

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING 25/10/18

Present: Councillor Annwen Hughes (Chair);
Councillor Edgar Wyn Owen (Vice-chair).

Councillors: Menna Baines, Freya Hannah Bentham, Stephen Churchman, Steve Collings, Annwen Daniels, R.Glyn Daniels, Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Peter Antony Garlick, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Alwyn Gruffydd, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, R.Medwyn Hughes, Nia Jeffreys, Peredur Jenkins, Aled Wyn Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Charles W.Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Elwyn Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Keith Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dilwyn Lloyd, Dafydd Meurig, Linda Morgan, Dafydd Owen, Dewi Owen, W.Roy Owen, Jason Parry, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Elfed P.Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Angela Russell, Dyfrig Siencyn, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas, Cemlyn Williams, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gareth Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams and Owain Williams.

Also in attendance: Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services / Monitoring Officer), Rhun ap Gareth (Senior Solicitor / Deputy Monitoring Officer), Vera Jones (Democracy Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Craig ab Iago, Dylan Bullard, Anwen Davies, Aled Evans, Dylan Fernley, Simon Glyn, Selwyn Griffiths, Sian Hughes, Judith Humphreys, Aeron Maldwyn Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones, Linda Ann Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Dilwyn Morgan, Rheinallt Puw, Peter Read, John Pughe Roberts, W.Gareth Roberts, Paul Rowlinson, Mike Stevens, Hefin Underwood, Catrin Wager and Gruffydd Williams.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None to note.

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Condolences were expressed to Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department) at the recent loss of his mother.

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

The Council stood as a mark of respect.

It was noted that Councillor Anwen Davies' son had been seriously ill recently and he was wished a full and speedy recovery.

The Young Farmers were congratulated on a successful Eisteddfod in Porthmadog recently, and particularly the Rhiw branch for their success, and one of whom, Sian Heulwen Roberts from the Environment Department, who won the chair.

It was noted that an announcement had been made on Tuesday that the Slate Areas would be the next nomination to be submitted to Unesco. This was excellent news for Gwynedd as a whole as an opportunity to celebrate our unique cultural heritage.

THE COUNCIL

It was noted that a short public service would be held at Caernarfon Castle at 2.30pm on Remembrance Sunday, 11 November 2018, to commemorate a hundred years since the end of the Great War. During the service, the ashes of the Poppy Crosses placed in the Great War Memorial Garden opened at the Castle on 7 July 2016, would be scattered in the exact location of the Memorial Garden.

It was noted that a Coffee Morning would be held by Liz Saville Roberts MP at Tŷ Siamas, Eldon Square, Dolgellau at 10.30am, Friday 2 November with the Red Cross and the Royal Voluntary Service in order to assist the charities to recruit volunteers. It was explained that they were collaborating on a project called Positive Steps and that Ann Griffith, Deputy Police Commissioner would be present to give a brief address on volunteering.

Also, it was noted that Liz Saville Roberts MP had arranged an event to commemorate the First World War Conscientious Objectors, at Capel Bowydd, Blaenau Ffestiniog, on Saturday 17 November from 9.30am.

4. CORRESPONDENCE, COMMUNICATIONS, OR ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None to note.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. GROWTH DEAL FOR THE ECONOMY OF NORTH WALES: THE PROPOSITION DOCUMENT

The Leader submitted a report inviting the Council to endorse the Proposition Document in order to give a mandate to the leaders to commit to a Heads of Terms Agreement with both Governments.

The Leader set the political context and the Corporate Director elaborated on the purpose of the document, the main considerations and the next steps.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and make observations.

During the discussion, strong support to the document was expressed by several members on the following grounds:-

- That this deal offered an excellent and unique opportunity for Gwynedd and that the document should be supported and trust placed in the Leader to battle on our behalf.
- That this deal would help young people to seek work in their local areas and create the environment for the county's private sector to prosper in the future.
- That in forming this deal, the two counties furthest East had set their sights back towards the counties in the West so that the six North Wales authorities spoke with one voice.
- That the status quo was not an option and this deal, which could transform the North Wales economy, must be taken advantage of.
- That the fact that this deal would place industrial buildings on strategic sites such as Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor, which had been vacant for 15 years, was welcomed, and the potential promise of 250 jobs, a stone's throw from the city centre, was very encouraging news.

On the contrary, concern was expressed about the deal by others on the following grounds:-

THE COUNCIL

- That there were reservations that the deal did not do enough to support rural Gwynedd.
- That Gwynedd was small and feeble compared with the populous counties of the North-East and Merseyside and that we could live to regret being drawn in to such a deal.
- That the inequality between the GVA of the north-east and the north-west was striking, with Wrexham reaching nearly 80% of the average GVA of England and Wales (excluding London and the South-East) whilst Anglesey was at 50% of the average. It was assumed that the GVA of Gwynedd, as one of the poorest areas in Europe, would also be low, though the public sector jobs in the Bangor and Caernarfon areas would skew that figure somewhat.
- That the document did not refer to the effect of the influx of exiles back to the country as a result of Brexit.
- That, in terms of nuclear energy and specifically the Sellafield nuclear energy waste tip, there was a risk for us to be drawn into the principle that, if it was good enough for Cumbria, it was good enough for Gwynedd and Anglesey too.
- That the document referred to European grants, but that there would not be a European Union by the time this deal was delivered.
- That there was much mention of businesses and the money that private businesses would pump in, but there were no businesses in Gwynedd that could contribute, as it was micro businesses that we had here, employing up to 10 workers only.
- That the talk about disseminating prosperity was merely pulling the wool over people's eyes and that the principle of trickle down economy had never worked.
- That it was commented that the report '*noted*' that there was a risk to our national entity, rather than '*insisted*' that we retained our national entity.
- That Westminster Government would not support this deal if the report did not mention the assimilation between the Northern Powerhouse and us.
- That it had been given to understand by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support that £2m had been allocated to promote the Arfor project, which was the idea of establishing one authority for the counties of West Wales. That offer should be grasped rather than supporting the Growth Deal.
- That the third recommendation in the report gave absolute power to the Leader to make political decisions on the county's economy.
- That there was a risk that the higher-level apprenticeships would all be in the East and out of reach of young people in Gwynedd due to the travelling costs and having to stay overnight in some cases.
- That there was a risk that some of the decisions would be made in the interests of the region at the expense of the West and that certainty was needed that this Council would have its voice in the decisions.
- That there were basic shortcomings which undermined the entire package, namely the lack of planning for the possibility of a hard border at Holyhead Port as a result of Brexit and the over-reliance on nuclear energy.
- That it was unclear how this deal would prevent the decline of town centres.
- That, though the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee had been supportive of the strategic direction and had shown its support to proceed with the Proposition Document, it had also highlighted several risks which needed to be addressed.

In response to the concern voiced, the Leader noted:-

- That he was confident that every effort had been made to extend the deal across all areas of Gwynedd and that he would monitor the situation in the future and would stand firm in support of the rural areas.
- That the North Wales counties were stronger together. The alternative would be to do nothing, and that would certainly leave Gwynedd in a weaker position.

THE COUNCIL

- That the Eastern counties could well have created an economic entity with parts of North-West England, but rather, they decided to choose to work with the counties of the West.
- That the Arfor funding was £2m for four counties over two years to undertake innovative work in relation to the language and the economy, and though this was to be welcomed, the £500,000 for Gwynedd would not touch the problem.
- That he did not have absolute power and that he, like the leaders of the five other local authorities, needed to seek the permission of their Council members to act.
- That the Gwynedd GVA was 65% of the national average, which was low, and it would be irresponsible to reject any opportunity to seek to improve the situation.
- That it was a matter of sadness to him that we, the Welsh people, were afraid of venturing and he referred to an example of a Welsh-speaker who had established a successful business in Gwynedd.
- That the Board would have to be in agreement on all decisions. Also, as four of the six North Wales counties (namely Conwy, Denbigh, Gwynedd and Anglesey) were rural counties and shared the same vision as us in terms of disseminating growth, it would be the counties of the East in the minority in these discussions.
- That only two of the 16 projects involved the nuclear industry in any way - one was a project by Bangor University to undertake research and the other was a project to improve the infrastructure at Trawsfynydd, whatever the future use of the site would be. The Wylfa development was not part of the Growth Deal.
- That the Holyhead Project answered the Brexit question and also created far more opportunities for Holyhead.
- That he recognised that there were risks involved with this deal, but that very detailed discussions would be held again regarding the financial side prior to making any final decisions for the future and the risks needed to be measured against the benefits it was hoped that the deal would bring.
- While sympathising with some of the points raised by the objectors, he encouraged the members to reject the negative attitude and look forward to a positive future. As the saying goes - nothing ventured nothing gained.

In response to the concern regarding the higher-level apprenticeships, the Corporate Director noted that £8m would be sought from both governments to develop the skills agenda in North Wales, with the vast majority of this money going to support young people for apprenticeships, and particularly higher-level apprenticeships, and keeping young people in their communities.

The following additional points were noted:-

- That the Communities Scrutiny Committee should have had an opportunity to look at this matter also, as the proposal would affect every community across the county.
- That it was disappointing that a third of the Council members were absent from this important meeting.
- That certainty was desired that Bangor city centre would not lose out, as investment was needed in the city as had already happened, or was going to happen in other towns across North Wales.

In response to the comment regarding Bangor, the Leader noted:-

- That consideration would soon be given to allocating £250,000 from the Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme to the Bangor High Street regeneration scheme, which would draw down an additional sum of £600,000 from Welsh Government.

THE COUNCIL

- That the strong message among North Wales leaders was that we should not be parochial and that it must be borne in mind that some councils would not benefit greatly from the deal, but were fully supportive of it nonetheless.

The Leader, Corporate Director and everyone else who had worked on this deal were thanked for their input.

A registered vote was called for on the proposal (as noted in paragraph 1 of the report) to endorse the Proposition Document in order to give a mandate to the leaders to commit to a Heads of Terms Agreement with both Governments, subject to the conditions noted. Over a quarter of the Members present voted in favour of a registered vote.

According to Procedural Rules, the following vote on the motion was recorded:-

In favour (45)

Councillors Menna Baines, Freya Hannah Bentham, Steve Collings, Annwen Daniels, R.Glyn Daniels, Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Peter Antony Garlick, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, R.Medwyn Hughes, Nia Jeffreys, Peredur Jenkins, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Charles W.Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Elwyn Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Keith Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dilwyn Lloyd, Dafydd Meurig, Linda Morgan, Dafydd Owen, Dewi Owen, Edgar Owen, W.Roy Owen, Jason Parry, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Elfed P.Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Dyfrig Siencyn, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas, Cemlyn Williams, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gareth Williams and Gethin Glyn Williams.

Against (4)

Councillors Stephen Churchman, Alwyn Gruffydd, Angela Russell and Owain Williams.

Abstaining (1)

Councillor Aled Wyn Jones.

The Chairman reported that the proposal had been carried.

RESOLVED subject to the decision not committing the Council to financial investment at this stage and that the financial risks and benefits will be considered in full when the final Deal is submitted to the Council for approval:-

- To adopt the Proposition Document as (1) the basis of a longer-term regional strategy for economic growth and (2) the regional bid for the priority programmes and projects from which the content of a Growth Deal will be drawn at the Heads of Terms Agreement stage with Governments.**
- To authorise the Leader to commit the Council to Heads of Terms with the Governments alongside the political and professional leaders from the nine other statutory partners represented on the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, and the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council, with the Proposition Document forming the boundaries for the Heads of Terms agreement.**

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.45am.

CHAIR

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.45 am

CHAIRMAN