

**Sub**  
**Partnership Council for Wales – 24 November 2022**  
**9.40-11.40 via MSTeams**

**Chair's opening remarks**

Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government

The Minister for Finance and Local Government opened the meeting by welcoming all members and stated that apologies had been noted by the secretariat.

The Minister commented that the minutes of the last meeting (6 July) had been circulated to members and asked whether there were any comments or questions, but there were not. The Minister confirmed that all actions from the last meeting were either complete or in hand.

Before starting on the agenda items, the Minister provided members with brief updates on relevant issues.

**Local Government Partnership Scheme**

The Minister noted that following the discussion at July's meeting, it was her intention to ensure the existing Partnership Scheme and also the Terms of Reference for this group remain fit for purpose and reflective of the ways of working.

The Minister confirmed that officials had circulated both documents to members for their consideration, and to provide the opportunity to comment if they wished. No comments had been received from members, but officials are currently considering updating the scheme, in conjunction with the WLGA, to ensure it is in line with the Partnership Council's current ways of working and to ensure it remains fit for purpose and future proofed. The Minister invited any comments from members via the secretariat as soon as possible. It is proposed to circulate a revised version of the Partnership Scheme in 2023.

**Action 1** - Members are invited to provide any comments on the Local Government Partnership Scheme or Partnership Council Terms of Reference to the secretariat as soon as possible. A revised version of the Partnership Scheme and Terms of Reference will be circulated if and when changes are made.

**Elections White Paper**

The Minister informed Members that the Welsh Government had published a White Paper on Electoral Reform and Administration on 11 October, and that the consultation will run to 10 January.

The Minister informed Members that the White Paper sets out the next stage of reforms to improve access to devolved elections and create a 21st century electoral system, including automatic voter registration, and an Electoral Management Board for Wales. It also sets out suggestions for improving the way electoral reviews are conducted and seeks views on whether five-year local authority terms are working or whether respondents felt terms should revert to four years.

The Counsel General invited all returning officers to a workshop on this issue on 15 November and both Ministers are keen to hear views on the proposals from across Wales.

### **Change in membership**

The Minister welcomed Dr Neil Wooding, recently appointed as Chair of the WCVA, to Partnership Council for Wales and this morning's meeting. Dr Neil Wooding replaces Peter Davies who stepped down as chair of the WCVA after 11 years on the Board and eight years as chair earlier this year. The Minister commented that she looked forward to working with Dr Wooding in this forum and noted her thanks to Peter Davies for his work on the Council over the past few years.

Dr Neil Wooding thanked members and said he looks forward to attending future Partnership Council meetings.

### **Agenda item 1: Climate Change (standing item)**

Climate Strategy Panel and WLGA Support Programme - update and next steps to consider - Tim Peppin, WLGA

The Minister introduced this item commenting that this is an auspicious week for our Climate Change discussion as it is Wales's Climate Week. She noted that many of the members' organisations and colleagues have hosted and taken part in events and discussions, showcasing the excellent work going on across Wales.

The Minister explained that this item will include the regular update on the important work of the Climate Strategy Panel and the LA WLGA support programme. Item 3 will be a presentation from the Wales Pension Partnership on their steps towards decarbonisation.

The Minister emphasised the importance of keeping our focus on the climate crisis. Energy efficiency and security of energy supply is more important than ever. Acting now helps avoid bigger and even more costly issues for the future. We will only deliver our commitment to achieving net zero by working together.

The Minister commented on the discussions playing out on the international stage at COP, and that these types of international events help to deliver on our international commitments but also provide opportunities to promote the outstanding examples of collective climate action being taken in Wales.

The Minister informed members that almost 60% of the changes needed to achieve net zero will require some element of societal behaviour change (according to the Climate Change Committee). This is why Net Zero Wales committed to consulting on a public engagement strategy which was published on 20 October, and the consultation will end on 14 December. The aim of the Strategy will be to set out how the Welsh Government will work with key stakeholders across Wales to inform, support and encourage the general public taking action on climate change.

And finally, the Minister noted it is also the two-year anniversary of the Climate Strategy Panel being set up by this Council. She stated how proud she is of the work the strategy panel has led. They have helped drive the climate change agenda; given us a joined-up approach; supported local authorities to co-produce ambitious commitments in the Net Zero Wales Plan; and are now supporting the delivery of those commitments as well as helping shape the WLGA support programme.

**The Minister invited Tim Peppin (TP) of the WLGA** to provide an update on the WLGA Climate Change Support Programme.

TP talked through the key points from the WLGA Paper: *Climate Change Update* which provided an update on notable developments since the last Partnership Council meeting, both in general terms and specific to work of the Climate Strategy Panel (CSP) and the WLGA's Transition and Recovery Support Programme.

TP mentioned that in July the High Court ruled that the UK Government's net zero strategy for the UK as a whole does not comply with the Climate Change Act. It found that it does not provide sufficient detail on how the target of net zero by 2050 for the UK overall is to be reached.

TP also shared the news that Audit Wales had issued a report in July which concluded it is 'uncertain' if the public sector will be able to meet its climate change target of net zero by 2030. The report highlighted that only 2 of the 48 public bodies it had spoken to had worked out how much it would cost.

TP noted some of the impacts of climate change we had seen over the past 6 months, including the extreme summer heatwave, prevalence of serious grass fires across Wales, and also mentioned that a tornado had been reported in Powys the previous day. All of which highlighted the importance of how we adapt and become better prepared to deal with such circumstances as they arise.

At the opening of COP 27, the emphasis has been on ensuring that there is no 'backsliding' from international commitments made at COP 26 in Glasgow last year. There is a continued focus on achieving a 'just transition' and calls for 'loss and damage' finance, with richer nations urged to help developing nations deal with the

issues they are already facing as a result of climate change

The second part of the paper provided an update on the work of the Climate Strategy Panel. This panel and support programme was set up by the Partnership Council for Wales two years ago and has representation from Chief Executives of Local authorities, the WLGA, trade unions and advisers.

The panel will oversee a review of councils' progress (which was agreed at the last Partnership Council meeting), Miller Research has been commissioned by WLGA and will be undertaking the work in coming months. All 22 councils will be asked how they have taken forward their work on decarbonisation over the last eighteen months. Councils will also be asked how they are approaching the risks associated with adaptation, as outlined in the UK Climate Change Committee's (UKCCC's) Risk Assessment for Wales. Miller's work will enable a more in-depth assessment of council activity and will follow the same methodology as UKCCC to ensure consistency and a comprehensive approach. The results are expected next Spring.

TP went on to stress that the panel is not always about reviewing, it has a strategic approach and provides support and advice to authorities to drive consistency and to achieve benefits of collaboration. For example, the panel will shortly distribute a procurement toolkit that brings together a range of resources to help make sustainable choices that will reduce emissions, along with plans for support in engaging with supply chains. This will support authorities on bulk buying together on items such as electric vehicles to enable financial savings whilst reducing emissions. The involvement of Welsh Government and the Society of Welsh Treasurers was welcomed in supporting a whole of government approach.

TP noted that Cllr Andrew Morgan had recently met all leaders and climate change champions to emphasise the importance of the 2030 target and to discuss the climate and nature emergency, but particularly energy planning which is a positive move but an equally great challenge.

Judith Cole (JC), Welsh Government member of Climate Strategy Panel, was introduced and commended the WLGA and local authority Chief Executives for bringing energy to 'front and centre' on the issues of climate change. JC shared the discussions she has been undertaking with the Society of Welsh Treasurers and welcomed the work on the electric vehicle (EV) fleet, including authorities generating their own energy to support the fleet.

The Minister thanked Tim and Judith for the updates on the work of the Climate Strategy Panel and thanked all those involved in delivering the work. The Minister commented on the importance of continuing to monitor progress and the forthcoming second year reports.

The Minister invited questions from members, which raised the following issues:

- Questioning the impact that Wales can have as a small country in a global environment.
- The importance of involving the four police forces in the work of the Climate Strategy Panel.

- The scale of the challenge, alongside all the other priorities and challenges faced by local authorities and public services.
- The success of the 'Places and Nature' conference recently held for Community and Town Councils which had attracted 240 attendees and emphasised the importance of involving those working closest to communities in this work.

The Minister closed the item by emphasising that although Wales is a small country, we can still provide leadership and share our own achievements with others, evidencing the importance of working together. The Minister also stated she was keen to hear more about how Community and Town Councils could be involved in this work.

<p><b>Action 2</b> – Alun Michael and Tim Peppin to explore involvement of Police in Climate Strategy Group</p>
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<p><b>Action 3</b> Secretariat to arrange a future agenda item for a speaker from UK CCC</p>
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## **Agenda item 2: Wales Pension Partnership**

*An update on progress and plans for decarbonising Local Government pensions*

This item included a presentation from Cllr Chris Weaver on behalf of the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) on the work to date to decarbonise local government pension schemes.

Cllr Weaver presented a series of slides which described the journey of the WPP towards carbon reduction.

Cllr Weaver described the WPP's governance structure and the policies which underpin how the group works. He went on to describe the group's engagement principles and the engagement activity it had undertaken.

### **Decarbonisation progress to date**

- Passive Investments – the Welsh Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) funds have transitioned the majority of their passive investments into low carbon tracker funds.
- Innovative decarbonisation strategy for the Global Opportunities and UK Opportunities Sub-Funds – reducing the carbon intensity by c25%.
- Monitoring decarbonisation against benchmark.

Cllr Weaver went on to describe what is in the pipeline for the WPP and how the WPP is also continuing to develop further reporting mechanisms, in addition to the

series of quarterly and annual reports already in place as outlined in the presentation.

Cllr Weaver concluded by confirming that this is an ongoing journey towards Net Zero goals, whilst having the protection of members' pensions at the forefront of their minds.

The Minister thanked Cllr Weaver for the informative presentation and welcomed comments or questions from members.

Key points included:

- Expressions of gratitude to Cllr Weaver and others involved in the WPP for taking a lead on this important work.
- Discussion around engagement and the need to communicate with the public more widely in future.
- The challenges around the return on funds, when investments in sustainable funds do not always have comparable returns to investments in fossil fuels. The discussion focused on the need to move slowly and carefully, focusing on the long term and investing in the right things whilst protecting members' pensions.

### **Agenda item 3: One Welsh Public Service**

An update on work being planned to support a One Welsh Public Service approach  
Tom Smithson (Welsh Government Official)

Tom Smithson (TS) gave a brief introduction to the current work underway on One Welsh Public Service (OWPS) which, as a concept, has been around for decades. The term tries to describe the distinctly Welsh way of working and applies deliberately not just to the public sector, but to all involved in the design or delivery of public services. In WG there is a renewed focus on this, learning from how services jointly responded to the Covid-19 pandemic.

TS described some of the background to previous work on OWPC, including through reviews and reform programmes such as the Beecham Review (2006), Simpson (2011), and Williams (2014), each with a programme of work attached. A lot was taken forward through those reviews, but they were time limited. Also, in Wales there is legislation which has codified some of this work, such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the upcoming Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill.

There have been, and are, a number of drivers behind reinvigorating this work, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the current financial crisis, Wales's response to the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis.

The focus now is to formalise the approach and to develop a series of principles, looking at opportunities where the public services work together. Examples include Leadership development through Academi Wales, exchange programmes,

shadowing and short-term exchanges, shared services, common platforms and pooled resources.

The Minister invited questions and comments, which included:

- That the focus sounds strong on national policy aspirations but weak at considering local level aspirations, with particular concern being felt about the lack of mention of the Public Service Boards (PSBs) in the focus of this work.
- The reenergising of the One Welsh Public Service concept was welcomed, and it was acknowledged that the timing is helpful given the budget challenges of more limited public funds whilst demands on public services are increasing. A strong plea for the involvement of the Community and Town Council sector in this work.
- Keenness for a more permeable public service, with increased opportunities to move between organisations. Also, positive that there is work through Academi Wales to identify and nurture our leaders, in addition to work as part of the co-operation agreement with Plaid Cymru to explore whether there's a case and appetite amongst public services for a national school for government in Wales. It is also important to map out what's already in place, and to consider whether there are better ways to form alignments with academic institutions.
- This is an exciting agenda, which could help address the sometimes-fragmented delivery of public services across Wales.

TS summed up by confirming this is the beginning of the conversation, and there is no intention to replace the existing partnership structures, but to identify the areas not already covered by such groups.

The Minister thanked Tom and advised members that Tom next intends to reach out to have wider conversations across the public services, including further discussions with members of the Partnership Council.

#### **Agenda item 4: Cost of Living Crisis (standing item)**

Led by the Minister for Social Justice

The Minister welcomed the Minister for Social Justice (MSJ) to lead the item of cost of living.

The MSJ stated she was grateful for the opportunity to update the Partnership Council on the cost-of-living crisis and started by thanking members for the partnership and joint working underway to tackle cost of living crisis. The MSJ noted she had met with Cllr Anthony Hunt the previous week in his role as WLGA Finance Spokesperson and together they had looked at best practice for supporting people through with the 'Claim what's yours' scheme to encourage people to ensure they obtained all the benefits they were entitled to, including the winter fuel support scheme. Their discussion had focused on all the ways Local Authorities were managing to get money out to people who were entitled to it.

The MSJ emphasised the importance of the approach taken to delivering the Welsh Government Fuel Support Scheme. Through the continued hard work of local government, over 230,000 payments had been made by 11 November (opened 26 September), with over half of eligible households claiming the £200 support. There is also a leaflet drop organised, focusing on the most deprived areas, so trying to target those who need it most.

This year, £1.6 billion of support has been distributed through programmes which protect disadvantaged households by putting money back in people's pockets. The MSJ stated that on 10 December she had hosted the third Tackling Poverty and Cost of Living Summit, with over 150 participants from our partner organisations such as the Bevan Foundation, Citizens Advice and National Energy Action. The Welsh Government Cabinet Sub Committee meets every week chaired by the First Minister. The MSJ went on to thank local authorities and all the other partners including the third sector for all for work they are doing on warm spaces. The Minister confirmed that the £1million fund had been quickly distributed as there had been a huge response from the third sector, churches, mosques and communities, bringing imaginative proposals forward.

In terms of food poverty, the Trussell Trust have distributed more emergency food parcels than ever before for this time of year. Welsh Government has allocated £4.9m to help on food poverty and build resilience by supporting local authorities to work with other organisations locally to develop and strengthen food partnerships that help build food resilience. This includes £1.5m to support foodbanks to address the increased demand for emergency food support.

The MSJ ended by saying that she is keen to continue to hear from partners on what they are doing, and how Welsh government can support them. The MSJ confirmed that she and other WG Ministers make representations regularly to UK Government for further support for families.

Cllr Anthony Hunt shared his thanks to the MSJ and stated his view that this is great example of partnership working, noting his thanks to the local authority revenues and benefits teams who have delivered so much of this work.

The MSJ acknowledged the work undertaken by those teams and also extended her thanks. She also emphasised the importance of the partnership working which was taking place between the local authorities, the health boards and the third sector to provide support and to encourage people to claim for what they are entitled to.

The MSJ thanked members for the discussion.

#### **Agenda item 5: Partnership working within Policing and Criminal Justice in Wales**

Led by Alun Michael, South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner



The Minister introduced this item which had been included at the request of South Wales Police and Crime and Commissioner Alun Michael for an item focusing on Partnership working within Policing and Criminal Justice in Wales.

Alun Michael (AM) provided a paper entitled *The Partnership Ethos of Policing in Wales* to support the discussion.

AM stated that the paper illustrates the commitment and contribution of policing in Wales to make the one Welsh public service ethos a reality. He went on to state the importance of partnership working between devolved and non-devolved services in Wales. He was pleased to have heard earlier reference to the Anti Racism Action Plan which was an example of all public services in Wales being committed to achieving the same outcome of an anti-racist Wales.

AM commented on the partnership working in Wales involving Ministers and other Senedd Members in defining what a devolved environment for policing and criminal justice would look like in Wales. Links at a local level with local government are essential for the partnership working to be effective, and it is important to keep strengthening those links. Joint working is about doing things better, not just doing things differently in Wales. Connectivity is crucial.

AM went on to comment that the All-Wales Criminal Justice Board is demonstrating a lot of innovative work, including on tackling of violence against women and girls, improving neighbourhood policing including through the important contribution of Police Community Support Officers, and through the Wales schools programme.

AM summarised by saying that the paper was intended to illustrate the strength of partnership working in Wales, with the Police working with WG, local government and other partners to make the services provided to the public all the more effective.

The Minister agreed the importance of the power of partnership working in this way.

Comments from members included:

- The improvements that have been made for people being able to contact the police or PCSOs through social media, but important to remember those who are digitally excluded.
- The importance of neighbourhood policing and the contact with members of the public. An example given was those in a mental health crisis and the trauma informed approach, with shared training and shared networks for escalating conversations about individuals.
- The most powerful connectivity being that at local level between the PCSO and the local councillor, who is the most likely to understand the concerns and the situation. PCSO is not just about communicating to the community but also listening to the community and helping the community solve its own problems.
- There was an acknowledgement of the importance of the trauma informed approach in helping to understand the extent to which experiences and trauma lead to violence and problems in education and ways of dealing with problems. AM is discussing with the Public Health Wales Adverse Childhood Experiences

(ACEs) centre about how we can make sure we keep on refreshing that sort of work, with strong links to the violence and prevention unit.

- Refresh of 101 system under consideration. System is under enormous pressure and a Wales specific focus on improving the system is needed.

<b>Action 4</b> – Include Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma Informed Approach on a future Partnership Council agenda.
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<b>Action 5</b> – Consideration to be given to the most appropriate forum to take forward discussions on how to improve the 101 system in Wales (whether through PC, another forum or through officials outside of the meeting?).
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<b>Concluding remarks</b>
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Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government
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There was no other business raised.

The Minister thanked members for their contributions and confirmed the next meeting will be on 2 March 2023.