

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, 17th January, 2018 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor M.Tegg – Mayor

County Borough Councillors

L.M.Adams	H.Fychan	M.Norris
S.Belzak	E.George	W.Owen
D.R.Bevan	D.Grehan	D.Owen-Jones
H.Boggis	M.Griffiths	S.Powderhill
J.Bonetto	J.Harries	M.J.Powell
S.A.Bradwick	G.Holmes	S.M.Powell
J.Brencher	L.Hooper	S.Rees
A.Calvert	G.E.Hopkins	A.Roberts
G.Caple	P.Howe	J.Rosser
A.Chapman	G.W.Hughes	R.W.Smith
A.Crimmings	J.James	E.S.Stephens
G.R.Davies	P.Jarman	W.Treeby
J.R.Davies	K.L.Jones	L.G.Walker
A.Davies-Jones	L.Jones	M.O.Weaver
L.De Vet	W.Jones	M.Webber
M.Diamond	R.Lewis	E.Webster
J.Elliott	W.Lewis	G.D.G.Williams
S.Evans	C.Leyshon	J.Williams
M.Fidler Jones	D.Macey	T.Williams
M.Forey	A.Morgan	C.J.Willis
A.S.Fox	S.Morgans	R.Yeo

Officers in Attendance

Mr.C.Lee – Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services
Mr.G.Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children’s Services
Mr.C.B.Jones – Director, Legal & Democratic Services
Mr.C.Hanagan – Director, Cabinet & Public Relations
Mr.R.Evans – Director, Human Resources
Ms.K.May – Head of Democratic Services

84 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors A.G.Cox, J.L.Cullwick, G.Jones, K.Morgan, S.Pickering, S.Rees-Owen, G.Stacey, G.Thomas, R.K.Turner and D.H.Williams.

85 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct the following personal declarations of interest were made in respect of **Agenda Item 7 – Welsh Church Act Fund – Annual Report 2016/17** by County Borough Councillors:-

- D.R.Bevan – “I have a duty to approve/not approve Welsh Church Act Fund applications in my capacity as Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Housing”
- G.R.Davies – “I am the Secretary of one of the Churches that have received funding in the past but not in the last year”.
- J.Elliott – “I am a member of one of the organisations mentioned in the report”.
- A.S.Fox – “I am the Trustee and Treasurer of one of the Groups referred to in the report”.
- J.Harries – “I am a member of one of the organisations mentioned in the report”.
- L.Jones – “I have helped in raising funds for one of the organisations mentioned in the report”.
- W.Lewis – “I am the Secretary of the Parish Church Council of St.Stephens Church”.
- A.Morgan – “I am Chair of one of the Community Organisations that benefit from the grant”.
- M.Norris – “I have just become a Board Member of the Cambrian Village Trust”
- J.Rosser – “I am a member of the Parish Council which includes the church who made an application”.
- E.S.Stephens – “I have been involved with St.Stephen’s Church in helping them raise funding”.
- W.Treeby – “I am involved in one of the Community Organisations that has received funding”.
- L.G.Walker – “I am involved with one of the organisations that has received an amount of money”.
- M.Webber – “Rhydyfelin AFC part of their Committee is a Community Group that I lead”.

86 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) County Borough Councillor G.R.Davies announced that following the success of Councillor D.Macey’s son, Lloyd on the X Factor; Councillor E.Stephens sister Rachel Stephens will be appearing on a new series titled `All Together Now` which is to be presented by Geri Haliwell and Rob Beckett. The first programme which is to be broadcast by the BBC will be on the 27th January, 2018 and will run for six weeks.

Councillor E.Stephens stated that like Lloyd Macey, her sister Rachel had also come through RCT Music Service and it was therefore something that the Council should invest in as many talented performers would be lost if such

cuts in the Arts were to continue. She stated that previously Rachel has been an Eisteddfod winner in the musical theatre category and has played many roles in local amateur dramatic productions, the latest being the lead in Sister Act at the Aberdare Colliseum as well as singing in many ceremonial events of past Mayors including the present Mayor.

Councillor Stephens confirmed that Rachel would be appearing in one of the shows that is to be broadcast by the BBC in the coming weeks and wished her all the best in the competition.

- (2) County Borough Councillor R.Lewis wished to congratulate Buffy Williams of Pentre who appeared on the festive BBC programme `Mary, Mel and Sue's Big Christmas Thank You` which was aired on Christmas Eve across Wales and the UK.. The Big Thank You of the title was delivered to Buffy Williams for the work she had undertaken for the community following the closure of some businesses in the area.

Councillor R.Lewis wished to thank the RCT Together team who had assisted Buffy in taking over one of the Council's disused buildings where she set up a community centre. The programme covered the hosting of a Christmas dinner for the locals at the Canolfan Pentre Centre as well as other surprises.

The Mayor stated that she would extend an invitation to Buffy Williams to attend the Parlour.

- (3) The Mayor wished to thank County Borough Councillors M.Fidler Jones, G.Hughes and R.Lewis for running in the Nos Galon race on New Year's Eve. She also wished to thank those that supported and sponsored the event.
- (4) County Borough Councillor W.Jones announced the achievement of Wayne Warren "a Rhondda boy" in reaching the Quarter Finals of the Darts World Championship. The Mayor indicated that an invitation would be sent to Mr.Warren to attend the Parlour.

87 MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as a correct record the minutes of the Council Meeting held on the 29th November, 2017.

88 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

- (a) **From County Borough Councillor R.Smith to the Deputy Leader of the Council (County Borough Councillor M.Webber)**

"Could the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the Post Office situation in Pontypridd?"

Response from County Borough Councillor M.Webber

“Thank you for that question, Councillor. The Post Office is a key service for our communities, and I was saddened to hear of the apparent troubles experienced by the franchise provider – Dennis Pounder Travel, over the Christmas period.

I can confirm that following the closure, I wrote to the Post Office to outline the importance of the service in Pontypridd town centre and to request that they explore all avenues to ensure that a permanent solution is found to ensure that the service is reinstated as promptly as possible. Following this, I have been assured that they are working hard to reinstate the service, and that the Council is kept informed of any future developments” .

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor R.W.Smith

“Thank you for your work on this issue, Deputy Leader. I wholeheartedly agree that these unfortunate circumstances have come as a bitter blow to the residents of Pontypridd. It is not all bad news, however, and Madam Mayor, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the council on the recent developments at the Taff Vale site that were announced earlier this week”.

Response by County Borough Councillor M.Webber

“Thank you Councillor. You are right in saying that this was a bitter blow for local residents, although I can assure you that this Council is committed to delivering positive news for the town. As you say, there is good news and just last week, our flagship Taff Vale redevelopment saw the ground broken on site as the construction phase commences; whilst there are exciting plans for M&S which also have the potential to deliver a marked improvement in the vibrancy of the town”.

(b) From County Borough Councillor J.Bonetto to the Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning (County Borough Councillor J.Rosser)

“How is the Council seeking to progress its plans for 21st Century Schools?”

Response from County Borough Councillor J.Rosser

“Thank you Councillor Bonetto. The 21st Century Schools programme has formed a key part of our drive to improve education facilities across the County Borough, and our Band A programme represented the biggest investment in this area of any local authority in Wales of £160M.

The Council recognises that the positive progress cannot stop there, however, and I am pleased to confirm that our draft application for the Band B aspect of the programme has been accepted by the Welsh Government”.

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor J.Bonetto

“Thank you for your answer, Councillor. I must say that it is hugely encouraging to see this administration placing such an emphasis on our youth and their education. Can you provide us with information of when we can expect to know more details of the proposals?”

Response from County Borough Councillor J.Rosser

“The £160M Band B wave will commence from April, 2019, and in accordance with this, a report will be brought before Cabinet at the next meeting, that will provide a detailed outline of where and when this investment will be allocated across Rhondda Cynon Taf”.

(c) From County Borough Councillor S.Bradwick to the Leader of the Council (County Borough Councillor A.Morgan)

“How does the Council plan and prepare to meet its Emergency Planning responsibilities during the winter months?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A.Morgan

“As an experienced Member, you will know that we have a Winter Maintenance plan which is published on the Council’s website. It is vital that we have clear plans in place to keep the County Borough moving when inclement weather is forecast. The main emphasis of our planning focuses on our mountain roads and the main arterial routes through the County. We aim to tackle minor roads when possible and where we have the resources available to do so. We have a number of 4 x 4 vehicles to ensure that we don’t get caught out and that services such as Meals on Wheels are delivered.

The recent bad weather saw our staff cover a distance of over 3,000 miles, which is the equivalent distance of a journey from Pontypridd to John O’Groats and back, twice.

I would like to pay thanks to all our staff who worked around the clock to keep our roads open and safe.

I urge all Members that when we hold seminars to come along so that everyone has a better understanding how we prepare for bad weather.

Supplementary Question from Councillor S.Bradwick

“Thank you Leader, I must say that I wholly agree with your praise, and I would like to echo your thanks to all of the staff members who worked tirelessly to keep our roads safe and clear throughout the bad weather”. would like to thank all staff in all departments”.

Response from County Borough Councillor A.Morgan

"I have expressed my thanks to the staff and volunteers and especially those that worked when we had snow in the lead up to the Christmas period. We have tried to get the message across to the public as some members of the public don't know that salt does not work if the temperature is below – 0, so very often it is the case that we have to close the road. Last night a vehicle came off Maerdy Mountain road which was very unfortunate, as the road had been salted three times. We station a plough on each of the mountain roads and they go back and fore".

(d) From County Borough Councillor P.Jarman to the Deputy Leader of the Council (County Borough Councillor M.Webber)

"Please make a statement on your portfolio priorities?"

Response from County Borough Councillor M.Webber

"My portfolio priorities are to ensure that, within the areas I have responsibility for, the Council delivers upon its ambitions as set out in the Corporate Plan".

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor P.Jarman

"Following widespread consultation and the submission of a business case to the Ministry of Justice in August 2015, This Council entered into a collaboration agreement with Merthyr, Bridgend, Powys, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils relating to the Coroner Service. Part of the agreement provided for the retention of the bespoke Coroner's Courtroom in Rock Grounds, Aberdare as well as one in Cardiff. In December I learned that consideration was being given to close the Aberdare Courtroom with a view to it being relocated in Pontypridd. Why has the original agreement not been honoured? Who made that decision. Have other Councils been consulted and why has there been no public consultation on such a sensitive proposal ?

Response from County Borough Councillor M.Webber

"No decision has been made, there is a proposal to relocate the Coroner Service for South Wales Central, which is currently under consideration. As part of this proposal, consultation is currently taking place with the appropriate public bodies which includes consideration of the wider regional facilities currently utilised by the Coroner. The proposal currently seeks to make use of an existing local authority premises. The consideration of a move has resulted from South Wales Police re-evaluating its own facilities which the Coroner currently utilises in Cardiff. If you want any further information then Mr. Chris Jones will be happy to deliver that to you as he is working closely with the Coroner Service".

(e) From County Borough Councillor G.Caple to the Leader of the Council (County Borough Councillor A.Morgan)

“How will the Council progress the additional £300M Capital Investment recently indicated by the Council?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A.Morgan

“I made a statement before Christmas and there is a report to the next Cabinet meeting on how this investment will be allocated across a range of key priorities such as education, transport and social care. The investment planned will be over and above our normal Capital Programme and has the ability to build on the work of the RCT Invest programme in continuing to transform our communities by allowing for the delivery of a range of our core commitments”.

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor G.Caple

“Thank you Leader. It is welcoming to see that this administration is willing to invest in our communities across the length and breadth of the County Borough, and I believe that this will potentially represent the largest investment in the history of RCT, and I congratulate you Leader, for driving this forward. Empty shops and properties is an issue which impacts on many valleys towns, with Porth being one. Could consideration be given to utilising available funding to target this issue?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A.Morgan

“Yes, I would hope that this funding would be able to contribute to addressing this issue and improving our town centres. It would be one of the largest capital programmes in its 20+ year history. I had a meeting with the Finance Minister regarding the schemes that are to be brought forward and looking for grants. The discussions have been positive. Empty properties in the town centres will form part of the report and Councillor Bevan and I will be involved and it is part of the plan coming forward. The report will be considered at the next Cabinet meeting”.

REPORTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, CORPORATE & FRONTLINE SERVICES

89 WELSH CHURCH ACT FUND ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

In his report, the Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services sought the approval of Members of the Statement of Accounts for the Welsh Church Act Fund for the financial year ended 31st March, 2017; and it was **RESOLVED** –

1. To approve and note the Welsh Church Act Fund Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2016/17, as shown at Appendix 1 to the report;

2. To approve and note the Letter of Representation relating to the Welsh Church Act Fund, as shown at Appendix 2 to the report.
3. To note the contents of the External Auditor report, as shown at Appendix 3 to the report.

90 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

In accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in Wales as set by regulations made under Schedule 1B of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992 (as inserted by the Local Government Finance Act, 2012) and the approval by the National Assembly for Wales of two sets of regulations (as set out in the report) on the 26th November, 2013, the Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services sought the approval of Members to adopt a Council Tax Reduction Scheme by the 31st January, 2018.

Following consideration of the report, it was **RESOLVED** –

1. To note the amendments to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 (“the Prescribed Requirements Regulations”) by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (the “Amendment Regulations”) that came into force on 10th January 2018, following approval by the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) at Plenary on 9th January 2018;
2. To note the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken by the Council on the local discretions applicable to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/19;
3. To adopt the provisions of the Prescribed Requirements Regulations and any amendments made to those regulations made by the Amendment Regulations as the Council’s local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/19 subject to the local discretions that the Council is able to exercise as set out in (4) below;
4. To confirm the following as local discretions applicable to the Council’s local CTRS as provided for within Part 5 of the Prescribed Requirements Regulations:

Discretionary Parts of the Prescribed Requirements Regulations <i>(Part 5 – Other Matters that must be included in an authority’s scheme)</i>	Prescribed Requirement Regulations (Minimum Requirement)	Recommended Discretion to be adopted
<p>Ability to increase the standard extended reduction period of 4 weeks given to applicants where they have previously been receiving a Council Tax reduction that is to end, as they have ceased receiving qualifying benefits as a result of returning to work, increasing their hours of work, or receiving increased earnings.</p> <p><i>Regulation 32 (3) paragraph (33) of Schedule 1 and Regulation 33 (3), paragraph (35) and (40) of Schedule 6.</i></p>	<p>4 Weeks</p>	<p><u>Pensioners:</u> The standard period of 4 weeks specified in paragraph (33) of Schedule 1 will apply, and</p> <p><u>Non- Pensioners:</u> The standard period of 4 weeks specified in paragraph (35) and (40) of Schedule 6 will apply,</p>
<p>Ability to backdate an application for CTR with regard to late claims prior to the standard period of 3 months before the claim is made.</p> <p><i>Regulation 34 (4) and paragraph (3) and (4) of Schedule 13.</i></p>	<p>3 Months</p>	<p><u>Pensioners:</u> The standard period of 3 months specified in paragraph (3) of Schedule 13 will apply,</p> <p><u>Non-Pensioners:</u> The standard period of 3 months specified in paragraph (4) of Schedule 13 will apply,</p>
<p>Ability to disregard more than the statutory weekly £10 of income received in respect of War Disablement Pensions and War Widow's Pensions (disregarded when calculating income of the applicant);</p> <p><i>Regulation 34 (5), paragraphs 1(a) and 1(b) Schedule 4 and paragraphs 20(a) and 20(b) of Schedule 9</i></p>	<p>£10</p>	<p><u>Pensioners:</u> The total value of any pension specified in paragraphs 1 (a) and (b), Schedule 4 will be disregarded.</p> <p><u>Non-Pensioners:</u> The total value of any pension specified in paragraphs 20 (a) and (b), Schedule 9 will be disregarded.</p>

91 COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS

In his report, the Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services provided Members with details of the current policy with regard to Council Tax discounts together with a proposal to use its discretionary powers to amend the level of discount for Council Tax in respect of dwellings that are classified as long term empty properties.

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

1. To agree the continuation of no Council Tax discount for all Class A and B properties;
2. To approve a new level of 0% Council Tax discount for all Class C properties in Rhondda Cynon Taf i.e. those properties which have been empty for longer than six months, effective from the 1st April, 2018;
3. To agree, that additional resources generated as a result of the proposed policy change in 2018/19 be set aside and added to the funding available through the Council's Empty Property Grant Scheme;
4. That delegated authority be given to the Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services to implement the above changes as set out in paragraph 6 of the report.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

92 CHANGE TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF CWM TAF PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

In accordance with the decision taken by Minute No.2(2.2) of the Council Meeting held on the 17th May, 2017, the Director, Legal & Democratic Services reported that he had received notification from the Plaid Cymru Group of a change to its membership of Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it was **RESOLVED** – to note that County Borough Councillor E.Stephens is to replace County Borough Councillor P.Jarman on the Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

93 NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors P.Jarman, G.Davies, J.Williams, L.Jones, K.Morgan, J.Davies, E.Webster, E.Stephens, S.Rees-Owen, M.Weaver, W.Jones, A.Chapman, S.Evans-Fear, A.Cox, D.Macey, H.Fychan, D.Grehan and J.Cullwick, was considered:-

“That this Council actions the decision made by Full Council on the 11th January, 2017 and actually provides the intended funding and increased provision of defibrillators in public places in support of the Welsh Hearts Campaign.

It is not acceptable that one year on from that decision, despite the life saving value of such devices, not one extra defibrillator has been provided by the Council”.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was **RESOLVED** – not to adopt the Notice of Motion.

94 NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors G.R.Davies, P.Jarman, A.Cox, W.Jones, K.Morgan, D.Macey, E.Webster, J.Williams, S.Evans-Fear, A.Chapman, S.Rees-Owen, M.Weaver, E.Stephens, L.Jones, J.Davies, J.Cullwick, H.Fychan and D.Grehan was considered:-

“Whilst this Council has recently acknowledged the Southern approaches to the Rhondda along the A4119 should be a Gateway to the Rhondda no such status has been afforded to the Northern approaches.

This motion calls on the Council to also adopt and suitably signpost the Northern approaches to Cwm Rhondda via Cwm Cynon. If both valleys are to benefit in the delivery of economic growth, job creation and prosperity it is important that prominent directional sign are immediately placed along the highways in the northern approaches as well as the A4119 in the South.

This Council will take immediate steps to provide such signage as they have responsibility for in the wider interest of those who wish to visit and invest in both Cwm Rhondda and Cwm Cynon along the northern approaches to both valleys”.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** – that the matter be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

M.TEGG

MAYOR

The meeting closed at 7.27 p.m.

These minutes are subject to approval at the next appropriate meeting of the Council