

**Minutes of the National Executive Committee Meeting,
Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells on Friday 8 March, 2019 at
1.00pm**

Present:

Cllr Mike Cuddy, Chair of One Voice Wales; Cllr John Hughes, Bridgend/Vale/Cardiff (Vice Chair, One Voice Wales) Cllr Bryan Grew, Larger Council's Representative; Cllr Mike Theodoulou, Larger Council's representative; Cllr Gareth Evans, Swansea; Cllr Wyn Morgan, Swansea; Cllr Tudor Owen, Arfon Dwyfor; Cllr Hugh Patrick MBE, Brecon/Radnor; Cllr Peter Games, Brecon/Radnor; Cllr Wyn Edwards, Carmarthen; Cllr Arthur Davies, Neath/Port Talbot; Cllr Ben Davies, Ceredigion; Cllr Bob Barton, Conwy/Denbigh; Cllr Philip Williams, Conwy/Denbigh; Cllr Rachel Davies, Montgomery; Cllr Derrick Pugh, Montgomery; Cllr Elfed ap Gomer, Meirionnydd; Cllr Brian Hancock, RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly; Cllr Jo Rao, RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly; Cllr Mike Harriman, Wrexham/Flint; Cllr Veronica Gay, Wrexham/Flint.

One Voice Wales Staff:

Lyn Cadwallader, Chief Executive; Paul Egan, Deputy Chief Executive; Shan Bowden, Development Officer; Mel ab Owain, Development Officer

Apologies:

Cllr Glyn Smith, Blaenau Gwent/Torfaen; Cllr Stephen Brooks, Blaenau Gwent/Torfaen; Cllr Mair Stephens, Carmarthen; Cllr Alan Carter, Neath/Port Talbot; Cllr Alun Wyn Evans, Meirionnydd; Cllr Ken Rowlands, Pembroke; Cllr Brian Miles, Monmouth/Newport; Cllr Keith Plow, Monmouth/Newport; Cllr Marjorie Thomson, Flint/Wrexham, Cllr Margaret Thomas, Anglesey; Cllr John Egryn Lewis, Anglesey.

1. Welcome

Councillor Cuddy welcomed everyone to the meeting. He gave a brief resume of the recent engagement with the Welsh Government, WCVA and WLGA and indicated his disappointment so far on the Welsh Government's response to the recommendations of the Independent Local Council Review Panel. He informed the NEC that Councillor Paul Griffiths, a former independent member of the Audit Panel had recently been appointed as a Special Adviser to the Minister for Housing and Local Government.

2. Apologies

See above.

3. Declarations of Personal Interest

There were no matters raised.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 December, 2018

RESOLVED that: The minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Matters Arising.

It was noted that in relation to Minute 22 'Posting of Papers for NEC Meetings,' there had been no discussion about this issue and it was considered that the matter should be fully discussed at the next NEC meeting. It was essential that matters referred from the Larger Council's Committee were fully debated at the NEC before decisions were reached. It was also agreed that all NEC Committees and Area Committees should have the opportunity to refer matters to the NEC for consideration and that a standard item be included on their

meeting agendas.. A brief debate took place about the need to reduce reliance on use of paper and postage and it was agreed that expenses claim forms be sent to NEC members electronically enabling them to complete and return by e-mail.

6. Finance, Resources and General Purposes Committee

Cllr Elfed ap Gomer gave the following report from this morning's meeting:-

- a) The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December, 2018 had been approved.
- b) A budget monitoring report had been received which forecast a healthy cash reserve of an estimated £170k at the year end due primarily to an increase in membership fees and training fees. It had been noted that the Welsh Government revenue grant had been confirmed for the next 3 years with a small annual increase which was to be welcomed. The Mid and West Wales Development Officer remained vacant and it was understood that the Chief Executive would arrange to advertise the post in the Welsh media in an effort to attract suitable candidates.
- c) The Committee wished to recommend that a small Working Party be established to develop a strategy and action plan for generating more sponsorship opportunities. A debate on this recommendation took place in the NEC and it was **RESOLVED** that:
 - I. A Working Party be established comprising of three representatives from the Finance, Resources and General Purposes Committee and the Chairs of the other two NEC Committees.
 - II. The Chief Executive to engage with the membership to design the terms of reference and objectives of the Working Party.
 - III. The mode of communication to be used for the Working Party to be based on e-mail engagement.
 - IV. The outcome of the work of the Working Party would be to develop a strategy and action plan for consideration by the NEC.
- d) The Committee had considered the main conclusions and recommendations from the recent Wales Audit Office reports on the audit round for 2017/18 and effectiveness of internal audit and expressed some concern about how relatively minor issues had influenced the overall impression given of the sector.
- e) The Committee wished to recommend the proposed increases in salary levels of permanent staff contained in a report that it had considered. The increases were based on the new salary levels approved by the NJC for Local Authority staff from 1st April, 2019. (OVW staff left the room whilst the NEC gave consideration to the recommendation). **RESOLVED** that: The proposed salary increases for permanent staff contained in the report to the Committee be approved with effect from 1st April 2019.
- e) The Committee had been pleased to learn that support for training was being maintained at a high level.
- f) The Committee noted that the Welsh Government had commissioned OVW to produce 7 basic on-line learning modules based on a quotation submitted for the work. The Welsh Government required the modules to be made available on the OVW website on a free of charge basis for both member and non-member councils. There was some concern that their availability could lead to a reduction in support for the normal training courses which could undermine income generation. It was necessary for the position to be closely monitored.

RESOLVED that: The report from the Committee be accepted.

7. Communications and Commercial Committee

A report was received from Councillor Peter Games.

- a) The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December, 2018 had been approved.
- b) It had been agreed that in the e-bulletin Clerks should be encouraged to learn more about the services of OVW and to consider purchasing 'Local Councils Explained' from NALC.
- c) It had been suggested that ROSPA be contacted about becoming an exhibitor at future Conferences.
- c) It was agreed that the WIFI Code of the venue for the Annual Conference be included in the Conference packs.

RESOLVED that: The report from the Committee be accepted.

8. Policy Committee

A report was received from the Committee.

- a) The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December, 2019 had been approved.
- b) Councillor Gareth Evans had been appointed as the new Chair of the Committee.
- c) It was noted that OVW had been provided with a new HMRC contact who would be prepared to consider a request for a blanket dispensation to be granted to all Councils enabling them to treat the basic allowance and caring expenses as free from any taxable liability.
- d) It was reported that the Wales Audit Office would be making arrangements for the external audit process to be moved in-house following the end of the current contract with the two private sector providers. A communication would be issued to Councils in due course.
- e) Concern was expressed that the current Code of Conduct and the arrangements for dealing with breaches was not always effective especially in the case of harassment and bullying of Council officials. At a recent meeting with the Ombudsman it was agreed that guidance in this context would be jointly developed by OVW and the SLCC with some assistance from PSOW staff.

RESOLVED that: The report from the Committee be accepted.

9. Welsh Government Monitoring Report

The most recent monitoring report was attached to the agenda for the information of members. The report included the performance of OVW in relation to the key performance indicators agreed in advance by the Welsh Government as well as a summary of activities undertaken in the period. The Welsh Government officials indicated that they were happy with performance in the period.

10. Business Plan 2019/20

The key sections of the business plan had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting. The targets contained in the report were all considered to be achievable. It was noted that there was no job role descriptors prepared for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Area Committees and in one Committee the Chair wished to extend the role to pursue OVW priorities in the area and to increase visibility. It was likely that Chairs would have differing perceptions of their role and there was insufficient Development Officer time to support an extended role. The NEC was not supportive of this proposal due to lack of funding and staff time available to support such an approach. It was vital that OVW operated as 'one' organisation and it was more important to have a consistency of approach rather than

regional variations. The Chief Executive considered that OVW was a poor relation compared with the funding support given to other sectors and if the position ever changed it would be possible to further develop the organisation in support of member councils.

RESOLVED that: The Business Plan for 2019/20 be approved.

11. Final Independent Review Panel Developments

The Welsh Government had responded to the recommendations of the Panel communicated to the sector through the publication of a list of immediate actions and areas for further consideration. 14 of the 36 recommendations contained in schedule of areas for action and further consideration would require ongoing engagement with the Welsh Government. The areas for action and for further consideration were divided into the themes of clarifying the role of the sector; increasing democracy and participation; building capacity, building capability, improving relationships and improving accountability.

12. Strengthening Relationships with the WLGA

In terms of strengthening relationships with the WLGA it was necessary to update the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding and work was currently ongoing in this respect. The 2013 document had been circulated with the agenda for the information of the Committee. The Chief Executive indicated his desire for Charters to be in place in all unitary authority areas and he would be looking to secure the support of the WLGA in this regard. A recent matter of concern related to the decision of Newport City Council to withdraw concurrent grant funding of local councils in its area which was currently the subject of a judicial review.

13. Partnership Council

The Chair and Chief Executive had recently met with their counterparts in the WCVA to commence discussions on the development of a model for community planning. It had been agreed to recommend to the Welsh Government that funding be provided for 3 pilots to support the work. It was hoped that the Welsh Government would support the outcome of this joint work. It was noted that in Ceredigion, work was being undertaken on the development of community planning approaches and Cllr Ben Davies would forward details to the Chief Executive. WLGA was being kept in the loop in relation to the work being undertaken with WCVA. It was considered that the work should be linked in with the PSB agenda and the Chief Executive would contact Claire Germain in this regard.

14. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

It was noted that the Annual Report for 2019/20 had now been published. Paul Egan was in contact with HMRC about the granting of a blanket dispensation for the sector enabling the basic allowance and caring expenses to be treated as having no taxable liability.

15. Ystadau Cymru – Community Asset Transfer Developments

The Chief Executive was a member of the Group and had a lead role in relation to asset transfer issues to the local council sector. It was noted that WCVA had been granted Welsh Government funding to undertake a survey of the third sector.

16. Carnegie Trust/Institute of Welsh Affairs ‘Understanding Welsh Places.’

The NEC was given a brief summary of the work being undertaken to provide key data in respect of all towns with a population of greater than 1000 which would be available on a new website from July, 2019. A similar facility already existed in relation to Scottish towns.

17. Conferences Update

The following Conferences were planned for the remainder of the year:-

Innovative Awards Conference – 28 March
Joint Event with SLCC – 15 May (Swansea)
Joint Event with Planning Aid Wales – 11 June (Llanrwst)
Innovative Practice Conference – 10 July (Builth Wells)
Annual Conference and AGM – 5 October (Pontrhydfendigaid)

18. Office Move and IT Update

The Chief Executive informed the NEC that it was his preference to re-new the lease in College Street and arrange for a new stair lift to be installed at an estimated cost of £4k. In terms of IT facilities, it was noted that Carmarthenshire CC was changing the system into an office 365 environment.

19. Staffing Matters

The NEC was informed that the part time Administrative Assistant had recently left to take up a new role elsewhere. The post would be advertised in the near future. An advertisement for the vacant Mid and West Wales Development Officer post would be advertised again next week. The post had been vacant for over a year in view of the difficulty experienced in attracting suitable candidates who were bilingual.

RESOLVED that: The Chair and Chief Executive be granted delegated powers to make the appointment.

20. Company Limited by Guarantee

There was nothing further to report at this time

21. Development Officer Reports

These were noted.

22. Date of Next Meeting

7 June 2019

Signed..... Date 7 June, 2019
Chair of NEC