

**Partnership Council for Wales**  
**12:30 – 14:30, 18 March 2019**  
**Conference Room C, Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay**  
**Minutes of meeting**

**Attendees**

**Members**

Julie James AM – Minister for Housing and Local Government (Chair)  
Hannah Blythyn AM – Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government  
Cllr Debbie Wilcox – Leader of Welsh Local Government Association and Leader of Newport City Council  
Cllr Andrew Morgan – Presiding Officer for Welsh Local Government Association and Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council  
Cllr Huw Thomas – Leader of Cardiff Council  
Rt. Hon Alun Michael – Police and Crime Commissioner Representative  
Cllr Tudor Davies – Fire and Rescue Authorities representative  
Cllr Michael Cuddy – Community Councils Representative  
Maria Battle – National Health Service Wales and Local Health Boards Representative  
Owain Wyn – National Park Authorities representative

**Observers**

Chris Llewellyn, Chief Executive, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)  
Martin Mansfield, General Secretary, Wales TUC  
Peter Davies, Chair, Wales Council for Voluntary Action  
Lyn Cadwallader, Chief Executive, One Voice Wales

**Welsh Government Officials**

Reg Kilpatrick, Director, Local Government  
Piers Bisson, Director, European Transition

**Secretariat**

Paula James & Lisa Hughes, Welsh Government

**Apologies**

Cllr Ellen ap Gwynn - Ceredigion  
Cllr Aaron Shotton – Flintshire County Council  
Cllr Rob Stewart - Leader of City and County of Swansea Council  
Cllr Mair Stephens – Elected Member of Carmarthenshire County Council  
Cllr John W Thomas - Leader of Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council  
Cllr Ieuan Williams – Elected Member of Isle of Anglesey County Council  
Adrian Crompton - Wales Audit Office (Observer)

## **Action Points**

**Action 1:** PB referred to the UK Government's document on the implications of a no deal exit for trade and business and agreed a link would be sent to members via the secretariat [\[Web link\]](#)

**Action 2:** PB mentioned the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report which he felt provided a fair and valuable assessment of preparations in Wales. The report highlights the scale of the challenge and the importance of scrutiny, and PB wished to record thanks to WAO for the subsequent scrutiny events. Secretariat to communicate message to WAO.

**Action 3:** PB stated that today (18 March) a report was published on the impact of the UK Government's future migration policy proposals on Wales, and agreed to send a link to the report via the secretariat [\[Web link\]](#)

**Action 4:** It was requested that the ECC(W) daily Wales report be shared with local authorities. RK confirmed that the particular report could not be shared but that the ECC(W) will provide a daily summary report to the local resilience forums when the process is fully live. Secretariat to inform civil contingencies team.

**Action 5:** The Minister stated that the terms of reference for the review of strategic partnership arrangements would be drafted and agreed, and the review would report by the Autumn to inform the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill. Secretariat to follow up.

## **Item 1 – welcome and introductions**

1. The Chair, Julie James AM, Minister for Housing and Local Government, opened the meeting by welcoming members and thanking them all for attending.
2. The Chair explained that the Counsel General had unfortunately been called to an urgent Brexit meeting in London so sent his apologies, but that the Brexit agenda item would be covered by Piers Bisson, Director of European Transition, Welsh Government.
3. The Chair briefly described the rest of the agenda which would consist of items on Civil Contingencies from Reg Kilpatrick, Director of Local Government, and on Community Safety from Alun Michael, South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner.

## **Actions from last meeting and updates**

4. The Chair provided updates on each of the action points from the previous meeting, as follows:

<b>Action Points</b>
<p>1. Consideration to be given to council tax mail shots being used for Welsh Government to get messages out to citizens about the Brexit portal and any other relevant sources of information.</p> <p>➤ Action – Brexit &amp; communications teams</p> <p>Actioned: majority of authorities included Brexit leaflet in council tax mail shots. Discussions ongoing between WLGA, Welsh Government and the outstanding authorities.</p>
<p>2. Brexit to be a standing item for Partnership Council and Workforce Partnership Council meetings</p> <p>➤ Action – Partnership Council secretariat</p> <p>Actioned: Brexit now a standing item for both groups</p>
<p>3. Welsh Government to continue to follow up on opportunity to submit a Welsh bid to the UK contingency fund to support some of the areas identified. All members to share any information or intelligence with members as it arises.</p> <p>➤ Action – Welsh Government &amp; all members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We are aware the UK Government is making available a fund in regard to potential civil contingencies.</li><li>• Our expectation is that there will not be many proposals that will meet the criteria for this funding.</li><li>• This is something we are giving consideration to, to ensure we explore all opportunities.</li><li>• We expect to receive a consequential of any funding allocated for proposals in England.</li></ul>
<p>4. Welsh Government to share work it had done with the Home Office on the settled status scheme</p> <p>➤ Action – Brexit team, Welsh Government</p> <p>Actioned: An update paper on the Settled Status Scheme has been circulated to members.</p>

## Item 2 - Brexit update

5. PB recapped on events in Parliament the previous week and the announcements made when the Prime Minister (PM) met with EU leaders in Strasbourg. These announcements included a joint statement with the EU and a UK Government unilateral statement, and was followed by a view expressed by the Attorney General regarding the backstop issue.
6. PB went on to mention the series of votes in Parliament including the second meaningful vote on the Tuesday (which had been lost by 149 votes), as well as Parliament voting against a no deal outcome and in favour of an extension to the Article 50 deadline.
7. UK Government focus now appeared to be on persuading DUP and European Research Group MPs to back the deal in a third meaningful vote.
8. Although Parliament voted against no deal, points of risk remain:
  - If the deal is not agreed in a further meaningful vote this week, what exactly will the PM ask for from the EU?
  - How will the EU respond and what will it ask for?
  - How will the PM respond to anything the EU asks for?
  - What can Parliament do if the PM does not feel she can accept the extension offered by the EU?
  - Even if an extension is agreed with the EU, can the UK Government get the regulations to extend exit day through Parliament by 29 March?

The Welsh Government has been clear that a no deal scenario is not acceptable and would not protect the interests of Wales.

9. PB referred to the UK Government's document on the implications of a no deal exit for trade and business, and agreed that a link to this document should be sent to members.

**Action:** Secretariat to circulate link to UK Government document regarding implications for trade and business.

10. PB stated that whilst we must make every attempt to avoid no deal, points of risk remain and so it is critical that we all press on with preparations to do all we can to be ready should that scenario occur.
11. PB emphasised that we cannot however prepare Wales in isolation and the links between the Welsh Government and UK Government are crucial, and are slowly improving, illustrated by the First Minister and the Counsel General attending specific meetings of a UK Government Cabinet Committee meeting for the first time in devolution history.

12. PB also described how in Wales there are four strands to our work:

- Engaging with UK Government on UK-wide projects
- Passing legislation in the Assembly (and consenting to legislation in Parliament) to give a functioning statute book for exit (we are on track)
- Civil contingencies
- Additional Wales-specific work (as outlined in statements to the Assembly on 22 January) supported by the EU Transition Fund.

13. PB also emphasised the importance of clear, measured, co-ordinated communications and mentioned the Preparing Wales website, which the majority of authorities had helped to raise awareness of with the public. The co-ordinated communications prepared by communications professionals are crucial to share messages in a clear way that will not inadvertently worry people, but social media poses a higher risk of miscommunications which could spiral out of control. It is important that all public service partners are aware of and alert to this.

14. PB mentioned the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report which provided a fair and useful assessment of preparations in Wales. The report highlights the scale of the challenge and the importance of scrutiny. Scrutiny events were held last week and will be held this week, in North and South Wales respectively. Feedback from the first event was positive, and PB wished to record thanks to the WAO.

**Action** – Pass on note of thanks to WAO for scrutiny events.

15. Looking further ahead:

- If a deal is agreed and the UK is in transition phase there will be negotiations on Future Relationship. The UK Government has promised more involvement for the devolved administrations, but these negotiations are likely to be broader and potentially more complicated than those so far. The economic model of trading goods and services, migration, and participation in future EU programmes are all important areas for negotiation.
- EU Funding and the UK Government Spending Review. The UK Government has signalled its intention for a shared prosperity fund to replace EU structural funds after the UK exits the EU. The Welsh Government has made clear its opposition to any reduction in the current levels of EU funding available to the Welsh Government, or to new controls being introduced, by the UK Government, through such an approach.
- UK constitution – common frameworks related to agriculture, the environment, the economy and other areas are being developed, and thought is being given to strengthening the overall constitutional architecture which supports devolution. As we leave the EU, common approaches applying at an EU would no longer automatically apply and

therefore intergovernmental arrangements within the UK will need to support a different type of engagement and way of reaching agreement.

- Future policy – there is work underway in Wales in a range of areas, including for example on the implications of Brexit for science and research.

16. PB stated that today (18 March) a report had been published on the impact of the UK Government's future migration policy proposals on Wales, and agreed to send a link to the report via the secretariat.

**Action** – secretariat to circulate link to migration report.

17. PB concluded by stating that in this critical week/ in what is a critical month and indeed a critical year, engagement and partnership working between the public services has never been more vital.

18. Cllr Debbie Wilcox (DW) firstly thanked the Minister for Housing and Public Services for providing funding to meet the additional pensions costs for teachers which had been discussed at the January meeting of the Partnership Council.

19. DW then thanked PB for his exceptional summary of the current situation regarding Brexit, which everyone agreed is highly complex and unprecedented. DW highlighted how difficult it is for elected members to try to explain the situation to their constituents. She also highlighted the importance of working across Government and with Scotland and Northern Ireland colleagues and peers to ensure the continuity of services to the public.

20. The Minister for Housing and Local Government (the Minister) observed that this is a most extraordinary time and we must all be as prepared as possible.

21. The Minister mentioned the legislative programme and the effect that Brexit is having by squeezing the ability to focus on legislation that would be new or innovative. The focus has to be on ensuring essential legislation is in place in preparation for the UK leaving the EU.

22. The Minister commented on how well colleagues have pulled together across Welsh Government and externally, and the positive impact of the partnership approach that exists across Wales.

### Item 3 – Civil Contingencies

23. Reg Kilpatrick (RK) introduced the contingencies being put in place to deal with a 'no deal' Brexit scenario. He talked through the arrangements to help describe the command and control structures in place in Wales to support the UK Government response arrangements .
24. RK thanked colleagues from across the public sector for all that has been done to get to the high state of readiness for Wales to support the UK Government's operations. The Emergency Co-ordination Centre (Wales) (ECC(W)) was mobilising today, 18 March, preparing to go live for a no deal scenario on 29 March. Wales will be prepared and operating and able to provide whatever support is needed by the UK Government.
25. RK described the positive relationship and collaboration between the Welsh Government (WG) and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and highlighted the importance of the role of local authorities in coordinating the Wales response to a no deal scenario. WG policy departments will need to work closely with local authorities and community organisations to identify potential problems such as food shortages, and relevant Ministers will be advised on any issues.
26. Local Resilience Forums will provide daily situation reports which will be digested into a Wales report, cleared by Ministers and fed up to UK Government. This process is important to spot issues as they emerge. This week will be a dry run and the ECC(W) will move to 24 hour cover from next week (wc 25 March). If there is a delay to Brexit then the centre will scale back but not demobilise.
27. Andrew Morgan requested that the daily Wales report be shared with local authorities. RK confirmed that the particular report could not be shared but that the ECC(W) will provide a daily report to the local resilience forums.

**Action:** ECC(W) to provide a daily summary report to all local resilience forums when ECC(W) fully live

28. RK asked LG colleagues for their sense of their own preparedness. Responses included concerns around sustainability of the approach due to it creating significant draw on time and effort, and it was agreed that it would be difficult to sustain beyond the medium term.
29. There was significant concern amongst members that whilst Brexit no deal preparedness was taking up so much resource, this provides a major risk if there were another emergency situation of any sort. There was concern that resources are stretched too far to respond effectively. The adverse impact on business as usual could also cause longer term problems.

30. The Minister thanked RK for the item and all members for their contributions. The Minister observed how we must ensure that people are fully informed about the implications of a no deal Brexit, but how we must actively avoid causing panic and stock-piling scenarios. The Minister stated that finding and maintaining this balance is difficult but crucial.

#### **Item 4 – Community Safety**

31. Alun Michael (AM) tabled his presentation '*Everything is Connected to Everything Else – Community Safety in Wales and why it matters*'.
32. AM talked about the importance of working together across the public services, as although policing is not devolved to Wales, we are working in a devolved environment. Key decisions relating to community safety are made by Chief Constables and Commissioners, but also by local authorities and the health service in Wales, falling within the remit of the Welsh Government.
33. AM raised the issue of police forces being statutory invitees to Public Service Boards (PSBs) but has also suggested being invited to Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) to help make connections across the two areas.
34. AM described the 'Partnership Landscape' slide and the importance of joining up with individual local authorities and health boards, including the challenges faced where there are examples of silo working.
35. AM discussed the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Wales and the support initiatives in place, in addition to the focused prevention work underway. AM emphasised the long term impact of ACEs with affected individuals being supported by public services throughout their lives, and described how the insights we are developing about ACEs are transforming policing methods. This is summarised in the new partnership between Public Health Wales and all four Commissioners and Chief Constables, and the resultant report '*Adverse Childhood Experiences: Breaking the Generational Cycle of Crime – Turning Understanding into Action*'.
36. AM explained the findings that 90% of calls to South Wales police are not about crime or disorder but are about vulnerability and mental health. Mental health nurses are now supporting police officers on duty to be able to appropriately help vulnerable people they encounter.
37. AM emphasised the social and economic cost of crime as depicted in his presentation, and the actions being taken by South Wales police to try to minimise these costs.

38. AM spoke briefly about the 101 call service and how a pilot between the police service, local authority and WLGA was unsuccessful, but the issue of how best to handle these calls was still to be considered.
39. AM concluded his presentation by talking about neighbourhood policing and about the 'Help Point' service in Swansea which had achieved significant savings for South Wales Police, the NHS and Ambulance Service. The Minister confirmed that Help Point had resulted in a significant reduction in alcohol/night out related incidents which are presented at her Swansea surgery, and she saw the service as a very positive intervention for the community. Maria Battle also confirmed the positive impact the service had on the treatment of people with alcohol abuse problems.

### **Minister for Housing and Local Government – Closing Remarks**

40. The Minister apologised for having missed the latest Local Government Working Group meeting due to illness, and confirmed how important the agenda is to her. The Minister confirmed she will prioritise future meeting dates, and asked that local government members are also flexible with their commitments to give the next meeting priority in their diaries.
41. The Minister mentioned one aspect of the Working Group discussions, which had been around strategic regional partnerships and the WLGA's compiled list of collaborations. There was some confusion around Public Service Boards and Regional Partnership Boards, how they operate in practice and whether the work of each group could be better aligned in future. The Minister noted that there was an upcoming event to explore this and that the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government and the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services would both be speaking. The Minister also confirmed she will be committing Welsh Government resource to work with the WLGA to undertake a review of existing arrangements and to make recommendations on how the landscape could be simplified. The Minister also noted the importance of involving other public service partners such as the police, health service, and also the trade unions (who are represented on the Working Group) in this review.

**Action:** The Minister stated that the terms of reference for the review of strategic partnership arrangements would be drafted and agreed, and the review would report by the Autumn to feed into the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill.

42. Cllr Debbie Wilcox (DW) agreed that the review was important and confirmed that the WLGA would work with WG to progress it. DW also took the opportunity to thank the Minister for the Welsh Government having fully funded the additional teacher and fire officer pension costs, and highlighted how much this had been appreciated. Tudor Davies also thanked the Minister on behalf of the three Fire

Authorities. The Minister stated her determination that front line services had not had to meet the additional costs.

43. The Minister confirmed that she will be attending the WLGA Council and also a subsequent meeting in lieu of a Working Group meeting on 29 March (Derek Vaughan, MEP, is currently unavailable to chair the Working Group due to the uncertainties over the Brexit timetable).
44. The Minister thanked members for their contributions and closed the meeting.

**The next meeting will take place 10.30 – 12.30, Wednesday 12 June at Ty Hywel.**