

# Partnership Council for Wales – 10 February 2022

## Chair's opening remarks

### **Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government.**

1. The Minister for Finance and Local Government (the Minister) welcomed members and attendees to the meeting, noting apologies.
2. The minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated and asked if there were any comments or amendments, but there were not.
3. The Minister provided an update on the actions from the previous meeting, noting all as completed or in hand.
4. The Minister paid tribute to Cllr Mair Stephens who had sadly passed away on 9 January. The Minister commented that Mair had until recently been a member of this Partnership Council, had made a significant contribution to several of the sectors represented as she had been Deputy Leader of Carmarthenshire Council and a WLGA Council member, was a community councillor for over 40 years and served as National Chair of the Wales Association of Community and Town Councils. Mair was also a strong campaigner for volunteering and supporting those in need, and served on the Board of the WCVA. The Minister commented that Mair would be missed by many, which was a sentiment echoed by all members.

## Agenda item 1: Local Elections 2022

### **Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government**

### **Cllr Jane Mudd, WLGA Spokesperson for Equalities, Anti-Poverty and Migration**

5. The Minister provided updates on the issues of electoral reforms, electoral reviews, the local election survey (also referred to as the candidate survey), the access to elected office fund Wales and the forthcoming flexible voting pilots.
6. Cllr Jane Mudd provided an update on the Diversity in Democracy work, Diverse Council declarations, the *Be a Councillor Wales* website, and the Fair Campaigns Pledge.
7. It was agreed that there was significant work underway in Wales to increase participation in democracy, including all 22 authorities having made the diverse council declarations. Some remaining challenges were also highlighted, such as salary levels for elected members, and the unacceptable abuse and harassment that many in public life unfortunately face. A range of resources and guides on handling intimidation have been updated and will be available for new councillors. There has also been engagement with the 4 police forces, who are offering advice and support to councillors.

8. The Fair Campaign pledge, signed by the 22 leaders, was shared in the chat. It is hoped this pledge will support candidates, particularly those newer to democratic life and especially those from a minority background who may have experienced discrimination.

## **Agenda item 2: Recovery (standing item) – Covid Adaptation**

### **Cllr Huw David, WLGA Presiding Officer and Spokesperson for Health and Social Care**

Main points raised by Cllr David and other members included:

- There will not be a clear transition from response to recovery. Wider pressures compounding recovery and adaptation. Notably the winter pressures and workforce challenges.
- Welcomed the work of the care action which resulted in swift additional action and investment this winter which has made a real difference. Pressures still there, working hard to get through this winter.
- Welcomed the provisional local government settlement including indicative multiyear settlement. Has made a real difference to authorities across Wales and authorities are grateful for that investment.
- Local government is supportive of much of the Programme for Government and Co-operation Agreement which we believe supports transition from covid in terms of public services and local economy.
- WLGA proposals for economic resilience package through Partnership Council. Procurement involving local supply chains is a priority and local government is looking forward to working closely with Welsh Government on that because there is still so much uncertainty in the economy and need to recover and rebuild following damage from the pandemic.
- Local authorities are working with community and town councils, reflecting on the role of councils and prioritisation of services. Pandemic has made us do things differently. The WLGA is working with WCVA, OVW and other partners. A Series of webinars has just concluded which described experiences through the floods and pandemic and showed excellent practice around flood prevention, community connection and public and voluntary services coming together.
- The Minister commented that she would be committed to a future meeting looking at procurement in terms of its role in adaptation and recovery, looking at supply chain voids, trying to build a foundation economy approach, working to keep money local. The Minister is committed to further developing capacity and capability in procurement, particularly around the issue of social value. Local authorities are keen to ensure procurement is fair and sustainable, but also to encourage small businesses to engage. NHS Wales would also be keen to be involved in this work.

**ACTION 1:** MFLG and the WLGA to meet to discuss the role of procurement in covid adaptation and recovery, the use of local supply chains, and issues around social value.

## Agenda item 3: Real living wage for care workers

### Social Services officials provided an update

Update from officials, and subsequent discussion, included:

- Social care fair work forum – commenced in 2020 in social partnership with union colleagues and others such as WLGA and Social Care Wales. Independent chair helpful in driving breadth of work forward. The Deputy Minister for Social Services and the Deputy Minister for Social Partnerships asked the forum to look at the Programme for Government commitment to implement the living wage.
- The DMSS made announcement in December that minimum of £9.90 to commence from April this year.
- Social care reform programme for social services. Recent white paper looking at social care framework, issues around commissioning. Have dotted lines to each of those pieces of work to make sure energy is targeted in the right places, and there is no duplication.
- Working on guidance, for local authority provision and local health board commissions so can be as consistent as possible in implementation.
- Importance of communications – for partners and people who work for a direct payment recipient so they know what they should be doing to implement the living wage.
- A progression framework in being developed. Social care wales are doing work on a recruitment and retention campaign, wellbeing of the workforce, to help people think about a career in health and social care as a whole package.
- Health and social care apprenticeships were agreed as important, giving people the choice to go into social care or health care.
- Welcomed the additional payment for care workers.

## Agenda item 4: Climate Change (standing item)

### Minister for Climate Change

**Tim Peppin, Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development, WLGA**

**Richard Crook, Director for Environment, Blaenau Gwent CBC, and Decarbonisation Strategy Panel Member**

Updates and discussion points included:

- An update from the Minister for Finance and Local Government on discussions with the Wales Pension Partnership regarding the divestment from fossil fuels by local government pension schemes. The Minister suggested inviting the Partnership to attend a future Partnership Council meeting, or Finance Sub Group, to discuss further. Cllr Anthony Hunt, WLGA Finance Spokesperson, agreed he would be supportive of that approach.

- annual monitoring of emissions. Welsh Government will be following up with local authorities on your emissions data, with workshops planned for March and April in readiness for the next steps.
- Lyn Cadwallader from One Voice Wales will be joining the Panel, which is important as the work moves into delivery as the materials and research will be useful for town and community councils who will be invaluable in engaging with local communities.
- Leaders at previous Partnership Council meetings have endorsed a series of commitments under the Net Zero Wales plan. There is funding available, and work is starting on the consideration and development of national programmes. A framework of consultants has been put in place to support.
- WLGA working with Natural Resources Wales on GIS mapping processes.
- Sharing of good practice and series of masterclasses have been very useful.
- The measurement of carbon impact of procurement spend requires more work.

**ACTION 2:** Wales Pension Partnership to be invited to a future meeting of PC or FSG to discuss the divestment from fossil fuels by local government pension schemes.

## Agenda item 5: Social housing in the context of decarbonisation

### Minister for Climate Change

#### Emma Williams, Director of Housing and Regeneration

The Minister for Climate Change introduced the item and invited Emma Williams to give a presentation on Welsh Government's priorities for social housing and decarbonisation.

Key points included:

- PfG commitments around 20,000 new affordable homes – a very challenging figure with the focus on low carbon and social homes for rent (last term included *help to buy* scheme).
- Net Zero carbon plan. Focus on retrofitting existing homes in line with advancing technology.
- Also a need for a behavioural shift, helping people to live in homes in an efficient way, all the more important in light of rising fuel prices and cost of living.
- Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR 2021) really raises the bar. Access to outdoor space is more important than it ever has been.
- Social housing is the trail blazer, but want private sector to follow suit shortly.
- Partnership working is very important, and Welsh Government is keen for projects to be brought forward for technical scrutiny at the earliest stage.
- A number of members agreed with the benefits of working together in Wales to meet the challenges and develop the solutions.

## Agenda item 6: Shaping Wales' Future

### Minister for Finance and Local Government

**Stephanie Howarth (Chief Statistician for Wales) and Andrew Charles (Head of Sustainable Futures Division)**

The Minister set the scene, reminding members that through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and its seven well-being goals, we have a framework for Wales's future that is economically, socially and environmentally just, and a Wales we would want our children to inherit.

A key part of the architecture of the Act are the national indicators and milestones that help us measure progress towards these well-being goals, and a means to look at the future trends likely to affect Wales.

Andrew and Stephanie provided an update on the work, including a reminder that in December 2021 the Minister for Social Justice had published a revised set of national indicators and a first set of national milestones for Wales, as well as an updated Future Trends Report. Gratitude was expressed for the input provided from other public bodies towards this work.

The full set of national indicators and milestones are here: <https://gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-national-indicators-2021>

A second wave of milestones and indicators are to be co-developed with public bodies over the coming months, followed by a formal consultation in the summer.

Future trends report Wales 2021 was shared with members. This is drafted every 5 years prior to a Senedd election. Our ability to collectively shape the future of Wales is linked with our ability to respond to big external trends, likely to shape Wales' future.

<https://gov.wales/future-trends-2021>

During 2022 a piece of work is being undertaken to help understand the long term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the seven well-being goals.

Alun Michael confirmed he was pleased to see the new *confidence in the justice system* indicator as one of the four new ones. This was welcome in view of the significant developments in Criminal Justice in Wales, through the Criminal Justice Board for Wales and the Steering Group that had come into being as a result of collaborative work during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

## Agenda item 7: Review of Partnership Council for Wales' activity and achievements from January 2019 to December 2021

### Minister for Finance and Local Government

The Minister introduced the fact that the Government of Wales Act 2006 prescribes the need for a Local Government Partnership Scheme, which underpins the Partnership Council and sets out how the Welsh Government and local government intend to work together, to sustain and promote local government in Wales.

The Act also requires that Welsh Ministers publish a report of how proposals in the scheme have been implemented.

WG officials and WLGA colleagues had jointly drafted a report which was shared with members ahead of the meeting for their consideration. The report aimed to capture the narrative of what had been covered and achieved through the joint work of the Partnership Council.

The Minister stated she was proud of what is contained in the report which covered a period including Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, both enormous challenges which public services in Wales faced together.

All members were invited to read and contribute to the report, or to amend it, with comments back to officials by 4 March.

Once finalised, the report will be laid before the Senedd and published on the Welsh Government website.

**ACTION 3:** All members to consider the Draft *Partnership Council for Wales Report: January 2019 to December 2021* and to provide any comments or amendments to the secretariat by 4 March 2022.

### Concluding remarks

#### Minister for Finance and Local Government

The Minister thanked all members for their input to the discussions, and informed members that the next meeting will be held on 7 July [*since changed to 6 July*].

The Minister wished any members who would not be continuing beyond the local government elections the very best for the future, and expressed her thanks for the collaborative and supportive approach shown throughout the meetings.

### ACTIONS

**ACTION 1:** MFLG and the WLGA to meet to discuss the role of procurement in covid adaptation and recovery, the use of local supply chains, and issues around social value.

**ACTION 2:** Wales Pension Partnership to be invited to a future meeting of PC or FSG to discuss the divestment from fossil fuels by local government pension schemes.

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