

**Meeting of the Partnership Council for Wales
10.00am -12.00pm, Thursday 20 September 2018,
Conference Rooms C and D Ty Hywel Building, Cardiff Bay.**

Minutes

Attendees

Members

Alun Davies AM, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services
Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister – part of the meeting
Mark Drakeford AM, Cabinet Secretary for Finance – part of the meeting
Julie James AM, Leader of the House and Chief Whip – part of the meeting
Cllr Debbie Wilcox – Newport City Council
Cllr Andrew Morgan – Rhondda, Cynon Taf Council
Cllr Huw Thomas – The City of Cardiff Council
Cllr Ieuan Williams – Anglesey County Council
Cllr Mair Stephens – Carmarthenshire County Council
Rt. Hon Alun Michael – Police and Crime Commissioner Representative
Cllr Mike Cuddy – Community Councils Representative
Maria Battle – National Health Service Wales and Local Health Boards Representative

Observers

Steve Thomas – Welsh Local Government Association
Ruth Marks – Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Lyn Cadwallader – One Voice Wales
Adrian Compton – Auditor General Wales

Welsh Government Officials

Reg Kilpatrick
Caren Fullerton

Secretariat

Claire Germain
John Davies

Apologies

Cllr Ellen ap Gwyn - Ceredigion
Cllr John W Thomas – Vale of Glamorgan
Cllr Aaron Shotton – Flintshire County Council
Cllr Rob Stewart – City and Council of Swansea
Martin Mansfield – Wales TUC
Owain Wyn - Snowdonia National Park Authority

Action Points

- Alun Michael to provide a paper on Community Safety for the next Partnership Council meeting in November (paragraph 1.2)
- Reg Kilpatrick to meet with Alun Michael to discuss implications of the Cyber Resilience and Security Concordat in further detail (paragraph 4.9)
- Alun Michael and Lyn Cadwallader to provide short contributions to the Local Government Partnership Scheme Annual Report (paragraph 5.3)

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- 1.1. The Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services opened the meeting by welcoming members. He welcomed the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance who were attending to discuss the European Transition paper. He then welcomed Adrian Compton to his first Partnership Council for Wales meeting in his new role as Auditor General for Wales.
- 1.2. The Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services then turned to the business of the day and explained that there were four main agenda items to cover and; there were also two papers to note. He noted that Alun Michael would present a paper on Community Safety at the November meeting.
- 1.3. The Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services then provided a brief update on Local Government Reform. He explained that a Working Group had been established which would be chaired by Derek Vaughan MEP to develop a shared agenda for local government and the first formal meeting would take place next Friday, 28 September.
- 1.4. The minutes were agreed with no comments.
- 1.5. Prior to the presentation of the first paper, Cllr Debbie Wilcox paid tribute to the First Minister in what would be his final Partnership Council meeting, before standing down as First Minister of Wales. Cllr Wilcox thanked the First Minister for the enormous contribution; and pivotal role he had played since devolution in 2009 and in taking Wales forward; and wished him well for the future. These sentiments were endorsed by Maria Battle, Ruth Marks and Alun Michael.
- 1.6. The First Minister thanked Cllr Wilcox for her kind words and explained that it had been a pleasure working with her and other local government colleagues over the last nine years.

2. European Transition

- 2.1 The Cabinet Secretary for Finance provided an update on latest Brexit developments, covering the UK Government's Chequers plan, challenge of the Prime Minister getting a deal through the Commons, the risks to Wales of a "no deal" and how mitigation against such an outcome were very limited.
- 2.2 The Cabinet Secretary for Finance also covered the UK Government's recent "no deal" Technical Notices and the potential legislative burden on the Assembly, and updated the meeting on the next tranche of funding from the EU Transition Fund.
- 2.3 Following on from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance overview, the First Minister provided a further update on his last meeting with Michel Barnier, the European Union's Chief negotiator on Brexit, commenting on the unified stance the EU has maintained during the talks compared to the UK Government. He also raised his concerns about the Chequers proposals on regulatory alignment with the EU on goods but not services.
- 2.4 The First Minister also highlighted the Irish border issue as a major stumbling block to negotiations. He went on to explain that nothing could be resolved unless this vital issue was resolved first. In essence it was a waiting game for the next few weeks or so and we will see what happens after that.
- 2.5 Cllr Wilcox explained that at a recent EU meeting she attended, the Secretary of State for Wales, had shared his optimism of a deal and the opportunities of Brexit. Cllr Wilcox highlighted the contrast of the two discussions.
- 2.6 Alun Michael raised the security and policing issues related to Brexit, including the European Arrest Warrant loss and current cross-border cooperation. He was particularly concerned about representatives not being in the room for discussions with implications for citizens in Wales. Alun Michael was of the opinion that one of the biggest challenges was to trade, but there was also a huge challenge to the safety of citizens both within the UK and the EU.
- 2.7 Maria Battle touched on the impact Brexit would have on the Welsh NHS and referred to the paper she had circulated to members prior to the meeting, in relation to the key issues for health and social care organisations as the UK prepares to leave the EU. Staff, supply of drugs and equipment were particular concerns. The First Minister noted that while continued access to skilled workers was necessary, many Welsh businesses relied on lower skilled workers from the EU and those businesses would be significantly challenged by a reduction in access to potential workers.
- 2.8 The Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services thanked the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, the First Minister and members of the Council for their views on this particular issue and he explained that time was very much of essence and we would need to see what the next few weeks would bring as the 29 March 2019 was fast approaching. Before the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance left the meeting, the

Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, thanked them both for attending the first part of the meeting.

3. Recommendations of the Independent Review Panel on Community and Town Councils

- 3.1 The Cabinet Secretary presented a paper which provided an overview of the findings and recommendations of the Independent Review of the Community and Town Council sector. The report would be published in the next few weeks.
- 3.2 The Cabinet Secretary had met the Panel on a number of occasions, and constructive and positive conversations had taken place around the potential for community and town councils. He was also aware that the Panel had held information sessions with the sector and key stakeholders, including some Partnership Council members, to share their findings and recommendations over the summer.
- 3.3 The Cabinet Secretary was keen to continue the conversation. A Cabinet discussion would take place in November and he would then present the agreed way forward to the National Assembly for Wales. Prior to that, the Cabinet Secretary was keen to hear the thoughts from the Partnership Council on the emerging findings.
- 3.4 Cllr Cuddy said that he could not quibble about most of the 46 recommendations and he welcomed the attention being given to community and town councils. He saw the report as a reasonable basis for future discussions, and believed that key elements to focus on included local democracy, local civic conviviality and foundations for economics for everyday life.
- 3.5 He noted the importance in support of stronger administrative structures, training and the building of capacity and resources. He felt the Panel could have said more on resources and the means of funding town and community councils.
- 3.6 Alun Michael was disappointed that the review did not recommend community and town councils should have greater ambition for what they achieve for their local area. He felt more focus could have been given to their role in relation to the Well being of Future Generations Act.
- 3.7 Ruth Marks informed the meeting that, building on discussions in a previous meeting, WCVA had worked with One Voice Wales and had submitted a short paper setting out some ideas for joint work on community planning.
- 3.8 Cllr Huw Thomas believed that the review of the community and town council sector was long overdue. While he welcomed the review, he did have some concerns. He agreed that decisions were best taken as close to the people as possible but noted that, given 80 per cent of all seats were uncontested; this did not translate into democratic accountability. Cllr Thomas noted he would not support the recommendation that community and town councils should be funded for taking on any new service / functions because the precept available to them to raise funding directly and it was up to the community and town council to determine how to make best use of that funding. Cllr Thomas welcomed the mandatory

training as well as minimum standards for clerks and the proposal to end 'dual-hatting' with councillors representing community at both principal council and community and town council level.

- 3.9 Cllr Wilcox agreed in principle with the greater clarity and purpose the report provided but expressed concern that it could result in the recreation of two tiers of local government in Wales.
- 3.10 Cllr Williams emphasised that although there was a mixed picture throughout Wales, it was vital to have strong communication between community councils and county councils and it was important that county councillors continue to sit on community councils. Overall he felt it was of the opinion that this was a good piece of work and a report where the WLGA would give its full opinion on in due course.
- 3.11 Cllr Cuddy explained that there was a possibility, in future, of the community planning model extending local services and he hoped this would be for the better. Cllr Cuddy also agreed with Cllr Williams in relation to local democracy being devolved.
- 3.12 Cllr Morgan welcomed the review and considered it to be long overdue. Cllr Morgan stated that community councils within his area were a mixed bag. Some were very good but others were falling short. He explained that, within the community sector within his area, some community councillors refused point blank to work with him and this was hugely frustrating. He also made the point about many members being unelected and he the expenditure on clerks in his area was too high.
- 3.13 Cllr Morgan wanted to see better partnership working particularly in respect of the sharing of HR functions.
- 3.14 The Cabinet Secretary thanked Cllr Morgan for his honest views and understood the fact that some members do behave poorly but this was not straightforward to address. There was much which could be done, as Cllr Morgan suggested, to make things more efficient and effective in the administration of community and town councils. He also stressed the importance of an effective relationship between the principal council and its community and town councils.
- 3.15 Cllr Mair Stephens welcomed the report and said community councils have provided many council leaders which was something to be commended. Community councils have provided the platform for many individuals to start their political career and we should always remember that.
- 3.16 Lyn Cadwallader was relatively pleased with the recommendations and findings. He was keen, however, to develop stronger relationships to address areas of weakness. Non-statutory services was an particular area that caused concern and he called for stronger communication between local authorities, One Voice Wales, community councils, Welsh Government and the Wales Audit Office to help address this concern.

- 3.17 Cllr Wilcox said the Welsh Local Government Association, would be working with One Voice Wales to develop good practice and to also encourage local charters and relationships.
- 3.18 The Cabinet Secretary explained that conversation would continue over the next few weeks to inform the Welsh Government's response to the report.

4. Digital Transformation and Cyber Security for Welsh Local Government and: launch of the Cyber Resilience and Security Concordat

- 4.1 The Cabinet Secretary welcomed Julie James AM, Leader of the House and Chief Whip to the meeting and invited her to introduce the paper. The Leader of the House provided an overview of the ongoing work and discussions between Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and local authorities to establish a Chief Digital Officer function for local government in Wales.
- 4.2 The Leader of the House highlighted the range of developments which were being led by local government and that she was looking forward to working with local government to support these developments. Alongside the work going on to establish the Chief Digital Officer function for local government in Wales, work was also underway across the wider public sector and academia to consider cyber resilience and security in further detail.
- 4.3 A key action from those meetings was that organisations across the sectors could agree to meet the minimum standards of cyber security in line with the recommendations of the National Cyber Security Centre. This would ensure that all public sector organisations shared a common awareness of cyber resilience and security issues and achieve a common standard of security.
- 4.4 Following on from those discussions, they would be signing a Cyber Resilience and Security Concordat between Welsh Ministers and the WLGA today.
- 4.5 Caren Fullerton, Welsh Government's Chief Digital Officer, explained the results of the recent National Survey had indicated that 82 per cent of the Welsh public were satisfied with digital services. Nevertheless, there was an opportunity to do a great deal more and a Chief Digital Officer function for local authorities would help engage on these issues and ensure collaboration.
- 4.6 Reg Kilpatrick outlined the importance of cyber security and introduced the Cyber Resilience and Security Concordat. Reg explained the Concordat would determine a common standard and show leadership in strengthening cyber security. The signing of the Concordat would also demonstrate local authorities' commitment to cyber resilience and security and establish a recognisable and common base level of cyber security across the whole of Wales.

- 4.7 The Concordat was welcomed by Councillor Huw Thomas, who recognised the importance of cyber security. It provided an opportunity for Wales to showcase its cyber security industry and lead the way for other regions. He also welcomed the development of a Chief Digital Officer function and emphasised the importance of collaboration.
- 4.8 Councillor Ieuan Williams welcomed the proposals regarding the Chief Digital Officer, but emphasised the importance of developing this function once and facilitating this shared resources across Local Authorities to avoid duplication.
- 4.9 Alun Michael noted the omission of health and policing in the Concordat, and commented that raising awareness of and strengthening cyber security should be a joint endeavour. Reg Kilpatrick pointed out that the Concordat between the Welsh Government and Local Authorities was merely a starting point and agreed to meet with Alun Michael to discuss further.
- 4.10 The Leader of the House and Chief Whip expressed that Wales was keen to be at the forefront of digital technology but acknowledged that there were major issues such as connectivity and digital inclusion that made that difficult.

5. Ratification of the Local Government Partnership Scheme Annual Report 2017-2018

- 5.1 The Cabinet Secretary explained that the Local Government Partnership Scheme Annual report had been agreed at official level and in partnership between Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association.
- 5.2 The Annual Report was being tabled today and members were invited to submit written comments to the Partnership Council secretariat by 4 October. Once the Annual Report had been finalised, it would be laid before the National Assembly for Wales and then published on the Welsh Government website.
- 5.3 Alun Michael and Lyn Cadwallader explained that they would both like to provide further contributions to the Annual Report. The Cabinet Secretary asked if contributions could be succinct and reach the Partnership Council secretariat by the appropriate deadline.

6. Any Other Business

- 6.1 The Cabinet Secretary thanked all members for their contributions and asked if anyone had any other business they wished to raise.
- 6.2 No other items of business were raised.
- 6.3 Before moving onto the signing of the Cyber Resilience Concordat, the Cabinet Secretary informed the Council that Steve Thomas, Chief Executive of the Welsh Local Government Association, would soon be retiring.

- 6.4 The Cabinet Secretary thanked Steve for the perseverance and dedication he had shown, not only to the Partnership Council but to all aspects of his role. The Cabinet Secretary went on to say that Steve had contributed hugely to the world of local government in Wales and it had been a pleasure working with him during times that had not always been easy. Finally, the Cabinet secretary wished Steve a long and happy retirement. Steve was very grateful for the Cabinet Secretary's very kind words and thanked him for the tribute that he had paid to him.
- 6.5 Finally, the Cabinet Secretary informed members that the next meeting of the Partnership Council for Wales was scheduled to take place on Thursday 22 November 2018.