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Meeting called by Mr David Bowles – Interim Managing Director,
Anglesey County Council, on the 9th June 2010 at 2:00 pm.

Purpose of the meeting :-

To explain the current financial situation faced by the Council in terms of cut-backs and their implications and to discuss the results of the recent staff survey

During the meeting, the following points were raised :-

1. David Bowles named and shamed Councillors whom he deemed to have “undermined” the authority of the leader and himself, namely Cllr. Schofield and Cllr. Durkin.
2. He said “these Councillors cannot be trusted”
3. Implied “pulling strings” and “late night phone calls” between the Councillors whom were seen as being anti-progress.
4. When asked why these Councillors were not duly thrown out over these serious allegations, he duly replied that it was because there was no proof.
5. Repeatedly mentioned Cllr. Schofield and Cllr. Durkin when discussing political matters, giving an impression that they were corrupt.

...the next few weeks will show, I think its very very disappointing, that there are at the moment only 20 Members demonstrably on the side of the angels and there is a large group of Members prevaricating. Um, but this is where we are at the moment in terms of the politics of this Council, that either it survives and is successful or preferably,way we go. So you need to be aware this Council is at a pivotal point:- there are documents that have now been floating around Cardiff about further intervention within the Council -- contingency plans have been in place for a long while to replace the politicians here, simply failed to fix the deep-rooted problems that they have; so, yeah you might know what's happened recently..... is..... long term turmoil in the political domain. I think this time, touch wood, the turmoil appears to be, I choose my words carefully, appears to be, prime reasons, IF that is the case, again I choose my words carefully, and IF this is successful, and IF those who disrupt this Council are marginalised, then we can all pass in confidence; IF it doesn't work the consequences I'm afraid are pretty dire. So I'm being very open with all of you, 'cos that's my style -- so that's the scene-setting.

Um, you can either look at this as a half-empty glass, that you know, "oh my God", or we can say that its half-full -- this is an opportunity to sort this place out once-and-for-all. Um, time will tell, time will tell. So I just wanted to move on now then to, just go, initially, just a quick whistle-stop tour of where we are in terms of some progress to fix the recovery. You're aware of what the CBI said -- the corrosive effect of politics here unchallenged for a long, long while. Um, you're aware of

Some of those Councillors who are most disruptive have been on this Council for many, many years. They know how the system works. We could go out to Ladbrokes etc. Is there any other game in town. I think the tide might be turning. Well its easy or me to say that – brutal. Half-measures on't work. The politics of this place is not fixable etc. The ½ measures don't work.

Well what concerns me is that he's taking a very courageous lead & used the term "high moral ground on the side of the angels" – but that is potentially divisive, because anyone who isn't on the side of the angels is pilloried.we have 6 new portfolio holders out of 10.

I agree with you – its troublesome but if you analyse what's happened – Cllr. Fowlie;

Cllr. Aled Morris;

Cllr. O. Glyn Jones;

2 Members proposing Cllr Schofield into a Chair, Cllr. Durkin making defamatory statements, Left, Right, & Centre.

We have Cllr. Schofield undermining. You stand back and you say – its divisive. – What can be more divisive than that.

Leadership, engagement, making the Council more business-like, improving performance management. Uh, again you can see that there's a fairly clear read across from those, uh, sort of priorities deriving from business plans. We've done a lot of work with Members an Member development -- if they don't understand the 1st. principles of Government, then we have serious problems and some of them don't -- some of them happily put their personal friendships and loyalties above the interest of the island. Too many of them. So we're intensively putting together a Member development programme, be it to understand issues like scrutiny, they have how to understand how they're supposed to add value, to what the Council does, rather than undermine what the Council does. So a lot of work is going on and we do have some excellent, first class Members being dragged back by a handful of very influential Members working in covert and underhand ways. But nevertheless, we are making progress here -- a lot of work has been going on in terms of trying to improve community engagement. Um we've got question-time-sessions coming up over the next couple of weeks or so, members going round the island -- ask any questions you like -- we have new systems -- engagement strategies being evolved & going to the Executive to sign-off. So a lot of work going on in those sort of areas. Making the Council more business-like! Members no-longer dabble in some of the detailed staffing issues like they used to.

And those who do opt-in, 20% of them say, I'm not going to tell wher I work (?) so I make those comments to start-off with. (15.2.)

18.0 – Bullied – not a very good question this – the question is actually... Have you ever been bullied or harassed – er – well, lots of people will have worked here for many many years and one persons strong manager and strong leader is another persons bully, so you have to be careful with those questions, it would have been better if it had said - In the past 2 years for example, because I...??..... better handle, but you get roughly the same results if you ask if staff are being bullied or harassed by elected members. Not acceptable. Work-place bullying is not acceptable. So we have work to do then – Um - you know is unacceptable so gaining the views of staff – Um – these are not my conclusions – an independent company conducted the survey for us, and therefore they did the analysis and they did the analysis, not just for the results but also from all the written comments that people put in as well.

Um – 28.12 Questions

I have absolute confidence that Clive McGregor wants that. Councillor McGregor has it that he's relatively inexperienced as a Councillor. He's been a Councillor for 2 years – and this is not the easiest Council if you're a political leader – to lead.

So, (.....) he's said to a group of Members – I'm not prepared to work with you. It's not to do with the distant past – its about now.

The 1st. is one about reputation and those sort of things – it's a reflection of where this Council has been. We have bid for lots of money – if you're a Minister and you have a pot of money and you have a Council you trust with millions, or a Council you don't trust (-----?) where's the money going to go? We may all deliver, but if the perception is our politicians don't deliver, then we bid with one hand tied behind our back – reputation is important. Um, so we need to tackle that. The economy, – that is a discretionary area of spending, we don't have to as a Council do a great deal of economic development, its not a statutory requirement but given the state of Anglesey's economy, it is vital unifying nature (.coughs..),.... we are committed to try to do things to recover, the island's economy. So..... (?) because of the relatively low state of GDP per head, etc, generated on the island, so that's a priority. The next 2 are the sort of things you'd expect to see in any Council, and they are predominantly things about sustainability, healthy lifestyles, green issues, working across partnerships etc etc, all the sort of things that you by and large, you'd expect to see in any Public Sector Organisation. And the last one is about being business-like and particularly managing our budget given the sort of off-the-edge-of-a-cliff – so – these are – beginning to feature in the way that we want the Council to bring the focus of what we do. (unclear) We identified a number of areas for recovery, where we try to do a lot of work, and get the regulation off our back. Um, there are 5 areas – Corporate Governance obviously, Um, Community

Managers mustn't manage. We are trying to make the Council business-like, particularly around business planning. Those of you who have been involved in doing business planning over the past 2-3 Months I know you've gone through hell in terms of doing it in a new way, uh, hopefully it will be a lot easier – the next time round. Um, but we need to approach these... in a... more corporate and structured way now, to what we have in the past. So an awful lot of work going on about making the Council business-like. Improving performance. Corporate management business-plans before, were often being something that was being done and left on the shelf. They are going to be the cornerstone of how we performance manage ourselves. Each individual area of the Council has its own business plan – its no longer going to be left on the shelf – its gonna be the cornerstone to monitoring performance – if we ___?___ the business plans so we an do it – we do it. We shouldn't be doing loads of things that aren't in the business plan – we need to bring more focus to what we do, and what we don't do; and we need to make ourselves accountable for performance through the management chain. A lot of work is being done _____ on structures and approaches. So while there's a lot of good work going on, um, that I think the regulators increasingly will give us positive ticks on, a lot of this is about process, procedure, how we work, its not fundamentally the culture of the Council, particularly the culture that exists amongst certain Members. All the process changes in the world.

Will not deliver political sustainability, Er., you just need to be aware of that. Reputation management. Gethin is here today and I've made this comment a few times before -- Members thought that we should spend loads more money on PR -- I can sort it out (won't mind 5 spots to me?) -- no you just _____ (?only?) need to stop doing stupid things -- why spend money -- just stop screwing things-up. So a lot is going on -- um -- its hard, hard work for many people, I do appreciate that. I'm very grateful to all the people who have been involved in these sort of things -- driving forward whilst trying to do their day-job as well. We can only deliver through our Staff. I'm a passionate fan of staff surveys. You should do them in such a way that you can identify bits of the organisation -- there's no point in knowing that about 50% of people think that communication of staff is good, because within that 50%, there'll be some bits of the organisation where its 90%, think its good, a tenth think.. 10% think its not good. You need to be able to identify that area where its _____ ??? So we did a survey in such a way that we could identify bits of the organisation and it was to identify to improve, not for punishment, 20% of people who responded to the survey did not identify where they were. I find that very, very worrying. ... ??? We've never ?? ... done a staff survey before, they might just be ? _____ ?; people who didn't identify where they were! The response rate overall, because we didn't include many school staff, was around about 40%, not very good. That says something about the relationship between the employer and his staff. Its 60% of doubt,

The tensions that existed between Officer leadership and Member leadership in the Council – Um. The bloody early departure of the previous Managing Director, at that sort of background – we needed to respond.... You're aware of the fact that, by and large, this failure is not about the services that you provide on a day-to-day basis, it is about a failure of leadership within the Council particularly the leadership (??) to some extent because of that, Um, dysfunctional Officer leadership created, I think as a result of the politics of this place over a long period of time. I know personally how draining working with these Members can be – for the past 3 weeks, 90% of my time has been working on the political management of this Council; and people who've been in that Office before me and this is what they've had to put up with – I can understand how this Council got into this mess. So, but we are where we are. So that's the background. We need to just remind ourselves that this is the 1st. Corporate Intervention – well – all the Recovery Board think about is single service failure – Education, --?--?--things like that. This is the first Recovery Board covering all of Wales. We are making a lot of progress. If you read the 4th report up-to-&-including the 5th report of the Recovery Board, it's quite positive, the 6th report not quite so positive. We've seen a draft of the new Audit Management letter – Um, coming out probably in the next couple of Months – I think, forget the timetable for it – again relatively positive, but positive stuff is fundamentally about systems, processes, procedures, planning. You know, all those sort of things, that, by and large, we do. It's not going to be as positive, I think, until these issues in the Member (--?vein?--) are resolved, - sorted once-and-for-all. We now publish 5 priorities for development.

Half measures don't work. I've come to the conclusion that the politics of this place are NOT fixable. You have to be brutal. There is nothing between the two. And if brutal doesn't work, then ----- . The half-measures haven't worked.

What concerns me is it sounds as if he's taken a very brave courageous lead. I think you've used the terms about something high moral ground on the side of the angels, but then that's potentially divisive because everybody who isn't with the new group then is pilloried on the other side and they also suffer the fall-out, in that it affects the continuity and stability because we may have 6 new portfolio holders out of the 10 portfolio holders. Yes - I agree with you. It is turbulence, but if you analyse what's happened, I don't think it had stability before. I can't see anything stable, bizarre decisions being made in bizarre ways. People being undermined left-right-&-centre. People prepared in the face of a Ministerial letter that says "you do not do this" prepared to do it. The Minister wrote to all Members of this Council and said "The controlling group do not able in the seats given to the opposition. Chairs, Vice-Chairs. Very clear statement from the Minister. What do they do? They turn-up and they said "we don't like the opposition's choice for this. We'll put Councillor Schofield in place instead. Now with the former Minister, he would probably have said - Tut-Tut, try and sort it out between yourselves. Carl Sargeant signed the letter - its like lighting a blue touch-paper. Now there are papers in Cardiff and options to remove the political leadership of this if Members won't work together and you either try and isolate those that disrupt and behave in that way. You know, just think about it. What have you got?

You've got Councillor Fowle up before the Ombudsman. Allegations of
– I won't mention the allegations, you'll see them on the internet.

You've got Councillor Aled Morris-Jones going before the Ombudsman.
Allegations of gerrymandering the Council. Um, we got O. Glyn Jones
up before the Ombudsman on a similar sort of allegation.

Um, we got 2 Members proposing Cllr. Schofield into a position of Vice
Chair in direct defiance of a Ministerial instruction. We got Cllr. Durkin
making defamatory statements left, right & centre.

We have Cllr. Schofield undermining. You stand back and you say –

“Well, _____ ?? _____ divisive, what could be more divisive than all of that
? And the list can go on!!

Goronwy Parry's letter – “You have to be cunning” to Barry Durkin – “the
footsoldiers are with you Barry!” (LAUGHTER)

I'm surprised we're STILL HERE !!

Now..