



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL COU

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 27 March 2019 at 5.00 pm at the The Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Council Members in attendance:-

Councillor S Powderhill (Chair)

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

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr C Jones, Director, Legal & Democratic Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources

124 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors G. Caple, A. Davies-Jones, K. Morgan, W. Owen, S. Rees, S. Rees-Owen, R. Smith, G. Stacey, E. Stephens, L. Walker and G.D.G. Williams.

125 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of interests were made at the meeting:

In respect of Item 8 – The Council's Pay Policy Statement:

- County Borough Councillor R Bevan referred to his dispensation granted by the Standards Committee on 8th December, 2017. "To speak and vote on all matters relating to the Children's Services department, save for any specific matters that directly affect my family member"
- County Borough Councillor M Powell referred to his dispensation granted by the Standards Committee on the 22nd March, 2019. "To speak and vote on all matters relating to the Children's Services department, save for any specific matters that directly affect my family member"
- County Borough Councillor G. Hopkins "My partner works for the organisation but the Pay Policy statement for the Council has no effect on existing terms and conditions applying to individual employees, therefore I will remain in the meeting and partake in the item."
- Mr C Bradshaw – Chief Executive "The Pay Policy statement for the Council has no effect on existing terms and conditions applying to individual employees, therefore I will remain in the meeting whilst the item is presented and during subsequent discussion on the item."
- Mr C Jones – Director, Legal & Democratic Services "The Pay Policy statement for the Council has no effect on existing terms and conditions applying to individual employees, therefore I will remain in the meeting whilst the item is presented and during subsequent discussion on the item."
- Mr C Hanagan – Director of Communications & Interim Head of Democratic Services "The Pay Policy statement for the Council has no effect on existing terms and conditions applying to individual employees, therefore I will remain in the meeting whilst the item is presented and during subsequent discussion on the item."
- Mr R Evans – Director, Human Resources "The Pay Policy statement for the Council has no effect on existing terms and conditions applying to individual employees, therefore I will remain in the meeting whilst the item is presented and during subsequent discussion on the item."
- Mr G Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children's Services "The Pay Policy statement for the Council has no effect on existing terms and conditions applying to individual employees, therefore I will remain in the meeting whilst the item is presented and during subsequent discussion on the item."
- Mr N Wheeler – Director, Highways & Streetcare Services "The Pay Policy statement for the Council has no effect on existing terms and

conditions applying to individual employees, therefore I will remain in the meeting whilst the item is presented and during subsequent discussion on the item.”

- Mr B Davies – Director, Finance “The Pay Policy statement for the Council has no effect on existing terms and conditions applying to individual employees, therefore I will remain in the meeting whilst the item is presented and during subsequent discussion on the item.”

In respect of agenda Items 6 (Treasury Management Strategy), 7 (2019/20 Capital Strategy) and 8 (The Council’s Pay Policy Statement):

- County Borough Councillor P Jarman referred to her dispensation granted by the Standards Committee on the 23rd November, 2018. “To speak and vote on all matters for the duration and adoption of the 2019-2020 Budget process in capacity as Leader of the Opposition.”

126 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Leader, along with the Deputy Leader and County Borough Councillor P Jarman led the tributes to Mr C Jones who would shortly be retiring from the Authority. Members expressed their gratitude for Mr Jones’ long term service and words of advice over the many years, before wishing him well for his future endeavours. Mr Jones was then afforded the opportunity to address Members with final words.
- The Leader took the opportunity to express his gratitude to Mrs J Cook who had recently left the Authority. The Leader spoke of Mrs Cook’s wealth of knowledge and her key involvement in the City Deal and various other projects. On behalf of all Members, the Leader wished her a happy retirement.
- County Borough Councillor P. Jarman advised Members that Miss Lowri Rees-Owen, daughter of County Borough Councillor S. Rees-Owen, had been selected to study at the prestigious New York Film Academy. Councillor Jarman took the opportunity to congratulate Miss Rees-Owen who is a former pupil at Bronllwyn Primary School and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda.
- County Borough Councillor P. Jarman went on to advise Members the Mr Lloyd Macey, son of County Borough Councillor D. Macey would be performing at the National Film Awards that evening at Porchester Hall, London. Councillor Jarman took the opportunity to congratulate Lloyd who would be joining numerous well-known names at the event, which would be aired on Sky Showcase.
- County Borough Councillor J. Rosser advised Members of five books which had been created in their entirety by young people from Cwm Rhondda. The books were available for purchasing at the price of £3 and all proceeds would be put back into the project.
- County Borough Councillor G. Hopkins advised Members that the Chair of Governors at Llanharan Primary, Mr Roberts had recently been the only Welsh teacher to be shortlisted for the Film Teacher of the Year award, and was pleased to announce that Mr Roberts went on to win the

award.

- County Borough Councillor G. Jones thanked the Mayor for hosting his choir, Cwmdare Voices at the Mayoral Parlour. Councillor Jones was delighted to announce that Cwmdare Voices would be travelling to Australia and Singapore in the coming weeks, with a performance at the Singapore Sevens.
- County Borough Councillor J. Harries took the opportunity to congratulate two 6th form students from the Rhondda, Sydney Richards from Treorchy Comprehensive School and Megan Saff from YG Cwm Rhondda, who both reached the semi-finals of the Area 5 district 1150 rotary 'Young vocalist competition'. Unfortunately, both pupils were eliminated at the Semi Finals, although Sydney was awarded the 'Runner Up' prize.
- County Borough Councillor T. Williams referred to her recent visit to the Mayoral Parlour with residents from a Cwmaman Afternoon Tea club for an 80th birthday celebration and took the opportunity to thank the Mayor.

127 MINUTES

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 6th March, 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

128 STATEMENTS

Statement from the Leader of the Council in respect of free WiFi Provision at Town Centres

The Leader was pleased to advise Members of the introduction of free Wi-Fi in the eight town centres of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Initially, the provision would be available within Aberdare town centre and would then be rolled out to the remainder of the town centres over the calendar year. Members learned that discussions were underway with local traders to ensure that the investment does not increase anti-social behaviour; and therefore, there would be a potential limit imposed between the hours of 7am – 7pm. The Leader concluded by stating that the free WiFi would be a positive investment, which would likely encourage businesses to the town centres and as a result, increase the footfall. Members were assured that Councillor M. Norris would provide further updates in the near future.

129 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

1. From County Borough Councillor E. George to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

“Can the Leader provide an update on the services provided by the Council following the roll-out of Universal Credit in RCT?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

The Leader spoke of the support provided by the Council for Universal Credit claimants, which includes:

- Adult Education Service worked with Digital Fridays partners to

develop a progression route onto a more formal 4 weeks digital skills course which has proved to be very successful. This has been further expanded in partnership with Adult Learning Wales to include a specific information and support on Universal Credit;

- Improvements to the Rhondda Cynon Taf Council website were made in order to provide claimants with information and advice, enable effective signposting to national on-line claim processes and to readily identify access to local support;
- Communities for Work/Communities for Work Plus staff have worked with current clients on the mentoring programmes to prepare them for Universal Credit by getting appropriate identification documents in place and providing some funding from the Barriers Fund for individuals who need support to pay for the documentation they need to complete the process;
- Families receiving support from the Resilient Families Service have had direct access to financial inclusion support from the Citizens Advice Bureau as our commissioned provider;
- The Housing Benefits team have attended quarterly welfare meetings with all Registered Social Landlords to discuss the impact of Universal Credit on their tenants, particularly in respect of rent arrears;
- Information had been disseminated to all relevant Council staff and partner organisations to ensure that they were aware of where and how to refer individuals for the support they may need aligned to information;
- Information drop-in sessions on Universal Credit were delivered;
- Universal Credit was included as a standard item on the agenda of the Housing Strategy Group facilitated by Regeneration and Planning and that includes Registered Social Landlords and private landlords.

The Leader concluded by stating that officers from the Department of Working Pensions had been proactive and responsive to working with the Council and that although current numbers were considered to be small, it could take up until 2021/2022 before all claimants are moved to Universal Credit.

County Borough Councillor George had no supplementary question.

2. From County Borough Councillor G. Jones to the Cabinet Member for Enterprise Development and Housing, County Borough Councillor D.R. Bevan:

“A range of factors continue to impact upon our high streets across the country. What can this Council do to support our Town Centres and make them fit for the future?”

Response from County Borough Councillor D.R. Bevan:

The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Jones for the question and agreed that all town centres are under pressure from a range of external factors, including austerity, the change in peoples' spending patterns and shopping habits. The Cabinet Member explained that the Council were committed to delivering and developing a range of measures that would lead to the towns being well placed to meet the challenges. Councillor

Bevan spoke of:

- Developing town centre strategies, such as the one recently developed for Porth;
- Providing new Community Hubs in town centre locations to deliver services such as those in the pipeline for Aberdare, Porth, Mountain Ash and Ferndale;
- Providing an integrated package of support for businesses to help them grow and modernise which includes the newly revised Enterprise Support Programme and Town Centre Maintenance Grants; and
- Continued reduction of car parking charges in the major towns and removal of charges in all other towns.

Supplementary question from County Borough Councillor G. Jones:

“As you know the BID in Pontypridd has been successful since its establishment, could you tell me more about the BID for Aberdare?”

Response from County Borough Councillor D.R. Bevan:

The Cabinet Member advised that the Council were working with Aberdare Business and Tourism Association (ABTA) and were supporting town centre business communities to help themselves and to develop their own initiatives through the development of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). The Cabinet Member was pleased to announce that Welsh Government had provided financial support to develop options for BIDs in Treorchy and Aberdare and that the Council were currently in the process of scoping out what benefits a BID can bring for the town centre. The Cabinet Member continued by speaking of the Hop Shop and Save initiative which had been developed in Pontypridd town centre, which allowed traders to provide discount opportunities to local shoppers. The Cabinet Member advised that discussions were underway to further roll out this initiative within Aberdare town centre.

3. **The Mayor advised Members that County Borough Councillor G. Caple was not present to pose his question to the Cabinet Member due to a bereavement. On behalf of the Council, the Mayor extended well wishes to Councillor Caple.**
4. **From County Borough Councillor G. Davies to the Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning, County Borough Councillor J. Rosser:**

“Will you provide a statement on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision in Welsh Medium education in Rhondda Cynon Taf?”

Response from County Borough Councillor J. Rosser:

The Cabinet Member thanked the Councillor for the question and explained that all Learning Support Classes are currently hosted by English medium schools in RCT. The Member advised that Access and Inclusion Services are able to provide outreach support through both the medium of English and Welsh, such as Educational Psychology, Sensory

Service, Speech and Language, which includes Autism, Behavioural support and specific/complex Learning Difficulties. The Cabinet Member added that RCT undertakes regular audits of the special educational needs of pupils within its Welsh medium schools to explore whether there is a need to establish Welsh medium learning support class provision.

Supplementary question from County Borough Councillor J. Rosser:

“Welsh Medium Education should be available to every pupil but pupils with special educational needs lose out due to a number of reasons such as the lack of special units that offer Welsh, English Welcome Schemes and Educational Psychology Tasks held in English. How many children lose out to Welsh Medium Education and what can be done to improve this?”

Response form County Borough Councillor J. Rosser:

The Cabinet Member reiterated that the Council undertake regular audits of the special educational needs of pupils within its Welsh medium schools and stated that there is a low number of pupils who would meet the criteria to access the same type of specialist Welsh provision.

5. From County Borough Councillor A. Fox to the Cabinet Member for Enterprise Development and Housing, County Borough Councillor D.R. Bevan:

“Will the Cabinet Member please make a statement on the Council’s Empty Properties Strategy?”

Response form County Borough Councillor D.R. Bevan:

The Cabinet Member thanked the Councillor for the question and went on to explain that the Council’s Empty Property Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 21st November 2018. The Cabinet Member advised that the key aim of the Strategy is to provide a pro-active approach to tackling Empty Properties by:

- Increasing scale of empty homes being brought back into use;
- Maximising current funding and identifying further funding to increase the number of empty homes that brought back into use; and
- Undertaking research in communities and evaluating existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty homes.

The Cabinet Member concluded by stating that the Council has issued 130 Empty Property Grants since 2016, and a total of 81 Houses into Homes Loans have been approved and paid out which equates to a total of £2.5 million.

Supplementary question from County Borough Councillor A. Fox:

“As you know my ward has some of the highest levels of empty homes in the County Borough, how will the strategy respond to persistent long-term empty properties?”

Response from County Borough Councillor D.R. Bevan:

The Cabinet Member advised that officers have been focussing on targeting the 684 'long term' empty properties that have been identified across RCT, including those in Penrhiwceiber; and explained that each community is evaluated on an individual basis as difference approaches are needed depending on the property and its location. The Cabinet Member continued by speaking of the recent work of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee which had undertaken a review in respect of the empty properties. The Cabinet Member advised that a follow up review would be undertaken by the Scrutiny in October 2019 to build upon their positive work. The Cabinet Member concluded by stating that the Council is willing to explore a vast range of options from early intervention to actively intervening legally when properties become significantly detrimental to the local communities.

130 COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Communications & Interim Head of Democratic Services advised Members that the Development Plan would be considered in the next Municipal Year.

131 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INCORPORATING INVESTMENT STRATEGY, TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP) STATEMENT FOR 2019/2020

In accordance with the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities through Regulations issued under the Local Government Act, 2003, the Director of Finance & Digital Services provided Members with information on the following:-

- The Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20;
- The Investment Strategy for 2019/20;
- The Treasury Indicators for 2018/19 (actuals to date) and 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22; and
- The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement.

(Note: At this point in proceedings, County Borough Councillors S. Pickering and D. Macey entered the meeting.)

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy, Treasury Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement as set out in the report.

132 2019/20 CAPITAL STRATEGY REPORT INCORPORATING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

In accordance with the 2017 edition of the Prudential Code, the Director, Finance and Digital Services provided Members with information in respect of the Council's Capital Strategy.

Members were advised that the purpose of the Capital Strategy report is to provide an overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of Council services, along with an overview of the associated risk, its management and the implications for the future financial sustainability.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Capital Strategy report incorporating the Prudential Indicators.

133 THE COUNCIL'S PAY POLICY STATEMENT

In accordance with Section 38(1) of the Localism Act, 2011, the Director, Human Resources provided Members with information in respect of the Council's 2019/20 Pay Policy Statement.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Pay Policy Statement as shown at Appendix A of the report.

134 BREXIT

The Chief Executive provided Members with a verbal update in respect of the current position of Brexit and its potential impact on the Council and its residents. The Chief Executive spoke of the UK Parliament's commitment to leaving the European Union, but there was insufficient support for the Government's Deal with the EU. However, a series of "indicative votes" were being taken by MPs this evening on alternatives to the Government's Deal but it was unlikely that there would be cross-party consensus supporting a way forward.

The Chief Executive emphasised that the impact of Brexit is unknown but assured Members that the Council were putting preparations in place, where possible. The officer continued by stating that the Council's website had been updated to include guidance to allow businesses and citizens to understand what they would need to do in a 'No Deal' scenario, so they can make informed plans and preparations. This included information on the EU Settlement Scheme for EU citizens residing in the UK. The Council had also written to all employees who may be affected and offered help and support to register in accordance with the Settlement Scheme.

It was explained that with the chance of the UK leaving the European Union in a 'No Deal' scenario, certain materials on large capital projects had been imported early and stored. To understand the risk of essential supplies and services not being provided in a "No Deal" scenario, the Council's Procurement Service has surveyed its largest 90 suppliers and has had confirmation (twice over the past 6 months) that the suppliers were confident they could meet our requirements. Members learned that regular meetings were held with public sector partners and a contingency plan had been established in the case of the need to organise European Elections or a General Election. Members were assured that future updates would be provided when appropriate.

Following a lengthy discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the update.

1. The following Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors J. James and L. Hooper was received was by the Proper Officer in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.1(b):-

This Council notes its disappointment at the recent defeat of the Autism Bill at the National Assembly for Wales, a Bill that was developed in partnership with the National Autistic Society and received cross-party support.

Though this Council, of course, recognises that legislation alone is not the answer to improving access to services for those with autism in our communities, by simply rejecting the Bill and without bringing forward a credible alternative, the Welsh Government is sending the wrong signal on this important subject.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Request that the Leader of the Council writes to both the First Minister and the Minister for Health and Social Services, outlining this Council's concern at the recent defeat of this Bill, whilst also seeking reassurances that the Welsh Government will be bringing forward its own legislation on this issue.
- Request that the Health and Wellbeing Committee of this Council produce a piece of work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, on what more this Council can do to support those living with autism in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

At the meeting, the Mayor announced that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.4.1 the following amendment to the Notice of Motion had been received from County Borough Councillors M Adams, J. Bonetto, R. Bevan, H. Boggis, S. Bradwick, J. Brencher, A. Calvert, G. Caple, A. Crimmings, A. Davies-Jones, L. De-Vet, J. Elliott, S. Evans, M Fidler Jones, M. Forey, A. Fox, E. George, M. Griffiths, J. Harries, G. Holmes, G. Hopkins, G. Hughes, G. Jones, R. Lewis, W. Lewis, C. Leyshon, A. Morgan, S. Morgans, M. Norris, D. Owen-Jones, S. Pickering, S. Powderhill, S. Powell, S. Rees, A. Roberts, J. Rosser, R. Smith, G. Stacey, M. Tegg, G. Thomas, W. Treeby, R. Turner, M. Webber, D. Williams, T. Williams, C. Willis and R. Yeo.

This Council notes the recent defeat of the Autism Bill at the National Assembly for Wales, a Bill that was developed in partnership with the National Autistic Society and received cross-party support. The Council also notes the concerns of the five Colleges of Medicine and the Welsh NHS Confederations concerns that the Bill was not the best route for improving outcomes for individuals with ASD.

Though this Council, of course, recognises that legislation alone is not the answer to improving access to services for those with autism in our communities, steps to improve outcomes for individuals with ASD should be a priority for Welsh Ministers.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Request that the Leader of the Council writes to both the First

Minister and the Minister for Health and Social Services to seek assurances from the Welsh Government that alternative solutions are put in place.

- Request that the Health and Wellbeing Committee of this Council produce a piece of work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, on what more this Council can do to support those living with autism in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

Following a lengthy discussion on this matter, the vote was taken in respect of the amended Notice of Motion which was carried and it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the amended Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors M Adams and J. Bonetto.

2. The following Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors P.Jarman, G.Davies, E. Webster, S.M. Evans, A. Chapman, L.Jones, E.Stephens, H,Fychan, D,Grehan, K.Morgan,S.Rees Owen, M.Weaver, D.Macey,J.Davies, J.Cullwick, J.Williams and A.Cox was received was by the Proper Officer in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.1(b):-

There are some 7,720 residents in Rhondda Cynon Taf living with sight loss and many thousands more residents suffering mobility difficulties such as wheelchair users as well as young people with pushchairs, who are finding it difficult to navigate streets because of obstructions on pavements.

As a consequence this Council will work with the Royal National Institute for the Blind Cymru (RNIB Cymru) and other disabled persons organisations to develop a Street Charter Toolkit to eliminate the risks and disadvantage associated with street clutter and obstructions.

That this motion once accepted by Council will refer the matter to the relevant Scrutiny committee to develop a Draft Street Charter. The terms of reference for that Committee will include working in partnership with RNIB Cymru and other Access and Disability Forum Groups by taking evidence from people with sight loss and other disabilities who endure disadvantage. The draft Street Charter will then be presented to both the Cabinet and Full Council for formal adoption.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Notice of Motion.

This meeting closed at 7.42 pm

**Cllr S Powderhill
Chairman.**