

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Wednesday, 4th March, 2015 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor M.J.Watts – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

L. M.Adams	A.S.Fox	S.Rees-Owen
P.Baccara	P.Griffiths	(Mrs.)A.Roberts
(Mrs.)T.Bates	(Mrs.)E.Hanagan	J.Rosser
D.R.Bevan	G.E.Hopkins	G.Smith
J.Bonetto	P.Howe	R.W.Smith
S.A.Bradwick	J.S.James	G.Stacey
J.Bunnage	P.Jarman	B.Stephens
A.Calvert	(Mrs.)S.J.Jones	(Mrs.)M.Tegg
P.Cannon QPM	R.Lewis	R.K.Turner
S.Carter	(Mrs.)C.Leyshon	G.P.Thomas
(Mrs.)A.Crimmings	C.J.Middle	L.G.Walker
W.J.David	K.Montague	(Mrs.)J.S.Ward
A.L.Davies MBE	A.Morgan	P.Wasley
C.Davies	B.Morgan	M.Webber
J.Davies	K.Morgan	E.Webster
(Mrs.)L.De Vet	I.Pearce	W.D.Weeks
J.Elliott	S.Pickering	T.Williams
S.Evans	S.Powderhill	C.J.Willis
M.Forey	K.A.Privett	R.Yeo

Officers in Attendance

Mr.S.Merritt – Chief Executive
Mr.C.Lee – Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services
Mr.G.Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children's Services
Mr.P.J.Lucas – Director, Legal & Democratic Services
Mr.C.Bradshaw – Director, Education & Lifelong Learning
Mr.T,Wilkins – Director, Human Resources
Ms.K.May – Head of Democratic Services

112 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs.)J.Cass, (Mrs.)A.Davies, G.R.Davies, (Mrs.)M.E.Davies, S.M.Evans-Fear, M.Griffiths, S.Lloyd, M.J.Powell, S.Rees, M.Weaver and D.H.Williams.

113 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, the following declarations of interests were made by the under-mentioned County Borough Councillors:

- County Borough Councillor P.Jarman – Agenda Item 7 – The Council’s 2015/2016 Revenue Budget Strategy – “I have a relative that works for the Council and on the 4th November, 2014, following a request I made to the Standards Committee, I was granted a dispensation in my capacity as leader of the Opposition to speak and vote at meetings of the Council and Overview and Scrutiny Committees on matters relating to all services affected by the budget process for a period leading up to and including the formal approval of the budget for 2015/2016 by the Council.”
- County Borough Councillor P.Wasley – Agenda Item 7 – The Council’s 2015/2016 Revenue Budget Strategy – “I have a close member of my family who is involved in the Expressions of Interest Exercise 2014/15 where expressions of interest were sought from staff who wished to consider opportunities for voluntary retirement/redundancy, reduced hours and flexible retirement, as outlined on page 14, paragraph 5(c) of the report.
- County Borough Councillor A.L.Davies MBE – Agenda Item 10 – Urgent Decision of Cabinet Excluded from “Call-in” (Paragraph 17.2(A) of Part 4 of the Constitution)(Update on the Consultation to re-organise Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Sixth Form Provision in the Rhondda Valleys and Tonyrefail) – “My grand-daughter works (Teacher) at Treorchy Comprehensive School.
- County Borough Councillor (Mrs.)E.Hanagan – Agenda Item 10 – Urgent Decision of Cabinet Excluded from “Call-in” (Paragraph 17.2(A) of Part 4 of the Constitution) (Update on the Consultation to re-organise Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Sixth Form Provision in the Rhondda Valleys and Tonyrefail) – “I am the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning”.
- County Borough Councillor (Mrs.)A.Crimmings – Agenda Item 10 – Urgent Decision of Cabinet Excluded from “Call-in” (Paragraph 17.2(A) of Part 4 of the Constitution) (Update on the Consultation to re-organise Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Sixth Form Provision in the Rhondda Valleys and Tonyrefail) – “I am employed at Coleg y Cymoedd”.

114 **PETITIONS**

RESOLVED – to note that the following petitions were handed to the Mayor at the meeting:

- (1) By County Borough Councillor R.Lewis on behalf of the residents of Walsh Street and Commercial Place, Abercynon requesting the implementation and installation of motor traffic speed reduction measures.
- (2) By County Borough Councillor A.Roberts on behalf of the Residents Association of Swn yr Afon Sheltered Complex, Gilfach Goch requesting

traffic calming measures and/or a pedestrian crossing on the road outside their scheme or near to the Health Centre.

115 MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 14th January, 2015.

Noted:

In respect of Minute No.104, County Borough Councillor P.Wasley wished to thank Members and Officers for the cards and letters he had received following the sad passing away of his mother.

In respect of Minute No.109(5), the Director of Human Resources informed Members that the recruitment of appointments to the local Pension Board would be advertised on the Council's website during the latter part of this week for a period of two weeks.

116 OPEN GOVERNMENT – STATEMENTS

(1) By the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A.Morgan

“Last week Members were made aware that the Chief Executive is to retire this year. As Leader of the Council and on behalf of the Cabinet and Council, I wish to place on record our grateful thanks for the services that he has given to the Council and in particular to Local Government over many years. He has served us loyally, recently as Chief Executive and previous to that as Corporate Director. We wish him best wishes for a long and happy retirement.

We must not lose sight of the strong Corporate Governance arrangements in this Council which help us deliver services. This strong Corporate core has been recognised by our Inspectorates. I have asked the Director of Human Resources to undertake a full review of the options available to us, taking into account the future shape of Local Government and at the same time carrying out our statutory obligations. This report will be brought to Members but should not be rushed to make sure that the services going through a difficult time are maintained. As soon as the review is carried out then we will be bringing back options to this Council”.

Leader of the Main Opposition Group, County Borough Councillor P.Jarman

In response to the statement made by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarman stated – “I am content with the statement made and would also add to the tributes to the Chief Executive and I have also made those tributes privately. We have got until October of this year but time passes quickly. At least there is going to be some consideration how the post is to be filled and I am quite content to wait for those reports. Whatever is decided will have to be a Council decision”.

(2) By the Cabinet Member for Service Delivery, Communities and Housing, County Borough Councillor K.Montague

“Mr.Mayor, thank you for allowing me to make a formal statement under Procedure Rule 2.

Members will all be aware of our commitment to engaging with the community and residents over the difficult challenges we face in delivering services in the future. Over the last two years the Council has received significantly less funding due to cuts to the public sector funding which has resulted in some facilities and services being reviewed, reduced and in some cases, unfortunately cut.

To protect our frontline services, as far as we practically can, we need to find alternative delivery models and wherever possible, where services or facilities have had to be cut, positive engagement with our communities has resulted in facilities and services being maintained for community use.

Clearly, given the bleak public sector financial forecasts, further reviews of Council run facilities and services will be required and we want to engage early with our communities to talk about the opportunities open to them.

This is why on the 25th March, as the Cabinet Member responsible, I have organised an event specifically to support this agenda titled RCT Challenge. This event will bring together colleagues from the third sector, community groups and individual with an interest in exploring the opportunities there may be in the future to operate facilities and services which are currently funded by the Council.

We have said all along in the face of the difficult decisions we have had to consider that we want to minimise the impact of the continued cuts from the CONDEM Government on the residents of RCT by engaging with our communities and working with them to forward plan the future delivery and running of services and facilities.”

117 MEMBERS’ QUESTIONS

(1) From County Borough Councillor R.Lewis to the Leader of the Council (County Borough Councillor A.Morgan)

“Will the Leader make a statement on how the Council has reduced Senior Management Costs?”

Response from the Leader, County Borough Councillor A.Morgan

“Thank you for giving me the opportunity to clarify some misinformation that some Members have tried to put around. Following a restructure of our Senior Management arrangements, which saw the removal of a Group Director and 12 other Chief Officer posts, the Council achieved savings of

over £1M. This was achieved by spreading the remaining responsibilities across existing posts.

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor R.Lewis

“I think the approach should be welcomed, however, some opposition Members have chose to criticise savings. Would you agree Leader, that this demonstrates their lack of understanding on how finance works.”

Response from the Leader, County Borough Councillor A.Morgan

“Based on who you speak to, we have certainly delivered those savings. Since that time two further members of staff have left the Authority. When people leave we consider whether to fill those posts and in the coming months we will see further reductions but it needs to be done in a structured way and on a review basis which is the right way.”

(2) From County Borough Councillor S.Rees-Owen to the Cabinet Member for Service Delivery, Communities and Housing (County Borough Councillor K.Montague)

“Can you highlight any part of your portfolio responsibilities that are under invested in please?”

Response from County Borough Councillor K.Montague

“In short, no. I believe all areas in my portfolio are appropriately funded when taking into account the financial challenges faced by the Council. This is demonstrated by the positive outcomes being delivered in these service areas. I would have been interested to see what Plaid Cymru would have prioritised but of course you failed to take the opportunity to submit an alternative budget.”

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor S.Rees-Owen

“A Press Statement in December, 2014 was issued in respect of Home to School Transport and it was stated that the Council currently spends over £10M per annum and that £3M of this expenditure is discretionary. Will you oppose any attempt to the distance levels and free transport for post 16 education when the report is brought forward?”

Response from County Borough Councillor K.Montague

“I am clear in answering every question, I cannot give that statement today as every area has to be looked at. In respect of the Anti-Poverty agenda, I am looking to setting up a Cross Party Working Group, which will allow Members to work together as all areas and services have to be looked after.”

- (3) **From County Borough Councillor P.Jarman to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Tourism and Heritage (County Borough Councillor P.Cannon)**

“Have you acted as mentor to Councillor Morgan in his leadership role?”

Response from County Borough Councillor P.Cannon

“Over the years, Councillor Morgan, like myself, has held a number of important portfolios within the Cabinet and the experience he has gained in those roles, he has put to good effect as our Leader and all Cabinet work alongside each other.”

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor P.Jarman

“The word Mentor was inspired by the character Mentor in Homer’s Odyssey not to be confused with Homer Simpson, of course. However, in modern times, it is acknowledged that new Senior Managers or Leaders who are paired with a mentor with previous successful leadership experience are twice as likely to remain in their job, than those who do not receive mentorship, either formally or informally. Do you have any regrets on that score?”

Response from County Borough Councillor P.Cannon

“No regrets, I am a Member of the Cabinet and we all work together.”

- (4) **From County Borough Councillor M.Weaver to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and Council Business (County Borough Councillor M.Webber)**

“Can you outline how the Public Relations of the Council are administered?”

Note: In the absence of Councillor Weaver, Councillor Webber indicated that a response to the question would be made in writing.

- (5) **From County Borough Councillor K.Morgan to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning (County Borough Councillor E.Hanagan)**

“Will you make a statement on school attendance levels in the County?”

Response from County Borough Councillor E.Hanagan

“Yes, thank you, I would be delighted. The measures that have been put in place to promote school attendance are having a positive impact on attendance levels for both primary and secondary schools with strong improvements made in recent years. The latest data shows that school attendance levels in RCT continue to improve faster than the Welsh average and we are on course to meet the ambitious targets we have set for both primary and secondary schools this year. We recognise there is still a lot of work to do and this is why improving school attendance remains a priority.”

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor K.Morgan

“At the moment, you may or may not be aware that there is total confusion and mixed messages throughout RCT about fixed penalty notices. Will you commit to make a public statement on the Council’s website to clarify that Heads have discretion to authorise leave up to 10 days, depending on individual circumstances?”

Response from County Borough Councillor E.Hanagan

“We have sent out a lot of paperwork to schools, following the consultation with Schools, Governing Bodies, South Wales Police and the Scrutiny Committee in respect of the issuing of fixed penalty notices for non school attendance. It was published on the website and I will ensure that it is on there.”

REPORT OF THE CABINET

118 THE COUNCIL’S 2015/2016 REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY

The Group Director, Corporate and Frontline Services provided information on the implications for the Council of the Local Government settlement for 2015/2016 and on behalf of the Cabinet he presented its recommendations in response to this Council’s resourcing requirements, in order to assist Members in determining specific service allocations with the Council’s Revenue Budget, together with the level of Council Tax, for the year ending 31st March, 2016.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED –**

1. To note the written statement from the Minister for Public Services and the table on the 2015/2016 Local Government settlement, as reproduced at Appendix 1 to the report.

2. To note the allocation of £0.200M from General Fund Balances to the Medium Term Financial Planning & Service Transformation Reserve as detailed in Section 3 of the report.

3. To note the base budget adjustments impacting in 2015/16 as summarised in Table 1 of the report.

4. To note the budget adjustments agreed previously following Cabinet approval in respect of:
 - Cabinet – 22nd January, 2015:

1. Charging for use of sports pitches
- Cabinet – 12th February, 2015:
 1. Review of the Council's Car Mileage Rates
 2. Staff Panel Ideas
 3. Funding for Nursery Education
 4. Music Service

5. To approve the budget strategy proposals as summarised in Table 3 of the report, including:
 - i. An agreed general efficiency target of £5M for 2015/16:
 - ii. The delivery of Service Specific Efficiency Reviews totalling £1.280M for 2015/16 in the following areas:
 - Marketing and Tourism
 - Special Education
 - Corporate Finance
 - Adult Education
 - Sports Development
 - Business Support
 - Highways Maintenance
 - iii. An increase in Trade Waste charges to deliver additional income of £0.200M in 2015/16;
 - iv. A net reduction in the Capital Programme of £0.900M for 2015/16;
 - v. Use of the `Medium Term Financial Planning & Service Transformation Reserve` as transitional funding, totalling £4.396M in 2015/16.

6. To approve Tables 4 and 5 as shown in Section 12 of the report as the basis of allocating resources to the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) to other Council Services, and to meet its corporate financing requirements.

7. To agree the Council Tax increase for the financial year ending the 31st March, 2016 at 3.8%.

8. To agree the Council's overall budget for 2015/2016, in order to set the Council's Tax for the forthcoming financial year by the statutory deadline of the 11th March, 2015.

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, CORPORATE AND FRONTLINE SERVICES

119 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH, 2016

In his report, the Group Director, Corporate and Frontline Services provided Members with details of the calculation of the Authority's Council Tax for the financial year ending 31st March, 2016 prior to passing the necessary statutory resolutions and it was **RESOLVED** -

1. To note the level of the precept from the Police & Crime Commissioner for South Wales.
2. To note the level of the Community Council precepts, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.
3. To pass the formal Council Tax resolutions for the financial year ending 31st March, 2016, as contained in Appendix 2 to the report.
4. To note the comments of the Group Director, Corporate and Frontline Services upon robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserved as detailed in paragraph 9.2 of the report.

120 NOTICES OF MOTIONS

- (1) The following Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors E.Webster, P.Jarman, C.Davies, S.Evans-Fear, S.Rees-Owen, M.Weaver, K.Morgan, I. Pearce and G.Davies was moved and seconded:-

"This Council understands the effect fuel poverty has on our most vulnerable residents and believes that the current energy market provided by "Big 6" energy providers does not work in the best interests of the citizens of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

This Council believes there are better ways of providing energy to our residents and as a consequence will research options to enable the Council to seek to consider becoming an energy supplier."

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** – that the matter be referred for consideration to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee and a report therefrom be reported back to a future meeting of the Council.

- (2) The following Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors P.Jarman, C.Davies, I.Pearce, E.Webster, S.Evans-Fear, M.Weaver, S.Rees-Owen, K.Morgan and G.Davies was moved and seconded:-

"That this Council, in an effort to end exploitative zero hours contracts, instructs that our Contract Procedure Rules be varied.

The variation to provide for contract specifications based on a community benefit approach. This would require a social return on investment by disallowing delivery of the contract by staff on zero hours contracts of employment.

This Council further orders a review of current contracts to examine the possibility of varying them in a further effort to end exploitative zero hours contracts.”

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** – that the matter be referred for consideration to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee and a report therefrom be reported to a future meeting of the Council.

121 FOR INFORMATION –
URGENT DECISION OF CABINET EXCLUDED FROM “CALL-IN”
(PARAGRAPH 17.2(A) OF PART 4 OF THE CONSTITUTION)

Update on the Consultation to re-organise Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Sixth Form Provision in the Rhondda Valleys and Tonyrefail

RESOLVED – to note the urgent decision (in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 17.2(a) taken by Cabinet at its meeting held on the 22nd January, 2015.

M.J.WATTS
MAYOR

The meeting closed at 7.05 p.m.