

## The history and work of Denbighshire County Council – a talk for Denbigh and District Probus Club

At the August meeting of the Denbigh and District Probus Club, members were delighted to welcome club member Meirick Lloyd Davies who gave a talk about the history and work of Denbighshire County Council and his involvement.

Meirick gave members an overview of his history as an elected member over the years including how in the 60's he was interested in his parish council and local history and how he and a friend stood for the council and were elected in 1968 and Meirick is still serving his local community of Cefn Meiriadog as a councillor 55 years later!

He began his working life as a skilled joiner and went on to be an occupational therapist in the North Wales Hospital helping people learn and practice woodworking skills to aid their recovery. He moved to Rhyl Urban District Council, then on reorganisation of local government in 1974 to Rhuddlan Borough Council at Prestatyn. He moved to Glyndŵr District Council 1977-1994 and he was Principal Building Control Officer between 1994 and 1996. He was a Borough councillor with Colwyn from 1993-1996.

In 1995, Wales changed completely to a system of unitary

authorities and he became one of the councillors in the new shadow Denbighshire County Council and in 1996 when the changeover was complete, he retired early and became a full-time councillor on the new Denbighshire County Council Unitary Authority and served until May 2022 – some 27 years of service!

During that period, he served as County Chairman on 3 occasions 2004-2005, 2010- 2011 and 2019-2021 (a year on each occasion apart from his final term which was 2 years due to the Covid period).

During his 27 years as a County Councillor, he represented the council on other bodies, boards and committees and he also chaired various Denbighshire committees and participated with small groups of councillors in many task and finish groups focusing on specific projects.

Meirick expanded on some of the key responsibilities as Chair and also on additional activities such as going in person to meet with people in the county who had reached the age of 100, delivering cards and flowers, visiting people celebrating special wedding anniversaries and also going to local shows in the county to meet people. During the Covid period, these activities were curtailed because of the restrictions but people were still contacted by telephone to ensure they were aware that they had not been forgotten and flowers and a card were sent.

Meirick also outlined the history of the development of Denbighshire pre 1995 for members.

The original old Sir Ddinbych/Denbighshire which covered north east Wales, was one of 13 counties in Wales – a maritime county created by King Henry VIII out of various local lordships as part of the Laws in Wales Acts 1535-1542. The area was previously The Marches.

It was formed from the cantrefi (an early Welsh administrative district, roughly similar in function to the English 'hundred'), Rhos, Dyffryn Clwyd, Rhufoniog, Iâl, Maelor Gymraeg, Nanheudwy and Cynllaeth.

Following the Local Government Act of 1888, an administrative county of Denbighshire was created governed by an elected county council who took over the roles and responsibilities of the quarter session courts (which were traditionally held on set occasions 4 times a year). This council was based at County Hall in Ruthin!! The county was divided into boroughs and urban and rural districts with reforms to these in 1894, 1897, 1926, 1934 and 1935 illustrating how boundaries, groupings and name changes have been a continuous feature in local government reorganisation.

The Local Government Act 1972 ended the use of Denbighshire for local government and ceremonial purposes in 1974 with the creation of the new county of Clwyd and the area was split into new districts including Colwyn, Wrexham Maelor and Glyndŵr. Clwyd County

Council with its headquarters in Shire Hall, Mold ran from 1974-1996.

A county called Sir Ddinbych (Denbighshire), a unitary authority, and part of 22 such authorities formed throughout Wales, was created in 1996 for modern local government purposes, with 48 councillors initially, covering a substantially different area from the previous historic Denbighshire counties.

After 2000, Cabinet and scrutiny committees were introduced (by law) but were service headed such as Environment, Health, Highways etc. and in 2011 further changes were introduced with Sir Ddinbych (Denbighshire) introducing themed scrutiny Committees, such as Performance, Partnerships, etc

Following the talk, members engaged the speaker in a question-and-answer session where many topics were explored including the new 20 miles per hour speed limit, conversions and new builds, arm's length companies, cross county working etc