

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL, THURSDAY, 13 MAY 2021

Present: Councillor Simon Glyn (Chairman);
Councillor Elwyn Jones (Vice-chair).

Councillors: Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Beca Brown, Stephen Churchman, Steve Collings, Annwen Daniels, R.Glyn Daniels, Anwen Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Aled Evans, Peter Antony Garlick, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, R.Medwyn Hughes, Judith Humphreys, Nia Jeffreys, Aled Wyn Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones, Gareth Tudor Morris Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Keith Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Linda A.W.Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dilwyn Lloyd, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Dafydd Owen, Dewi Owen, Edgar Owen, Nigel Pickavance, Rheinallt Puw, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Elfed P.Roberts, Gareth A.Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson, Angela Russell, Dyfrig Siencyn, Mike Stevens, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas, Hefin Underwood, Catrin Wager, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gareth Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Owain Williams.

Also present: Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services / Monitoring Officer), Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department / Head of Democracy Service), Sion Huws (Senior Solicitor - Corporate), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Simon Glyn as Chair for 2021/22.

Councillor Simon Glyn read and signed the declaration accepting the post of Chair of Gwynedd Council for 2021/22, in the presence of the Chief Executive.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Two names were proposed and seconded for the post of vice-chair, namely Councillor Elwyn Jones and Councillor Peter Read.

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Elwyn Jones as vice-chair for 2021/22.

Councillor Elwyn Jones read the declaration accepting the post of Vice-chair of Gwynedd Council for 2021/2022.

The Monitoring Officer explained that, as the Vice-chair was attending the meeting remotely, arrangements had been made for him to sign the declaration in the presence of the Chief Executive.

3. APOLOGIES

Councillors:- Dylan Bullard, Dylan Fernley, Peredur Jenkins, W. Roy Owen, Jason Parry, Peter Read and Cemlyn Williams.

4. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meetings of the Council held on the following dates as a true record:-

- 4 March, 2021
- 23 April, 2021 (Extraordinary Meeting)

5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

6. THE CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Selwyn Griffiths paid tribute to the late Maldwyn Lewis, Porthmadog – a former member of this Council and the previous Gwynedd County Council.

The Chairman noted with sadness that they had also heard about the sudden death of former Councillor Dewi Llewelyn, who had been very active in representing local people and his community in Bangor. The Council's sincerest condolences were expressed to his family and friends.

It was also noted that the Council wished to sympathise with everyone within the county's communities who had recently lost loved ones.

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect and remembrance.

The Leader was invited to say a few words about the recent Senedd Elections. He noted:-

- This was the last Annual Meeting of the Council before the members faced elections in May of next year, and he took the opportunity to thank every member for their valuable contribution to the Council's work. He also noted that it had been a pleasure and privilege to be Leader over the past four years, and that he would do his best for the remaining year of the current Council's term.
- He wished to congratulate Siân Gwenllïan and Mabon ap Gwynfor on being elected to represent Arfon and Dwyfor Meirionnydd in the recent Senedd Elections. He expressed his hope that both of them, as former county councillors, would remember local government in their work, and support every effort to empower and protect local government, and to ensure that we received sufficient funding to perform our duties.
- He wished to state his appreciation of those members of the Council who had stood in the Senedd Elections, and thanked them for participating in the democratic process.
- He wished Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas well in his retirement from the Senedd after a lifetime of service to Wales, especially to Meirionnydd. He noted that his work as the Presiding Officer of the Assembly had been key in laying firm foundations and giving status to the body, and he thanked him for all his work, and for representing us for all this time.
- The people of Wales had put a vote of confidence in the Labour Party, and much of the thanks for that was down to the First Minister, Mark Drakeford, for the measured and honest way in which he had guided us through an extremely difficult time. The last year had shown that Wales could work more effectively, and more sensibly, than the Westminster Government, and it had also shown very clearly the need for far more powers for Wales. There was a challenge for the Labour Party to demonstrate that they were ready to stand firm for Wales, insisting on more powers, and to establish themselves as a Welsh independent party, breaking free from their peers in England. As Leader of the Council for the next year, he would take advantage of every opportunity to express this challenge to them.

- He wished to welcome Dafydd Gibbard to his first meeting of the full Council as Chief Executive. He wished him every success in the job, and noted that he looked forward to working alongside him over the next year.

Andy Dunbobbin was congratulated on being elected as North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Chair expressed his appreciation of Councillor Edgar Owen's work as Chair over the past two years. He had truly walked the second mile, and his term as Chair was greatly respected. He added that the last year had been incredibly challenging, and that Councillor Edgar Owen had been very successful in handling the chairing of the Council meetings virtually for the first time in the Council's history.

Dafydd Gibbard was welcomed to his first meeting of the full Council as Chief Executive, and Dilwyn Williams, former Chief Executive, was thanked for his work over the past seven years, and was wished a long and happy retirement.

It was also pleasing to note that the Council had retained its Gold Level status by a Corporate Health Standard assessor (Welsh Government) following a presentation and discussion on what the Council had done to support mental and physical health during the past 12 months.

7. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

8. QUESTIONS

No questions were received.

9. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR TO THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Council was invited to appoint a chair for the Democratic Services Committee for 2021/22.

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones as Chair of the Democratic Services Committee for 2021/22.

Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones thanked the Head of Democratic Services, the Language and Democracy Manager and the staff of the Democracy Service for all their support over the past year.

10. ANNUAL REPORT BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRACY SERVICES

The Head of Democratic Services presented his annual report on behalf of the Democratic Services Committee in respect of support for members.

The Head thanked all the committee members and the officers of the Democratic and Language Services for their support during the last year. He referred in particular to the heroic efforts of the Leader and staff of the Translation Team in ensuring simultaneous translation provision at virtual meetings, not only within this Council but also across the region with other public organisations. The work of the Information Technology officers had also been essential, and had enabled everyone to now take the technology for granted. He also thanked the officers of the Council's Learning and Organisational Development Service for coordinating the training, and he also thanked the members of the Democratic Services Committee and Councillors Dewi Owen and Anne Lloyd Jones as the chairs of the committee for the period of the report in question.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- A member expressed concern that the additional cost of working virtually from home could prevent some from standing in an election to become a councillor – we should ensure that we continue to be an inclusive council. In response, it was noted that the Service was live to this threat, and that the matter would be discussed further at the next meeting of the Democratic Services Committee in June.
- A member asked whether consideration had been given to offering a translation service to other authorities, as a way of generating additional income to the Council's coffers. In response, it was explained that the Translation Service already provided a translation service to a number of other organisations. Over the past year the service had also assisted many other local authorities etc., in order to introduce systems that allowed simultaneous translation in virtual meetings. There was already income coming in from organisations for the translation service provided by Gwynedd, but there was scope to consider extending this further.
- It was noted that Gwynedd Council had been proactive in moving to conduct virtual meetings bilingually from the very beginning, and was an example to other bodies across Wales.
- It was noted that conducting meetings virtually saved a lot of travelling costs for the Council and travel time for the members, and that virtual meetings should be considered as the way forward in future.
- Members expressed that the Planning Committee should meet in person in order to maintain its status as a fair and firm committee. It was also noted that it had not been possible for the members to go on site visits, which were so important in respect of making the correct decisions on planning applications.
- Members expressed the view that the full Council and Scrutiny Committees should meet in person, but that members should be given the choice of attending other meetings either virtually or in person. In response it was explained that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 incorporated the virtual way of working, as well as the hybrid and common method, and that the Council would be requested to adopt a policy on the procedure. As such, there would be an opportunity for the members to contribute to the discussion regarding the form and shape of future committees soon.
- It was noted that the hybrid approach had been successful in other places. This Council had been proactive in establishing a virtual system, and it could push again to be at the forefront in terms of a hybrid system. In response, it was explained that the Council was already investing in a provision that would allow this flexibility in the near future, and it would certainly be in a position to proceed and agree on this very soon.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

The Head of Service was thanked for his presentation.

11. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2020/21

The Statutory Director of Social Services presented her annual report regarding the performance of the Social Services in Gwynedd during the previous year.

The Director noted that, due to the pandemic, 2020/21 had been a very different year to previous years, and a year that no-one would wish to see repeated ever again. She sympathised with everyone who had lost loved ones to the virus, and thanked every one of the county's care workers who had gone above and beyond to provide the best

possible care for the residents. She also noted that the joint-working across Gwynedd had been an inspiration for everyone, and that we had seen the best of the people of Gwynedd, be they staff, volunteers, champions in the communities or elected members.

She noted further that despite the challenges faced because of the pandemic, she was proud to note that the performance of social services for the past year had once again been positive. However, as they had focused on coping with the Covid-19 crisis, some priorities had slipped somewhat, or had been put to one side for the time being. Consequently, the report focused on how the department had responded to the pandemic and how they had continued to maintain and provide the essential services, and also developed and provided new services.

She explained that there was an army of hard-working staff and managers behind this performance, as well as carers who were family or friends, foster parents and volunteers. The pandemic had demonstrated that having robust care services in the communities was vital, and it was greatly hoped that policies and arrangements etc. in the future would highlight that the care sector was just as important as the health services.

She emphasised that she and the heads of department would closely monitor the effect of last year on the staff in the long term and the short / medium term. There was mental health support available for the staff. We must be alert to the needs of individual staff, and try and anticipate any future problems. The pandemic had also left its mark on the county's population in terms of employment, loneliness, depression etc., and the Supporting People Board was looking at well-being issues, and had learned from the experiences of Covid in order to ensure that we responded in the best possible way.

She added that good performance was not possible without political and corporate support, and she thanked all the members for their work throughout the year in supporting, challenging and offering observations and new ideas. She thanked the two Cabinet Members involved in the care field, Councillors Dafydd Meurig and Dilwyn Morgan, and thanked the Leader and the rest of the Cabinet, and the Chair and members of the Care Scrutiny Committee for their continued assistance and support. She also took the opportunity to thank the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Head of Children and Families Department, and the senior managers and managers. She further thanked other departments in the Council for their willingness to step in and support the social care work over the past year. She gave particular thanks to Dilwyn Williams for his leadership and support during his time as Chief Executive, and noted that she looked forward to working with Dafydd Gibbard, the newly-appointed Chief Executive.

To close, she noted that 2021 would also be a challenge, but by working together and sharing and offering ideas, she was confident that they could continue to offer the best service to the people of Gwynedd.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- It was noted that the Gwynedd Test, Trace and Protect department had done exceptionally good work.
- It was noted that no matter how hard the Council worked, especially in the area of mental health, they would not be able to achieve their mission unless the Health Board had enough staff, and they emphasised the need to train doctors and nurses in Bangor, jointly between the Hospital and the University.
- The two care Cabinet Members thanked the Director for her support and leadership, and they thanked all members of staff, especially the front-line staff,

for all their work and their personal sacrifice at times, for the benefit of the vulnerable people of Gwynedd.

- The staff were thanked for their willingness to assist the members to respond to enquiries by the public.
- It was noted that the effects of the pandemic would last for years, and they called on fellow-members to assist with the burden in support of the officers and the people of Gwynedd.
- In response to a question regarding the Department's capacity to face the problems we will face in the future in light of Covid and Brexit, it was explained that the matter of recruitment in the care field had been included on both Departments' risk register. There were no easy solutions to this, but we must make this matter a priority, in partnership with the Health Service. We had to have the funding from the Government to ensure that we could pay fair salaries across the entire sector. It was unclear as yet what kind of service would be required in light of the experiences with Covid, but it was important that we were able to be responsive and answer some of the problems in the most constructive and proactive way possible.
- A member queried what kind of response there had been to the recent national and local campaigns to recruit workers in the care sector, and questioned what could the members do to promote this. In response, it was noted that the campaigns had improved the situation. They believed that more could be done, and there might be scope to have more of a local feeling to some of the posts too, so that it was possible to support anyone who was slightly anxious to apply for a post in a council or with a provider. The members' role could be key in that respect. The social workers must be taken into account too, ensuring that enough of them were supported to complete a higher degree to enter the field. The Care Scrutiny Committee would undoubtedly keep an eye on the work that was happening, and anyone who had ideas on how to improve the recruitment systems and the campaigns were invited to make contact with the Department to discuss further.
- It was asked how the Council could support those people who are on the line and cannot get financial aid from anywhere. In response it was explained that the Supporting People Board were working in this direction, as it included specific work streams on employment, poverty, mental health, well-being etc. but this could be discussed further with the member outside the meeting.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

The Director was thanked for her presentation.

12. EXTEND THE APPOINTMENT OF LAY MEMBER OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented a report which requested the Council to extend the appointment of Mrs Sharon Warnes as a lay member of the Audit and Governance Committee for an additional year, until the election in May 2022, as the current local government term would end in 2022, and since constitutional changes would entail quite significant changes to the committee's membership from May 2022 as a result of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, the Chair and Vice-chair of the Audit and Governance Committee and members of the committee noted that Mrs Sharon Warnes had been a very hard-working member over the years.

RESOLVED to extend the appointment of Mrs Sharon Warnes as a lay member of the Audit and Governance Committee for an additional year, until the election in May 2022.

13. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL BALANCE

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report on the annual review of the Council's political balance.

The Head of Democratic Services noted that Councillor Freya Bentham, Member for Harlech / Talsarnau, had tendered her resignation since publishing the report, and he intended to report further on any change to the political balance as a consequence of this to the Council in July, after a by-election had been held.

He also acknowledged that the formula for allocating seats on committees was complicated, but this was a statutory system that was implemented consistently across Welsh Councils. As such, the Democracy Team and the Communications Team were in the process of producing a short video to assist everyone to better understand the process.

RESOLVED

- (a) To adopt the list of committees and sub-committees to be established for the municipal year, as noted in the appendix to these minutes, and to adopt the allocation of seats in accordance with what is noted in the appendix.**
- (b) To delegate the power to the Head of Democracy Services to make appointments to the committees based on political balance and in accordance with the wishes of the political groups.**
- (c) To adopt the chairpersonships of the scrutiny committees on the basis of political balance, as follows:**

**Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee – Independent Group
Communities Scrutiny Committee – Plaid Cymru
Care Scrutiny Committee – Independent Group**

14. RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS NOTICE OF MOTION

Submitted for information – a letter from the Chief Executive of Snowdonia National Park Authority, in response to Councillor Glyn Daniels' notice of motion to the meeting on 1 October, 2020, regarding the possibility of charging tourists for visiting parts of the National Park.

A member noted his dissatisfaction that it had taken five months to present the response to the Council members.

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 2.55pm.

CHAIR

APPENDIX A – ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES

A	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	The National Party	United Independent Group for Gwynedd	Individual Member	Total
Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee	10	5	1	1	1	0	18
Communities Scrutiny Committee	10	5	2		0	1	18
Care Scrutiny Committee	10	5	1	1	0 (down from 1)	1 (up from 0)	18
Audit and Governance	10	5	1		1	1	18

B	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	The National Party	United Independent Group for Gwynedd	Individual Member	Total
Democratic Services	8	4	1	1	1		15
Planning	8	4	1		1	1	15
Central Licensing	8	4	1		0	2	15
Language	8	5	1		1		15
Chief Officers Appointment	8	4	1 (down from 2)	1	0	1 (up from 0)	15
Employment Appeals	4	2	1		0		7
Number of seats	84	43	11	4	5	7	154

C	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	The National Party	United Independent Group for Gwynedd	Individual Member	Total
Pensions	4	2	0		0	1	7
Local Joint Consultative Committee	6	3	1		1		11
SACRE	4	1 (down from 2)	0	1	0	1 (up from 0)	7

Joint Planning Policy Committee	5	2	1		0		8
Total seats	103	51	13	5	6	9	187

In accordance with the previous decision of the Council, the higher salaries are paid as follows:

- Leader
- Deputy Leader
- 8 other Cabinet members
- The Leader of the largest Opposition
- Committee Chairs
 - Scrutiny Committee (x3)
 - Audit and Governance Committee
 - Planning Committee
 - Licensing Committee (Central and General count as one Committee)
 - Pensions Committee