

## One Voice Wales

### Minutes of the Larger Council's Meeting held remotely on Wednesday 12 February 2025 at 10.30am

#### Present: Members

Councillor Gail Brehany	Monmouth Town Council
Councillor Teresa Carberry	Mold Town Council
Councillor Mike Cuddy	Penarth Town Council
Councillor Alison Davies	Welshpool Town Council
Councillor Mal Davies	Llantrisant Community Council
Councillor Mike Harriman	Gresford Community Council
Councillor Gwenfair Jones	Gwersyllt Community Council
Councillor Joshua Declan McCarthy	Bargoed Town Council
Councillor Carol Marubbi	Llandudno Town Council
Councillor John Miller	Neath Town Council
Councillor Glyn Morvan	Nantyglo and Blaina Town Council
Councillor Allan Pelope	Pontypool Community Council
Councillor John Powell -	Brecon Town Council
Councillor Jay Shipley	Abergavenny Town Council
Councillor Carrie Townsend Jones	Mumbles Community Council
Councillor Wayne Thomas	Ystradgynlais Town Council

*A number of other Councils were also represented but it was not possible to accurately identify them from the registration details*

#### Present: Clerks and other officers

Karen Brown	Buckley Town Council
Vanessa Lewis Camacho	Haverfordwest Town Council
Tina Earley	Bay of Colwyn Town Council
Mandy Evans	Abergele Town Council
Kerry-Leigh Grabham	Mumbles Community Council
Ryan Grimward	Abergele Town Council
Ed Humphreys	Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn Town Council
Louise Morris	Llandudno Town Council
Tim Oliver	Bargoed Town Council
Carole Roberts	Acton Community Council
Dave Sheridan	Gwersyllt Community Council
Mark Sims	Barry Town Council
Emma Smith	Carmarthen Community Council
Dylan Thomas	Towyn & Kinmel Bay Town Council
Helen Williams	Bargoed Town Council
Suzanne Wilson	Connah's Quay Town Council

**Apologies for Absence: Members**

Councillor Donna James    Magor with Undy Town Council  
Councillor Penelope Kirkham    Magor with Undy Town Council  
Councillor Sian Meredudd    Llandrindod Wells Town Council  
Councillor Gareth Rice    Briton Ferry Town Council  
Councillor Gareth Wilde    Abergavenny Town Council

**Apologies for Absence: Clerks and other officers**

Tony Graham    Pontypridd Town Council  
Lisa McNail    Pontypool Community Council

**One Voice Wales: Officers in attendance**

Lyn Cadwallader: Chief Executive  
Paul Egan: Deputy Chief Executive and Resources Manager

**LLC 2024/67      Apologies for Absence.**

Apologies for Absence are set out above.

**LLC 2024/68      Declarations of Personal Interest.**

None

**LLC 2024/69      Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 October 2024**

It is **Resolved** that the minutes are approved.

**LLC 2024/70      Matter Arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters raised.

**LLC 2024/71      Keynote Speaker, Derek Walker – Future Generations Commissioner**

The Chair welcomed Derek Walker to the Committee. In his presentation the following matters were highlighted:

- a) Explanation of key elements of his role.
- b) Process in place to review progress on delivering the key components of the Wellbeing Act against the 50 key indicators with the review report being launched at an event in Cardiff on 29 April 2025.
- c) Most larger councils are required under Section 4 of the legislation to have in place a wellbeing plan that supports the work of the local Public Service Board.

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- d) The review report will provide an analysis of progress in meeting the key indicators, identify solutions as well as an assessment as to how the targets have been implemented.
- e) The Welsh Government's net zero ambitions by 2030 will require greater investment and enhanced partnership working if they are to be achieved.
- f) Many of the targets have been adversely impacted by cutbacks in public spending as well as insufficient collaborative and partnership work and these difficulties require special attention as a matter of priority.
- g) Trust in public institutions is in decline and needs to be restored and to achieve the targets there needs to be more engagement and support from people generally.
- h) He would be calling for wellbeing budgets to be protected and that public bodies needed to think in an integrated and collaborative way to include attention being given to nature conservation and climate change issues.
- i) He would be encouraging employers to implement the real living wage as a means of addressing poverty.
- j) Other matters for public bodies to consider included energy, play, addressing loneliness and bringing people together to create a healthier Wales.
- k) He would also be encouraging public bodies to support local culture and the Welsh language.

In the discussion that following a number of key points were made:

- Lack of local council participation in the work of local PSBs
- Need to refine guidance for councils with a duty under the Act to align their work with the PSB's local wellbeing plan
- It was noted that there were two local council representatives on the Powys PSB but despite representatives from OVW their membership was terminated
- In the light of the Senedd Inquiry on the role, governance and accountability of the local council sector, the published report on democratic health and the recent community boundary reviews which would result if approved in fewer councillors, it would prove increasing difficult to maintain significant engagement with the local PSBs having regard to the general workload of councils and their staff
- There could be a different political landscape after the 2026 Senedd elections which may result in a less sympathetic approach to the delivery of wellbeing goals and targets.

In the light of the above comments, the Commissioner responded as follows:

- He was confident that common areas of interest would likely be shared by all political parties as it was difficult to disagree with the wellbeing goals although the method of implementation would be subject to debate

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- It was important to bring people on board through dialogue and listening rather than adopting a directional approach
- He indicated his support for the local council's sector involvement in the work of PSBs
- Performance of PSBs was variable and the reasons for this would be subject to examination
- He agreed to look into the implications of the Senedd Inquiry and community boundary reviews and how they might impact on the ability of larger councils to address the wellbeing duty.

The Chief Executive considered that from the outset there was always ambiguity about the role of local councils in relation to the Act and after 10 years since its implementation it was his view that PSBs either loosely engaged with or failed to engage with the sector. He suggested that relevant councils needed adequate support from the Welsh Government which should include grant funding.

In conclusion, the Commissioner agreed to consider the comments made by the Chief Executive but indicated his view that the legislation contained a clear expectation of the role of local councils. The Commissioner's role did not involve the provision of grant funding to public bodies but he agreed to include on the new website a reference to the role of local councils.

The Chair thanked the Commissioner for his presentation.

**LLC 2024/72**

**Senedd Cymru's Inquiry – Role, Governance and Accountability of the Local Council Sector**

The Chief Executive provided a brief background to the work of the Local Government and Housing Committee's Inquiry. The detailed submission made to the Inquiry had been circulated to member councils. He was currently awaiting feedback from the Inquiry which was likely to be available in March 2025. He assumed that the Welsh Government's published report on democratic health would be included in the scope of the Inquiry.

It is **Resolved** that the position is noted.

**LLC 2024/73**

**Improved Working Arrangements with Principal Councils/WLGA**

The Chief Executive gave a brief summary of the content of the protocol with the WLGA and that since its signing two meetings at officer level had been held. It had been agreed that OVW would take part in a joint session at the WLGA conference on the subject of joint working. It was noted that there were significant proposed changes in the local government framework in England with the proposals including an enhanced role for parish councils. It was important to track the progress of the proposals as they might become relevant to Wales. He was liaising with NALC in this regard.

It was **Resolved** that the position is noted.

**LLC 2024/74**

**Sharing of Best Practice**

Councils were invited to share examples of best practice it being noted that the closing date for submissions under the OVW awards scheme was 28 February 2025.

Pyle and Kenfig Community Council

The Council had concluded an asset transfer of land that was being transformed into a community garden designed in consultation with the local community including schools.

Mumbles Community Council

The Council was looking to reduce the carbon footprint as part of a four-year project. They were also designating bee-friendly streets where weedkilling substances would not be used.

Haverfordwest Town Council

The Council had introduced a 'Feed the Community' initiative which included provision of warm spaces encompassing activities, free haircuts, and an exchange clothing scheme. Local MP and senior county councillors were invited to attend.

Welshpool Town Council

The Council had been operating a meals on wheels scheme for a long time with support from volunteers. The community service team had been permitted to cultivate some vacant allotment plots with produce being donated to support the meals on wheels scheme. Local stores were also donating surplus food to support the scheme. It was noted that the Council had decided to survey all of its buildings on a five-year cycle.

Llandudno Town Council

The Town Council had decided to take full responsibility for public toilets from the County Borough Council. The cost however would impact on other elements of the budget. There were many Friends Groups cleaning up the town on a voluntary basis included supervised children.

**LLC 2024/75**

**Good Practice Guidance**

The Committee received a brief update on practice development notes that would be issued to member councils in the near future. One member present wondered whether the NALC legal topic notes could be published on the OVW website. Paul Egan explained that this would not be possible but he would enquire with NALC as to whether it was possible to publish a listing of them on the OVW website.

It is **Resolved** that Paul Egan seek permission of NALC to publish a listing of legal topic notes on the OVW website.

**LLC 2024/76**

**One Voice Wales Online AGM – 11 March 2025**

Details of the AGM had been included with the agenda and those present were reminded of the closing date for bookings to be made on the basis of one councillor representative per council. It was highly important that 20% of member councils were in attendance for the meeting to be quorate to consider and approve a change to the OVW constitution.

It is **Resolved** that the position is noted.

**LLC 2024/77**

**Innovative Practice Conference – 2 July 2025**

The Committee was invited to submit items for inclusion in the Conference agenda. The following suggestions were received:

- a) Welsh Government spokesperson on the future role of the sector having regard to the impact of community boundary reviews and the published report on democratic health – First Minister suggested.
- b) Speaker on the developments in devolution of services and functions in England.
- c) A speaker on the benefits and drawbacks of artificial intelligence.

On a separate matter, the Committee was informed about the fact that Microsoft would not be supporting Windows 10 from 14 October 2025 and that urgent guidance was required as to how councils should address this matter.

It is **Resolved** that:

- a) The suggested matters for inclusion in the conference agenda be noted.
- b) The Chief Executive to take up the issue of Windows 10 with the Digital Project Manager with a view to guidance being published as appropriate.

**LLC 2024/78**

**Training and Consultancy Update**

The Committee received an oral report from Paul Egan, Deputy Chief Executive and Resources Manager.

There were still free places available to attend certain core modules, but it was important that Members who had intended to take up the free places attended the courses rather than withdraw at short notice.

Members noted that new training would be provided in relation to digital health. Consultancy services continued to offer considerable support to Councils. New consultants would be sought to extend the service available.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the Welsh Government would continue to provide funding for the cost of living, local places for nature and digitalisation projects in 2025/26 but would remove the hypothecation element enabling OVW to determine how to prioritise the funding. It was intended to offer new webinars on digitalisation from June 2025 and to continue with the provision of digital maturity assessments.

It was **Resolved** that the information is noted.

**LLC 2024/79**

**Policy Matters**

A brief report was provided by the Chief Executive as follows:

- a) Very short notice had been provided by the Law Commission on the consultation on burial and cremation law. With the assistance of Penarth Town Council, OVW had submitted comments to the Commission.
- b) There were three open consultations of relevance to the sector relating to planning resilience (Trees); reform of the law relating to compulsory purchase orders (a joint response from OVW and NALC with support from Councillor Mike Cuddy) and on the electoral review programme 2025.

**LLC 2024/80**

**Communication Matters**

The Chief Executive was pleased to report that the new OVW website would go live in late March 2025. It had involved a high staffing resource commitment but the end product would be of substantial benefit to member councils.

**LLC 2024/81**

**Finance Update**

It was reported that there remained concerns about the charging regime applied by Audit Wales. One large council present reported that their last audit opinion was received in relation to the 2018/19 accounts. Paul Egan would take up the matter with Audit Wales. The Chief Executive reported that the Welsh Government would be

increasing its revenue funding to OVW but accounting for inflation and the increase in NI employer contributions the net effect was a reduction in funding. An application had been made to the Welsh Government to substantially increase the funding for the local places for nature scheme. Public Health Wales had been requested to consider granting financial support to enable OVW to support the dementia friendly project. The Chief Executive was pursuing a possible grant application in conjunction with a Town Council(s) for support to be available for councils dealing with asset transfers.

**LLC 2024/82**

**Guest Speakers for Future Meetings**

It was noted that Owen Struthers had agreed to present at the next meeting on the subject of the implementation of the infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024. It was suggested that other speakers to be invited were the Chief Executive of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru on community boundary reviews and Rachel Carter, Local Places for Nature Officer (Vision for next 2 years).

**LLC 2024/83**

**Forthcoming Events**

The Committee noted the following events:

Joint Event – OVW and Planning Aid Wales – 27 March 2025

Joint Event – OVW and SLCC – 14 May 2025.

**LLC 2024/84**

**Referrals to the NEC**

There were none.

**LLC 2024/85**

**Dangerous, Dilapidated and Listed Buildings**

Monmouth Town Council was taking local action to address this problem which it considered served to detract from local business, lowered the town's credibility for visitors and had a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of local people and could drive up crime. The Committee was asked to consider whether the issue in Monmouth affected other towns and if it might be advantageous to establish a working group to develop a concerted approach to the problem. In the discussion that took place the following comments were made:

- a) It was understood that a Royal Commission and Twentieth Century Society were examining such matters.



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- b) Some support was offered with an acknowledgement that progress would only be made with the support of principal councils.
- c) Some concern that it could result in a lot of effort with little return.
- d) It was unlikely that most councils would have the legal power to incur expenditure in this area.

It was clear that many town councils present experienced similar issues and the suggestion of the Chief Executive to seek an all Wales partnership approach with the WLGA was fully supported.

It is **Resolved** that:

- a) There be a presumption in favour of OVW seeking to work with the WLGA on an all-Wales partnership approach.
- b) The Chief Executive to circulate proposals of this approach to larger councils to seek their views on the matter and invite their possible engagement.

**LL 2024/86**

**Date of Next Meeting**

To be held remotely on Wednesday 16 April 2025 at 10.30am.