

Minutes

WLGA Executive Board

28th January 2022

Via Zoom

PRESENT:

WLGA Presiding Officer, Cllr Huw David (Bridgend)
Cllr Andrew Morgan (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Cllr Anthony Hunt (Torfaen)
Cllr David Simpson (Pembrokeshire)
Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn (Gwynedd)
Cllr Emlyn Dole (Carmarthenshire)
Cllr Hugh Evans (Denbighshire)
Cllr Huw Thomas (Cardiff)
Cllr Ian Roberts (Flintshire)
Cllr Jane Mudd (Newport)
Cllr Lisa Mytton (Merthyr Tydfil)
Cllr Llinos Medi (Ynys Mon)
Cllr Mark Pritchard (Wrexham)
Cllr Neil Moore (Vale of Glamorgan)
Cllr Philippa Marsden (Caerphilly)
Cllr Rosemarie Harris (Powys)
Cllr Charlie McCoubrey (Conwy)
Cllr Ellen ap Gwynn (Ceredigion)

APOLOGIES: Cllr Richard John, Monmouthshire
Cllr Ted Latham, Neath Port Talbot

SUBSTITUTES: Cllr Leanne Jones, Neath Port Talbot

ALSO PRESENT: Chris Llewelyn, Naomi Alleyne, Jon Rae, Tim Peppin, Daniel Hurford, Sharon Davies, Karen Higgins, Emma Thomas, Jo Hendy, Simon Wilkinson, Lee Pitt, Lucy Sweet, Nathan Gardner, Nathan Swain, Nerys Hurford (interpreter)

IN ATTENDANCE: Ceri Reeves

Item 1: Welcome and Apologies

1. The Presiding Officer paid tribute to Cllr Mair Stephens, WLGA Council member and Deputy Leader of Carmarthenshire council who sadly passed away on Sunday 9th January. He noted that Mair will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by

friends and colleagues within the WLGA and across local government in Wales and of course by Cllr Dole and colleagues in Carmarthenshire.

2. The Presiding Officer noted that yesterday, Thursday 27th January, was Holocaust Memorial Day when the lives lost during the Holocaust are remembered and Councils across Wales marked the day, remembered the victims of genocide and took a stand against prejudice and hatred.
3. The Presiding Officer congratulated Cllr Moore on being awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours, for services to the community in the Vale of Glamorgan and noted the honour was well deserved.
4. Cllr ap Gwynn congratulated Urdd Gobaith Cymru on its Centenary and reported she has represented the WLGA during those celebrations. It was noted that as part of the celebrations two Guinness World records were set. The Presiding Officer noted that the importance of the organisation to Welsh culture and children in Wales and that the WLGA has always supported its work.
5. Apologies were noted as above.

Item 2: WLGA Leader's Update

6. The Leader paid tribute to Cllr Mair Stephen and put on record his sincere condolences to her family, friends and colleagues in Carmarthenshire – particularly Cllr Dole.
7. Cllr Morgan updated members on recent finance discussions with the Welsh Government around end of year flexibilities which were positive and that the WLGA has asked for a general capital allocation which Welsh Government had agreed and is likely to be about £70m. He noted discussion were ongoing in relation to funding to cover authorities' shortfall in council tax collection due to the pandemic. The £10m social services funding for adaptation was noted.
8. The Leader reported that Cllr Stewart is in ongoing discussions with the Economy Minister around underspends of Business Support funding. Mechanisms are being considered that will allow money to be passed to authorities to provide businesses with support in the forthcoming year.
9. Cllr Morgan noted further funding, in terms of consequentials, maybe coming to Wales as a result of recent UK Government spending announcements. If the UK Government does not give the Welsh Government permission to carry the funding into 2022-23 then it is likely the Minister for Finance and Local Government will request an urgent meeting with the WLGA to consider how best to allocate the additional resources.
10. The Leader highlighted to members that everything local government has lobbied for in terms of funding for social care, capital and council tax has been agreed by the Welsh Government and noted that further funding may come before the end of the financial year and that authorities would welcome that too. Once approved, the

Minister will provide Leaders with full details of the additional funding the Welsh Government intends to make available to local authorities for 2021-22.

11. Cllr Morgan mentioned the forthcoming public inquiry into the Covid-19 pandemic and confirmed he believes there should be discussion about this prior to the elections.
12. Resolved: Jon Rae or Chris Llewelyn to write out to Leaders once the position around WG funding is confirmed.
13. Resolved: WLGA to arrange discussions regarding the Covid-19 public enquiry before the local elections

Item 3: Welsh Government Draft Budget & Draft Local Government Settlement Update

14. Cllr Hunt noted that he had given evidence to two Senedd Committees recently to say it is a good settlement, but stressing it is one which reflects the huge pressures we have been under.
15. Cllr Marsden confirmed that whilst the settlement is great, we need to keep lines of communication open to discuss wage inflation, noting it is crucial we all understand the issues that will be affecting all authorities in the future whilst being appreciative of the settlement we have got.
16. The Leader added that we haven't got over last year's pay issues yet adding that next year, a high pay settlement poses risks. With inflation running at 5.2% there will be a lot of pressure for a high pay deal. He also stressed that WG don't have much in the way of reserves. The Leader additionally commented that we have very little say on the teachers pay and the other Trade Unions will undoubtedly be guided by the teachers award.

17. Resolved:

17:1 Members noted the contents of the report; and

17:2 Members agreed the WLGA's response to the Provisional Settlement should be in line with paragraph 4 of the report.

Item 4: Public Protection Pressures

18. Chris Llewelyn introduced the paper, noting this report follows from one taken to Executive Board in September. He stated we're all aware of the pressure Covid has put on public protection services, having suffered cuts during the period of austerity and their capacity has been stretched with Covid, balancing food hygiene, food standards et cetera along with covid issues which has presented challenges in the priority of their work. He confirmed the WLGA have been looking at the resources we put into this area of work as both ourselves and the WG recognise this is

stretched in the short term and we need to look at planning and training opportunities to expand the capacity of public protection to bring an element of resilience into the service. This this report aims to form a part of that longer term discussion.

19. Simon Wilkinson drew attention to the fact the paper introduces a report from the directors of public protection in Wales and presents a case for the discussion around increased investment. He stated Leaders have heard about the risks to public health – food standards food safety, etc, with there being a backlog of business as usual work. He highlighted that Paragraph 10 contains the key issues DPPW would want to draw Leaders’ attention to and the financial implications to undertake the recommendations in Paragraph 11 are found in paragraphs 12-15.
20. Cllr Dole welcomed the report and all that is included, but felt the wording should be stronger in paragraphs 17.2 and 17.3, believing it should not be “to consider”, but rather “we do”.
21. Cllr Medi states that in terms of Pembrokeshire and Anglesey, she would like it referenced to the port authority and wants it recognised that the situation is more difficult in those two authorities.
22. Cllr Huw David expressed the view there should be a recognition we need to work with our higher education partners to ensure the pathway exists. He also wanted to place on record his gratitude to Simon and all the Public Protection colleagues who have been exemplary throughout this pandemic.

23. Resolved:

- 23:1 Members agreed to note the content of the report and the report from the Directors of Public Protection Wales and made recommendations accordingly;**
- 23:2 Members agreed the WLGA should write to the Minister outlining the challenges and issues facing Public Protection Services in Wales and provide a copy of the DPPW report as supporting evidence;**
- 23:3 Members agreed the WLGA should seek a meeting with Welsh Government to discuss the future of Public Protection Services in Wales; and**
- 23:4 Members agreed that the WLGA should work with the Welsh Government to secure long term investment into Public Protection Services.**

Item 5: Wales Safer Communities Network Update

24. Cllr Mudd reminded colleagues The Safer Communities Network was formally established in January 2021, being established because there was initial funding from Welsh Government but with an expectation over time the network would

become self-funding. She stated what the network is looking to do is deliver support and building a sustainable approach to partnership working. She noted one of the challenges we face is how to develop a sustainable funding model and that the paper presents some approaches which we would invite comment on. She confirmed the favoured approach is a tiered model.

25. Naomi Alleyne confirmed that we won't just be asking LAs and the police, but also membership for others in the criminal justice world.

26. Cllr Dole queried being only 8 weeks away from the pre-election period, whether this is a report that should be considered now, or one that lends itself better to the new authorities and the WLGA when re-established in May.

27. Naomi Alleyne confirmed that membership would be optional and a decision for each authority, adding we are looking at the risks of sustainability and there are risks around the membership. She stated we would like to see WG continue to contribute towards it and are there more or less for the budget next year but it's about the sustainability and the budget going forward thereafter.

28. Resolved:

28:1 Members noted and commented on the content of the report, including the progress made by the Safer Communities Network since its establishment;

28:2 Members considered the Membership model and provided views on the proposed 3 tier model set out; and

28:3 Members agreed to ensure consideration of the invitation to join the membership of the Network when received by each authority.

Item 6: Updated Memorandum of Understanding with Natural Resources Wales

29. Members raised a number of points and reservations in relation to the draft Memorandum and consequently agreed to defer the report. They called for direct engagement between Leaders and NRW and a stronger regional dimension to be included as part of the MoU. The current focus was considered to be weighted too heavily towards national-level WLGA-NRW engagement. Leaders also asked for the indicative list of protocols to be developed beneath the MoU to be extended to include, for example, phosphates/nutrient management and marine licensing. Officers were asked to arrange a workshop at an appropriate time to enable Leaders to talk these proposed changes/additions through with NRW and to build relations.

30. Resolved:

30:1 Members agreed to defer approving the Memorandum of Understanding in its current form.

- 30:2 Members agreed there should be a workshop with Leaders to consider the Memorandum of Understanding in detail.**

Item 7: Civility in Public Life – Fair Campaign Local Elections Pledge

31. Cllr Mudd confirmed the guide on handling intimidation and the social media guide are being updated and will be available post elections in May but stated in the interim it was important we come together to work towards a fair campaign pledge.

32. A number of Members relayed experiences of abuse and vitriol, leading to them boycotting social media as it often became poisonous. Members were united that the pledge should both be signed up to and promoted, alongside a statement from the WLGA group leaders

33. Resolved:

33:1 Members considered the adoption and promotion of local ‘fair campaign’ pledges ahead of May’s local elections; and

33:2 Members agreed that all Leaders’ would sign the Pledge and a Joint Statement be issued.

Item 8: WLGA Improvement Programme 2022-23

34. Cllr Evans introduced the paper, noting it was in the context of the improved relationship with WG and this substantial piece of work should be welcomed. He confirmed the draft improvement programme delivery plan has been informed by discussion with all 22 authorities, but long-term planning is difficult because there is no indication of longer-term funding.

35. Resolved:

35:1 Members considered the Improvement Programme progress report for Quarter 3; and

35:2 Members discussed and endorsed the proposed Improvement Delivery Plan for 2022-23.

Item 9: Establishment of WLGA Subsidiary Company

36. Chris Llewelyn confirmed he had some discussions with the WLGA Independent Group prior to this meeting and understood that they have some concerns, so wanted to emphasise the report was for consideration, rather than decisions. The report updated members on progress made in discussions on hosting the Joint Inspection Team. He confirmed the WLGA were approached by the Welsh Government about hosting the team, but because the Association is an

unincorporated public body, Welsh Government lawyers advised that a more robust structure might be needed. The proposal was to look at running an arm's length company, similar to Data Cymru.

37. Chris Llewelyn noted the paper included some of the legal advice received by the WLGA's own legal support. There are questions as to whether any arm's length company should have broad or narrow objectives and focus only on the purpose of the inspection team. Chris confirmed the WLGA had been in contact with CIPFA and that the paper provided members with an opportunity to discuss the matters raised, in paragraph 17 there are issues raised from that, so again the paper seeks to give an opportunity for Members to raise their issues concerns, especially in relation to paragraphs 7-10

38. Resolved:

38:1 Members noted the contents of the report; and

38:2 Members noted that further legal advice and project management support will be commissioned, ahead of consideration of final proposals at WLGA Management Sub-Committee in February.

Item 10: Any other Business

39. Chris Llewelyn informed the meeting there had been discussions about having a Leaders Awayday to discuss the experience and learning from the past term and what could be carried forward to the next Association. There was agreement from Members that a face-to-face meeting would be useful and should be progressed