an unusual year with income doubling largely as a result of an increase in Welsh Government grants (detailed in the report. Cllr Pritchard had a query regarding the presentation of the accounts which Jon will speak to him separately about.
7. The Chief Executive drew members attention to the Review of Business in the Strategic report and agreed with Cllr Siencyn's comment to Partnership Council earlier in the week, that local government's response to the pandemic has been 'heroic' and Chris noted agreed with the statement. Chris mentioned the reports cover the first twelve months of the pandemic. Chris emphasised that the WLGA always aims to support and add value to the work of local authorities. He noted that a big part of what the Association does includes negotiating the local government settlement and shaping government policy and legislation. Supporting authorities to improve services was also highlighted as function of the WLGA. He also noted that the WLGA has moved premises and has introduced an Agile working policy this year and mentioned the forthcoming elections in May 2022 could bring some turbulence.
8. **Resolved that:**
 - 8.1 **Members approved the WLGA Strategic Report, Report of the Chief Executive and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021; and**
 - 8.2 **Members approved the Consolidated Statement of Accounts for the WLGA and Data Cymru for the year ended 31 March 2021.**

Item 5: Welsh Government Draft Budget & Draft Local Government Settlement

9. Cllr Hunt, Finance Spokesperson, introduced the report which gives an update to the autumn finance timetable and reported the lobbying work that is going on in support of local authorities' position and the mounting pressures they face. He noted pressures in terms of social care, pay, NI increase, free school meals and that multi year settlements continue to be a key ask for local government. Cllr Hunt thanked members for their work locally in lobbying Senedd members in making the case for additional resources for local authorities to deliver vital services to communities. He noted that the Minister for Finance and Local Government recognises that local government is a priority - along with the health - and the importance of an effective social care system to the health service.
10. Jon noted the Regional Finance Senedd Engagements events being held by the WLGA. He mentioned the meeting early December with the Minister for Finance and Local Government, Leaders and Finance cabinet members to discuss council tax reform and highlighted the issue is included in the recent Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru.
11. **Resolved that:**

11.1 Members noted the contents of the report.

Item 6: Update on delivery of the UK Government Afghan Citizens Relocation Schemes

12. Naomi Alleyne, Director of Social Services and Housing, noted the report is an update for members and made clear these schemes offer a legal route for entry into the UK.
13. Members reported that the Home Office continues to bypass authorities when trying to place asylum seekers and refugees and asked that the WLGA communicate to the Home Office the importance of engaging and working in partnership with authorities to provide the necessary support and help needed. It was also reported that the Home Office is directly securing provision for refugees and asylum seekers in some facilities which is resulting in those currently there being made homeless. The letter that authorities have received requiring them to take one unaccompanied asylum seeker children was noted and the lack of foster carers for local children already in the system was highlighted.
14. Cllr Elsmore, Deputy Spokesperson-Equalities, Anti-Poverty and Migration, noted that the increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees will result in difficult times and authorities will be required to support in a way that has not happen in Wales before and asked that authorities work together and consensually in response. The lack of capacity in the Home Office was noted. Cllr Elsmore also asked that if authorities were aware of large properties that could be utilised for this purpose, they contact the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership.
15. Resolved that:
 - 15.1 Members noted and commented on the content of the update;**
 - 15.2 Members agreed to encourage their councils to continue to support the ARAP scheme and make efforts to identify suitable properties, and in particular larger properties to offer to the scheme; and**
 - 15.3 For those councils who have not yet decided on participation in ACRS, to seek to ensure that their councils consider participation, and if agreed/supported, outline pledges and inform WSMP of the number of families over each year of the five-year scheme that could be accommodated to help with planning on a Wales wide basis.**

Item 7: Social Care Pressures, Priorities and Key Messages

16. Cllr David, Health and Social Care spokesperson, noted now is the time to consider national terms and conditions to raise the status and attract people into the profession. He was clear social care is a profession and should be treated the same as other professions. He reported that a letter had been sent to the Welsh Government from Cllr David (as WLGA spokesperson) and all cabinet members, the Leader and Finance spokesperson outlining the current fragile position of social care.

17. Resolved that:

- 17.1 Members noted and commented on the contents of the paper;**
- 17.2 Members supported and endorsed the key messages developed: and**
- 17.3 Members considered additional key messages and asks that should be included.**

Item 8: Managing Environmental and Economic Challenges

18. Tim Peppin, Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development, referenced the recent letter to authorities in relation to TAN 15. He noted the report highlights issues that require high level arrangements and co-production to negotiate and navigate with the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales – not just a period of consultation.

19. Members noted while the deferral of TAN 15 is helpful, authorities need to make the most of the opportunity to allow work on flood consequences and the challenge of phosphates, particularly to rural communities, and nitrates also needs to be considered. It was noted that planning officers will be compelled to follow the Technical Advice Note when considering any planning application, so it is important to spend time getting it right. Members noted the importance of working together with one voice on this and other issues.

20. Resolved that:

- 20.1 Members commented on the issues raised in the report and indicate if they feel the idea of having more formalised arrangements for working jointly on these sorts of ‘wicked issues’ is worthy of further investigation.**

Item 9: COP 26, COP Cymru and Decarbonisation

21. The Leader reminded members that the WLGA made a decision to not attend COP, in line with the LGA.

22. Resolved that:

- 22.1 Members noted the report to Partnership Council and commented on the next steps, to feed into and inform forward planning.**

Item 10: Diversity in Democracy Update

23. Cllr Mudd drew attention to paragraphs 13, 14 and 15 which cover the safety of elected representatives. Cllr Mudd highlighted there had been some inconsistency and disparity in support from the police for members and it has to be remembered members as those closest to the community. The need for a separate meeting with Leaders and Chief Constables to highlight concerns maybe an option. Cllr Mudd reported that new legislation in May will mean that Group Leaders will become accountable for the conduct of their members and with that in mind suggested the WLGA considers a Fair Campaign pledge. Cllr Mudd highlighted the links in paper the promoting political engagement and local democracy and encouraged members to take a look at them.
24. Members were supportive of the update and the need for a meeting with Chief Constables on the issue of personal safety, especially in the run up to local elections in May would be helpful. A Fair Campaign pledge in terms of civility in public life was also supported and the need to call out abuse as necessary. Members suggested greater awareness and emphasis should be made in relation to Independent members. The abuse members face can deter people for putting themselves up for the role was noted.
25. Members also noted that councillors need to be appropriately remunerated for the work they do, and the issue should be addressed as a priority to attract more diverse candidates to the role and shouldn't be the preserve of the well off. It was noted that the assumption the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) makes that backbench councillors work three days a week is disrespectful as most do considerably more than that. The Presiding Officer noted the meetings Leaders had with the IRP when they were preparing their report and recommendations and the full and frank conversations that were had.
26. Candidates Declaration forms were also highlighted as a safety concern as they continue to include the home address of candidates.
27. **Resolved that:**
- 27.1 **Members noted the local and national progress in delivering the Diversity in Democracy programme;**
 - 27.2 **Members agreed to encourage the continued sharing of good practice and resources between councils;**
 - 27.3 **Members agreed that councils review their online 'standing for election' or 'Be A Councillor' resources to ensure they are prominent and easily accessible via website homepages and link to WLGA Be A Councillor resources;**
 - 27.4 **Members commented on the Independent Remuneration's Draft Annual Report;**
 - 27.5 **Members agreed there should be meeting of all Leaders and the four Chief Constables before Christmas to discuss concerns about councillors' personal safety; and**

- 27.6 Members agreed that the WLGA consider developing a 'Fair Campaigns' Pledge for local consideration to outline a clear public statement about expectations about respect and tone of political debate in the elections period.**

Item 11: WLGA Constitution Update

28. Resolved that:

- 28.1 Members noted that a wider review of the WLGA governance arrangements and Constitution will commence and report to the WLGA Council in 2022; and**
- 28.2 Members approved the proposed minor alterations to the Constitution (as per Annex A of the report).**

Item 12: Announcement on the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children

- 29. Members noted that additional funding from the UK and/or Welsh Government is needed by authorities to provide the care and support needed and especially for those with complex needs. The need for appropriate secure bed provision in Wales (North and South) was noted.**

30. Resolved that:

- 30.1 Members noted and commented on the content of the report;**
- 30.2 Members acknowledged the work of authorities to successfully transfer 27 UASC to Wales since the launch of the NTS in July 2021;**
- 30.3 Members support the continuation of discussions to consider, and as appropriate develop a collaborative approach to ensuring Wales meets the allocated number of transfers required under the Scheme but in a way appropriate to Welsh circumstances, while recognising individual responsibilities remain until such a model is agreed; and**
- 30.4 Members agreed to share copies of any representations made to the Secretary of State with WLGA officers to enable a national overview to be maintained.**

Item 13: The Co-operation Agreement Update

- 31. The Chief Executive noted that the WLGA will follow up the financial implications of the co-operation Agreement with Welsh Government**

32. Resolved that:

32.1 Members noted the update; and

32.2 WLGA to follow-up the financial implications for local authorities of the Co-operation Agreement with the Welsh Government.

Item 14: Update on the Proposed Establishment of a Subsidiary Company of the WLGA

33. The Chief executive introduced the report and noted the matter had previously been considered by Group Leaders, the WLGA Executive Board and WLGA Management Sub-Committee and wanted to make sure the proposal was also brought to full Council. A subsidiary company would allow the WLGA to undertake specific projects including hosting the Joint Inspection Team. The team will support local authorities in conducting full, comprehensive expert Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessments and report their findings and recommendations to the requesting local authority.

34. Resolved that:

34.1 Members noted and commented on the update; and

34.2 Members noted a further update on progress is to be provided to the Management Sub-Committee in December, including detail on practical operation of such a company, including proposed Articles and details of operation.

Item 15: Any Other Business

35. The Chief Executive reported to members there will be a meeting with the Leader, Spokespersons and Ministers next week to look delayed transfers from hospital and in advance of that he has written to Chief Executives to get a Wales wide picture.

36. Members were clear that a comparison needs to be made and/or account taking of the position two years ago as delayed transfers of care are not new. It was noted that while this is an issue for the NHS, it faces more complex and long-standing challenge and pressures than delayed transfers of care.

12:30: Meeting Close

The Presiding Officer thanked members for their attendance.