



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 29 July 2020 at 3.00 pm at Virtual Meeting.

County Borough Councillors - Council Members in attendance:-

Councillor S Powderhill (Chair)

Councillor M Adams	Councillor R Bevan
Councillor H Boggis	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor S Bradwick	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor A Calvert	Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Chapman	Councillor A Cox
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor J Cullwick
Councillor A Davies-Jones	Councillor G Davies
Councillor M Diamond	Councillor S Evans
Councillor A Fox	Councillor H Fychan
Councillor E George	Councillor D Grehan
Councillor E Griffiths	Councillor M Griffiths
Councillor J Harries	Councillor G Holmes
Councillor L Hooper	Councillor G Hopkins
Councillor P Howe	Councillor G Hughes
Councillor J James	Councillor P Jarman
Councillor G Jones	Councillor L Jones
Councillor W Jones	Councillor R Lewis
Councillor W Lewis	Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor A Morgan	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor M Norris	Councillor D Owen-Jones
Councillor S Pickering	Councillor M Powell
Councillor S Powell	Councillor S. Rees-Owen
Councillor S Rees	Councillor A Roberts
Councillor J Rosser	Councillor G Stacey
Councillor E Stephens	Councillor G Thomas
Councillor W Treeby	Councillor R Turner
Councillor L Walker	Councillor M Weaver
Councillor M Webber	Councillor E Webster
Councillor D Williams	Councillor J Williams
Councillor T Williams	Councillor R Yeo

Officers in attendance

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

167 Introductions

Introductions were made by the Group Leaders present:-

County Borough Councillor A Morgan (Labour Group)
County Borough Councillor P Jarman (Plaid Cymru Group)
County Borough Councillor M Powell (Alliance Group)
County Borough Councillor J James (Conservative Group)

In recognition of the change to the Council's Political balance following official notification of a change to the membership of the RCT Independent Group, the Service Director, Democratic Services and Communications confirmed that a report outlining the change in political balance would be considered at a future meeting of the Council.

168 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors S Belzak, J Edwards, J Elliott, S M Evans, A S Fox, M Forey, K L Jones, K Morgan, W Owen, M Tegg, G D Williams and C Willis. An apology was also received from Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive.

169 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations were made pertaining to the agenda:-

County Borough Councillor P Jarman referred to her dispensation granted by the Standards Committee on the 29th November 2019 providing the member. "Dispensation to speak and vote on all matters for the duration and adoption of the 2020-21 Budget process in her capacity as leader of the Opposition".

Mr Nigel Wheeler, Group Director, Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services declared the following personal and non-prejudicial interest with regards to Agenda Item 11 (Appointment of the Group Director – Community & Children's Services and that Council consider the recommendation for the appointment to the Deputy Chief Executive role) stating "I will leave the meeting when the item is considered"

170 Minutes

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the virtual Council meeting held on the 1st July 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

171 Suspension to Standing Orders

The Deputy Leader made a statement in respect of moving the suspension of Council Procedure Rule 15.1 and advised that in order to facilitate the smooth running of the Council meeting through Zoom, Group Leaders have agreed in advance that where a vote is taken on any item, the individual Group Leader will exercise the vote on behalf of all their Members present for the item in question.

In order to implement the revised voting procedures the Deputy Leader moved

the suspension of Council Procedure Rule 15.1, which states that a matter will be decided by a simple majority of those Members voting and present in the room at the time the question was put.

Following consideration of the matter it was **RESOLVED** to suspend Council Procedure Rule 15.1

172 **Statements**

The Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan made the following statement in respect of two major incidents which have impacted on the Local Authority, the flooding incidents in February followed by the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The Leader referred to the unprecedented times endured by Rhondda Cynon Taf, its residents and local businesses regarding the impact of both major incidents. The local authority is working to address the pressures particularly the financial pressures around balancing the Council budget, the additional costs and lost income and the damage to the infrastructure across the County Borough from the flooding incident. The Leader advised that discussions are ongoing between the Welsh Government and Central Government about further support for the flood damage to the infrastructure in RCT.

The Leader advised that a Mid-Year Budget Review which is usually undertaken in February each year will be reported to Full Council in September or October. It is hoped that the costs for Covid-19 will be covered by Welsh/Central Government but the local authority will need to address this issue in the event that some costs are not wholly covered. The Council will continue to lobby the Welsh Government for additional funding and discussions will be ongoing.

The Leader also explained that a Capital Expenditure review is to be undertaken to establish a stimulus package which will support the existing investment and infrastructure to secure jobs and economic growth across the County Borough.

173 **Questions**

Question from County Borough Councillor H Fychan to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan:-

“A allwch amlinellu sut mae'r Cyngor yn bwriadu ymgynghori â chynghorwyr ar effaith COVID19 ar eu wardiau er mwyn helpu i'r Cyngor cynllunio o ran adferiad ahefyd o'r posibilwydd o ail don?”

“Can you outline how it is intended to consult Councillors on the impact of COVID19 on their wards to help inform the Council's planning for recovery and preparation for a potential second wave?”

Response from Councillor A Morgan:

“Councillor Morgan welcomed any feedback from local Members in respect of local issues relating to Covid-19. As Covid is affecting every electoral ward, a lot of services and responses need to be implemented on a wider scale. He added that there is unlikely to be a significant second wave but a sustained continuation of cases on an elevated level.

Welsh Government's Test Trace Protect Programme (TTP) is in place to tackle any outbreaks such as those recent incidents in Merthyr Tydfil and Wrexham which were work place transmitted outbreaks. The Leader referred to the valuable learning which has arisen from the Covid-19 pandemic, such as working with the vulnerable in our communities and how we can continue to support them in collaboration with the community volunteers going forward in a number of ways such as accessing online food orders through the supermarkets.

The Leader welcomed any examples and feedback from Elected Members.

Supplementary question from Councillor H Fychan to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan:-

"One of the things which isn't clear at the moment is all of the case work that has increased and the work that we as Councillors are doing with volunteers which is being missed by the Council. Whilst I would like to see, as some of the restrictions are relaxed and a number of people are still self-isolating and a number of businesses are unable to operate fully because of the 2 metre rule, as we saw in an email that myself and the Leader received yesterday from Cortile Coffee in Pontypridd, a company which has an uncertain future. How will the Council continue to support people that are self-isolating, namely those who are shielding and also particularly businesses in Pontypridd who have suffered greatly from the flooding and Covid-19?"

Response from Councillor A Morgan:

The Leader advised that following the flooding and Covid -19 the town centre teams, which include staff redeployed from other service areas, have been visiting businesses with further advice and information posters. Where there are specific issues regarding grants the Council has liaised with WG to see if businesses are eligible and kept them fully informed. There are still officers from the Regeneration teams out in the town centres communicating with businesses on a daily basis.

The Leader advised that the community support provided to those vulnerable residents via the hubs would be down scaled over the coming weeks with a view to still providing some assistance to vulnerable residents such as direct deliveries of medicine from the pharmacies and online grocery shopping in place of community hub food boxes.

Question from County Borough Councillor G Hughes to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan:-

"What steps are the council taking to support the local economy?"

Response from Councillor A Morgan:

"The Leader confirmed that grants worth millions of pounds have been processed for local businesses through the small businesses rate relief programmes. The council will also process the NNDR Business Relief to stimulate local economy and support local businesses over the next 12 months. The Council's Capital Programme (approx..£150m spending last year) which invests in the Council's own infrastructure such as play areas, highways, schools and is linked with a significant number of jobs. The Leader confirmed that a

number of Graduates/Apprentices will be taken on, initially 50 by Christmas with discussions ongoing with Welsh Government regarding further funding. The Leader referred to a number of initiatives which will draw inward investment to the area such as the new units at Robertstown and Coed Ely and working closely with Zip world to help boost the economy.

Supplementary question from Councillor G Hughes to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan:-

“How might the Council stimulate the local economy and help to provide resilience against the future economic challenges?”

Response from Councillor A Morgan:

The Leader responded by referring to the stimulus package as mentioned earlier in the meeting which will accelerate some of the investments. Other opportunities linked with the Council’s waste infrastructure, the Eco Park in Aberdare with Welsh Government Support. Also the Council is looking at how it can lever in private investment from the private sector. The Leader confirmed that further detail would be presented in October.

Question from County Borough Councillor S Rees-Owen to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, County Borough Councillor C Leyshon:-

“Can you make a statement on the increasing numbers of children looked after during the pandemic?”

Response from Councillor C Leyshon:

Councillor Leyshon confirmed that the rate of children became looked after did not increase during this period however Children’s Services ability to carry out face to face meetings with families towards safe exit from the looked after system has been affected by the restrictions of the pandemic. It has been possible, where children have been moved on, which includes to adoptive families following National guidelines. The figures have not increased.

Supplementary question from Councillor S Rees-Owen to the County Borough Councillor C Leyshon:-

“I am aware that the Corporate Parenting Board will consider the Children’s Services Annual report tomorrow, on the 31st March 2020 the figures of our children looked after stood at 717. In the Cabinet papers dated the 25th June when Cabinet discussed the financial impact of Covid-19 there was reference to ‘an increasing numbers of children looked after’, an estimate from April 2020 to June 2020. In which case, if the current numbers are still 717, what additional programmes will be put in place to support the children and young people, who are looked after, academically, emotionally and socially throughout this very traumatic time?”

Response from Councillor C Leyshon:

“Councillor Leyshon confirmed that as of Monday this week there are 708 children looked after which is the accurate figure. A number of support packages are in place for our children looked after, the children’s hubs and working with resilient families and where there has been an emergency need to meet with

children and their families face to face meetings have taken place. The Council is in contact with vulnerable families by telephone. There is a play scheme throughout the summer holidays to which vulnerable families have priority placements.”

Question from County Borough Councillor G R Davies to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan:-

“A wnewch chi datganiad ar effaith Covid19 ar Rhondda Cynon Taf?”

“Please can you make a statement on the effect of Covid-19 on Rhondda Cynon Taf?”

Response from Councillor A Morgan:

“Councillor Morgan referred Councillor Davies to his response to Councillor Fychan’s question earlier and stated that the final impact of the Covid pandemic will take some time to analyse, the impact on people’s mental health and wellbeing, the impact on children taking time away from school may take some time to understand. The economic impact is likely to be with us for some time to come, there is an emerging picture across the country regarding job losses with some large companies e.g GEC in Nantgarw. As furlough ends we may see further impacts on some companies such as companies reducing the working week to a four day week and cutting salaries by 20%. Other issues which will potentially impact on the economy include whether the community will return to retail shopping in place of online shopping and whether residents have the confidence to return to restaurants and cinemas.

To date there have been over 1,00 additional claims for Council Tax relief and over 1,000 additional children coming into the Free School Meals scheme which demonstrates that the Covid pandemic has had an impact on families.

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor G R Davies to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan:-

“In the novel “The Plague” by Albert Camus, the doctor says ‘ What we learn in time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise’. This has been true in Rhondda Cynon Taf over the last few months. We have seen staff in the Health Service, Council staff, transport workers, shop workers and many volunteers working together particularly for the benefit of vulnerable people but also for the benefit of our society in general. Each one deserves our admiration and we thank them.

My supplementary question is what has the Council learned from the experience of operating during the pandemic and what will the Council change if a second wave of the virus comes? Maybe if a wave happened, in a particular ward will the local Councillors be consulted? And what things have worked better during this time and can continue to be used in the future?”

Response from Councillor A Morgan:

“Councillor Morgan heeded that a second wave may not be imminent and according to Public Health Wales it is likely for us to see outbreaks in clusters

and local incidents of the virus and with the support of the Track and Trace Programme we will be able to address it quickly. This advice will give our communities more confidence.

As Leader of the WLGA, Councillor Morgan advised that he has meetings with all 22 local authority Leaders who are feeding into a Welsh Government review which is a wider piece of learning around Covid-19 regarding issues such as PPE, social care provision and supporting vulnerable residents. In RCT and in the unlikely event of a second wave and the country went into a second lockdown, Councillor Morgan advised that the Council is much better prepared with measures such as the infrastructure in place for staff to work from home and PPE supplies secured. In the event of an incident such as in Merthyr or an outbreak as in Wrexham and in the event of a community transmission, the council would consider the individual circumstance which would not necessarily mean the whole of RCT going into lockdown. Public Health Wales are also sharing learning from Environmental Health staff across the local authorities”

174 Council Work Programme

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications advised that a report outlining the Council’s revised political balance, following the formation of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Independent Group, would be presented to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September . The report would confirm the four political groups and one unallocated Member.

The Service Director also provided advance notification that an update report outlining the flooding in Rhondda Cynon Taf could be reported to the council meeting to be held on the 23rd September 2020.

In response to a query, the Service Director confirmed that the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal would form part of the future work programme of the Council.

RESOLVED to note the update as provided by the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications.

175 Local Development Plan (LDP) for Rhondda Cynon Taf Update

The Director Of Prosperity & Development advised that on the 27th November 2019, Council approved the Delivery Agreement (DA) for the Revised Local Development Plan (LDP), for Rhondda Cynon Taf which set an official start date of June 2020. Due to the Coronavirus virus restrictions it was not possible to launch the revision in June due to the necessary significant public engagement in the early stages.

The Director sought the approval of Full Council to amend the delivery agreement for the preparation of the Rhondda Cynon Taf revised local development plan as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. The Director advised that the proposed revised launch date would be September 2020.

The Director responded to a number of queries such as how the Council takes its lead and advice from Welsh Government’s Planning Division as to what is relevant to consider as part of the DA and in respect of the community engagement strategy.

It was advised that the terms of reference and membership of the Member's Steering Group, which would play a formal role in the preparation of the revised LDP, was initially considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee but due to the Covid-19. It was proposed that nominations would now be sought from Group Leaders and the membership of the Steering Group would mirror the political balance of the Planning and Development Committee.

In conclusion, the Director of Prosperity & Development proposed that the current consultee list in place with targeted stakeholder bodies could be extended following consultation with the Members' Steering Group. He also acknowledged the challenges faced with regards to community engagement, involvement and consultation given the ongoing social distancing restrictions.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to

1. Approve the proposed amended DA for the Revised LDP for Rhondda Cynon Taf (as set out in Appendix 1 to the Council report) which outlines the revised timetable and method of community involvement and engagement for the revision preparation process; and
2. Submit the amended DA to Welsh Government for approval.

176 Annual Treasury Management Review 2019/20

The Director of Finance & Digital Services advised that the Council's Annual Treasury Management activities are widely regulated and scrutinised through its internal processes. This report secures the Council's compliance with the need to provide an annual Treasury Management Review which follows a mid-year review which was previously reported to Council on the 27th November last year.

The Director stated that events such as global pandemic and Brexit have created uncertainty with markets and more volatility with interest rates which has meant the council has taken advantage of by means of locking in additional borrowing at historically low rates. The Council's average cost of borrowing of 3.33% compares to previous years when the cost of borrowing was 4.75%.

The Director referred to the Council's Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2019/20 and its investment strategy and investments activity results, set out in the report, which demonstrate the Council's continued low risk strategy and returns on investments slightly behind the benchmark.

The Director responded to a number of queries relating to the Annual Treasury Management Review 2019/20. The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications explained the role of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in considering the Council Performance Report 31st March 2020 at its meeting on the 30th July 2020.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report.

177 Virtual Meetings Update

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented his report to provide Members with a further update in respect of the Council's virtual committee meetings, following the introduction of the [Local Authorities](#)

[\(Coronavirus\) \(Meetings\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#), and the previous update report, presented to Council on the 1st July.

The Service Director reminded Members that the initial phase prioritised Cabinet, Planning & Development Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Since the last update a number of other committees have convened including the first thematic Scrutiny Committee, the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee which met to allow members to engage and scrutinise the guidance issued by the Council regarding the return to school in September.

Members were referred to the meetings schedule at 6.3 of the report which sets out the meetings up to and including the Council's AGM based on dates confirmed to date. Members were advised that should the business of the council determine there to be a need, both the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee and the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee will convene in advance of the Council's AGM.

In conclusion, the Service Director advised that ongoing engagement with the Group Leaders will continue to take place to develop future approaches such as a hybrid approach to virtual meetings. He added that the Council will continue to build on the opportunities that virtual engagement does provide such as participation for Members as part of the Council's democratic approach.

Following discussions in respect of the recent visit by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and confirmation from the Leader that following the appointment of the new Chief Executive in September, the Board would return to provide Members with a further update, it was proposed that the Group Leaders would meet in advance of the meeting and Members would identify key areas for discussion.

It was further proposed to review the 3pm start time of the Council's Annual General Meeting (AGM) to 4pm to accommodate those Members with childcare/work commitments.

Following consideration of the virtual meetings report it was **RESOLVED** to:-

1. Acknowledge the progress made to date with regards to virtual meetings;
2. Note the sequence of meetings in the enclosed timeline of committees up to and including the 16th September 2020 (Council AGM); and
3. Request that the Service Director Democratic Services and Communication provides further updates on progress of the Council's virtual meetings.

178 Notice of Motion (business deferred from 18th March 2020)

To consider the following Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors J.James and L.Hooper :-

It is estimated that there are 200,000 children being brought up by family members or friends in the United Kingdom in what is termed as 'Kinship Care'.

These kinship carers have stepped in to care for children whose parents are unable to look after them and keep their families together, and it represents three times the number of children in the national foster care system – and is a

growing figure.

Kinship care is one of the main ways to provide a sense of security, continuity and belonging for children who cannot live with their parents and it provides high levels of stability and enduring support well into young adulthood.

However, the support that is offered to kinship carers throughout the country lacks consistency, and carers often feel isolated, abandoned and 'hung out to dry'. This is in marked contrast to the support that foster carers and adoptive parents can receive.

This Council recognises the invaluable work that kinship carers do for their loved ones, often under the most trying of situations, and is committed to providing the help, engagement and support that they need.

This Council requests that a report be considered by the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee to look further into the role of kinship care in the County Borough and to work closely with Grandparents Plus to identify ways in which it can meet the needs of kinship carers and those in kinship care.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Notice of Motion in respect of kinship carer and refer the issue to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee for further consideration (and in collaboration with 'Grandparents Plus' and the Council's Corporate Parenting Board).

179 TO CONSIDER PASSING THE FOLLOWING UNDER-MENTIONED RESOLUTION:

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications confirmed that there was no Urgent Business for Members to consider and following consideration of agenda item 11, the appointment of Group Director, Community & Children's Services and the appointment to the role of Deputy Chief Executive, the Presiding Officer would bring the meeting to a close.

Members resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended) for the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 12 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

180 Appointment of Group Director, Community & Children's Services and Appointment to The Role Of Deputy Chief Executive

The Director of Human Resources presented his report which sought Council's ratification of the decision of the Appointments Committee, regarding the appointment of the selected candidate to the post of Group Director – Community & Children's Services and consideration of the recommendation for the appointment to the Deputy Chief Executive role.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED**:-

1. To ratify the recommendation of the Appointments Committee regarding the appointment of Group Director – Community & Children's Services to commence the w.e.f. 1st January 2021; and
2. That the Group Director, Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services

undertake the role of the Deputy Chief Executive w.e.f 1st January 2021

(Note: The Group Director, Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services previously declared a personal interest in respect of the matter and left the meeting for the duration of the item).

This meeting closed at 4.30 pm

**Cllr S Powderhill
Chairman.**