

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON WEDNESDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2023 AT
16:00**

Present

Councillor M Jones – Chairperson

H T Bennett	A R Berrow	F D Bletsoe	S J Bletsoe
JPD Blundell	E L P Caparros	N Clarke	RJ Collins
HJ David	C Davies	C L C Davies	P Davies
S Easterbrook	M J Evans	N Farr	P Ford
J Gebbie	W R Goode	RM Granville	H Griffiths
S J Griffiths	D T Harrison	M L Hughes	D M Hughes
RM James	P W Jenkins	MJ Kearn	W J Kendall
M Lewis	J Llewellyn-Hopkins	RL Penhale-Thomas	J E Pratt
E Richards	R J Smith	JC Spanswick	I M Spiller
T Thomas	G Walter	A Wathan	A Williams
AJ Williams	HM Williams	I Williams	MJ Williams
R Williams	E D Winstanley	T Wood	

Apologies for Absence

None

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Carys Lord	Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Michael Pitman	Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services
Alex Rawlin	Corporate Policy & Public Affairs Manager
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

89. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made and those who declared prejudicial interests were stated, left the meeting whilst the item they declared an interest in, was being considered:-

Councillor Alex Williams – Agenda item 5 – Prejudicial interest as a family member had a second home in the Bridgend County Borough (BCB).

Councillor H Williams – Agenda item 5 – Prejudicial interest

Councillor M Evans – Agenda item 7 – Personal interest as a member of Pencoed Town Council

Councillor N Clarke – Agenda item 5 - Prejudicial interest as a family member has a second home in BCB.

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Councillor J Pratt – Agenda item 7 – Personal interest as a member of Porthcawl Town Council

Councillor R Williams – Agenda item 7 – Personal interest as a member of Pencoed Town Council

Councillor S Bletsoe – Agenda item 5 – Prejudicial interest as his paid employment comes from a representative body of people who have second homes in BCB

Councillor T Thomas – Agenda item 5 – Prejudicial interest as he works for an organisation that represents interests of property agents.

Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing – Agenda item 5 – Prejudicial interest.

90. **TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:**

Mayor

We were very saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Clare Drakeford, the wife of Wales's First Minister, Mark Drakeford on the 28 January 2023.

The thoughts of everyone in Bridgend County Borough Council are with the First Minister and the family at this time.

It is also with sadness that I announce after a short illness the unexpected sad passing of Mr Jeff Baker an independent member of Bridgend County Borough Council Standards Committee.

Mr. Baker had been a member of the Committee since 2016 and certainly made a significant contribution to the governance of this Council.

I am sure all members today will extend warmest condolences to Jeff's wife Janet during very this difficult of times.

It was a pleasure to continue into the New Year with some fantastic examples of the incredible young talent we have here in the County Borough.

I attended His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Mid Glamorgan Awards for the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for Wales at Pontypridd.

It was a particularly proud moment to see three young people from our Borough being recognised.

Leading Cadet David Morgan and Able Cadet Anna Marie Petter from Porthcawl Sea Cadets Corps.

Cadet Flight Sergeant Scott Jones from No 3 Welsh Wing RAF Air Cadets. Congratulations to all on their achievements.

Together with the Mayor of Porthcawl Town, I accepted an invitation to visit to the Grand Pavilion at Porthcawl where Porthcawl Comprehensive School presented 'Footloose the Musical'

He extended his thanks to all that were involved in the show.

The Mayors Award nomination process has been completed, with the applications all being of a very high standard and worthy of recognition.

We are currently in the process of contacting those who participated in the process to update them on their individual applications.

I wish to introduce you all to this little Red Dragon sitting proudly of front of me, a dragon currently with no name. Can I extend an invitation to you all to nominate a name for this. The cost of which is £1 a go. All proceeds will go towards the Mayor's Charity. I would like to think the list will be full of all Councillor names and those of Senior Officers within the Authority.

Can I thank Councillor Paula Ford for finding this poor creature? There will be a personal presentation from myself to the individual who picks the correct name.

It is my pleasure to have with us in the Chamber today, two of the Youth Council (YC) representatives, Aspen and Tyler. Each representative then gave a short speech, in turn, on their roles and responsibilities on the YC.

Finally, a timely reminder to those who unfortunately were unable to manage their mobile phones during council business. Your penalty of £10 to the Mayor's Charity remains unpaid. Interest will be due on any outstanding sums along with a public name and shame list.

Cabinet Member - Regeneration

At the last meeting of full Council, our Chief Executive advised members that an announcement was due on our bid to the UK Government Levelling Up fund.

Since then, we have learned that £18m has been awarded towards a major redevelopment of the Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl.

As you know, the Levelling Up Fund is a national scheme and has been set up and administrated by UK Government as a way of enabling local authorities to put in bids for funding new infrastructure within local communities.

The funding will be used to address the condition of the building's concrete structure and will ensure that its unique heritage can be preserved.

At the same time, it will enable the building to benefit from an extended and improved arts, culture, and heritage service.

Among the modern facilities that will be introduced are new first-floor function spaces, a new rooftop area capable of hosting functions and cafe space, a new studio theatre, space for new businesses, new offices, a 'changing places' facility and much more.

This funding is the culmination of many years of planning and partnership working alongside our colleagues at Awen Cultural Trust, and I am sure that members will agree it is excellent news.

Unfortunately, the news was also bittersweet as we were notified that UK Government had turned down our second bid to the Levelling Up fund.

This would have supported our ambitious plans for creating a new Penprysg Road Bridge, and I am sure that our deep disappointment will be shared by the people of Pencoed.

We are currently waiting to hear whether further rounds of the Levelling Up fund will be announced, and I will bring you more news on this as soon as possible.

Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations

I am sure that members will share my concerns over recent research which has confirmed that the cost of living crisis is driving more people in Wales to borrow money from illegal loan sharks.

The research, which was commissioned by Welsh Government and Stop Loan Sharks Wales, found that people aged 18 to 34 were most susceptible, and that half of all respondents who have borrowed money have done so to cover every day normal living expenses.

A further 66 per cent said they did so to purchase food, and 53 per cent to cover energy bills.

Worryingly, 38 per cent also said that they would be likely to borrow further money at some point this year.

This highlights the grim reality faced by Welsh communities in the current financial climate and confirms fears that the cost of living crisis is encouraging predatory illegal lenders to target desperate borrowers.

Thankfully, organisations such as Stop Loan Sharks Wales are working alongside the likes of our own Shared Regulatory Services to protect, educate and support victims of illegal money laundering, and are working together to investigate and prosecute loan sharks across Wales.

Members can support the fight against such illegal activity by ensuring that their constituents know that confidential help and advice is available simply by calling 0300 123 3311 or visiting the website, stop loan sharks wales dot co dot UK

Their work has already seen victims of illegal money laundering receive more than £66,000 in compensation, and I would strongly urge anyone who may be considering borrowing money to speak to the organisation first.

As members know, the Shared Regulatory Service works alongside a wide range of partners and play a vital role in protecting the public from unscrupulous traders while looking after consumer rights, food safety, animal welfare and more.

I'd like to thank them for their efforts, and for helping to protect local communities from being preyed upon by illegal money launderers.

Cabinet Member – Communities

I would like to draw members' attention towards an important consultation that is currently being carried out by Welsh Government.

As you know, in 2017 Welsh Government set a series of national targets on generating and using renewable energy as part of our overall commitment towards delivering a more sustainable future for Wales.

Latest national data shows that in 2021, renewable sources generated the equivalent of 55 per cent of our electricity use against a target of 70 per cent by 2030.

We have achieved nearly 90 per cent of our target for at least one gigawatt of renewable energy capacity to be locally owned by 2030, but while our renewables-based electrical capacity continues to increase year-on-year, the current rate of growth will not be enough to meet demand.

As a result, Welsh Government has launched a consultation on proposed new renewable energy targets, which includes sourcing 100 per cent of all national electricity consumption from renewable electricity by 2035.

This is an ambitious target, one which is likely to be largely dependent on increased support from the UK Government and reductions in cost, and a wealth of research and background information has been made available to ensure that people can provide an informed response as part of their feedback.

I would urge all members to take a look at the proposals, and to participate with this important national consultation, which can be found at the Welsh Government website.

Chief Executive

Members may be aware that we are currently marking National Apprenticeship Week at the council, and I recently joined the Leader, Deputy Leader and members of Cabinet at an event where we had a chance to meet some of the authority's existing apprentices and find out more about their experiences.

At the moment, the council has 24 apprentices working across ten different departments including Business Support, ICT, Social Care, Highways, and Green Spaces.

Since the apprenticeship programme was launched in 2013, we have successfully supported 116 apprentices, many of whom have since gone on to work at the council in full time, permanent positions.

This is especially fitting as the theme of this year's event is all about developing 'Skills For Life'.

We are committed towards supporting people into learning and developing future-ready skills which will help them to secure employment and set them on a path for a rewarding career.

The benefits of this 'grow your own' approach are very obvious, especially when you consider some of the workforce issues and recruitment challenges that the council is facing.

The last ten years have demonstrated beyond a doubt that this is a mutually beneficial and highly effective partnership.

As an organisation and an employer, we remain dedicated towards supporting young people by creating apprenticeship opportunities, and I hope that this will continue for many years to come.

Members may wish to advise their constituents that apprenticeships within the council are advertised through the job pages of the corporate website, and that further information and advice on apprenticeships is available from Careers Wales.

91. **TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER**

The recent industrial action by the National Education Union resulted in the closure of 23 primary schools, eight secondary schools and two special schools in Bridgend County Borough.

A further 16 primary schools and one special school were only partially open as a result of the industrial action. In total, nine primaries and one secondary school remained open as normal.

The strike marked the first of four planned days of industrial action, with further disruption to services likely to affect schools on Tuesday 14 February, and Wednesday 15 to Thursday 16 March.

On each strike day, schools make a decision on whether they can stay open or not based upon factors such as staff supervision levels, risk assessments, safeguarding and more.

While all schools will aim to inform parents about potential closures at least three working days before any industrial action takes place, some schools may make a decision to remain open or to close on the day of the proposed strike.

If a school has decided to close in advance, pupils who are eligible for free school meals are given a packed lunch the day before the proposed strike.

If a headteacher decides to close a school prior to lunchtime on the day of the strike, eligible pupils will receive a packed lunch to take home with them.

Unless a school has decided to close prior to the day of planned industrial action, school transport for eligible pupils will continue to run as normal.

However, in the event that a school or year group is forced to close due to staff supervision levels, a responsible adult such as a parent or carer should collect children from primary or additional needs schools.

Pupils, parents and carers are being kept up to date on latest developments around the industrial action, and schools are liaising with them closely to make sure that everyone is informed.

While the industrial action is underway, the ongoing welfare of local children will remain our top priority.

In other news, members may want to let their constituents know that Bridgend Register Office will host an open day on Saturday 18 February

Since its move into new premises here at the Civic Offices in July 2020, the Register Office has hosted more than 500 ceremonies ranging from weddings, civil partnerships and vow renewals to naming and commitment events.

It has also hosted citizenship ceremonies featuring the High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan, representatives of the Lord Lieutenant and the Mayor of Bridgend.

The register office now offers a state of the art ceremony room, Swit Pen-y-Bont, which can host up to 50 guests, as well as a purpose-built garden area where people can take photographs to mark their happy event.

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At the open day, staff will be available to show people around the new facilities and answer any questions that they may have about the register office and its work, what the booking process is and more.

The event will run from 10am to 1pm, and the facilities are fully accessible for people with disabilities.

I hope that members will let their constituents know about the open day, and that it is of interest.

Finally, I'd like to make members aware of the services that are offered through the Repair Café Wales organisation.

Designed to stop repairable household items from being thrown out or going to landfill, the service enables people to have broken or damaged items fixed and repaired - all for free.

The repair service covers items ranging from clothes, household electrics and technological goods to children's toys, bicycles, furniture and woodworking.

It offers training and advice to local communities and aims to encourage people to repair and recycle.

With a network of around 50 workshops spread throughout Wales, the organisation regularly advertises a series of pop-up repair events, but I am delighted to confirm that we have a local branch based here within the county borough.

Maesteg Repair Café was established by members of the Menshed project with support from BAVO and Repair Café Wales in January last year.

Based at the Old Court House, they were the first one of their kind to set up in the county borough and have gone from strength to strength with some highly positive and very moving testimonials from the people making use of their services.

I am sure members will agree that with the ongoing cost of living crisis, a service such as this is more valuable than ever.

More information is available at the Repair café website, and also from BAVO.

92. COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS - LONG TERM EMPTY HOMES AND SECOND HOMES - OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, submitted a report, in order to:

- provide information to Council on the discretionary powers that the Council has with regards to charging higher amounts of council tax on long term empty homes and second homes;
- inform Council of the outcome of the recent consultation exercise in respect of charging a council tax premium on long term empty homes and second homes; and
- seek approval from Council that the proposed council tax premiums, as recommend by cabinet on 17 January 2023, be implemented.

By way of background, she advised that from April this year, Councils in Wales were able to charge higher amounts of up to 300% on top of the standard rate of council tax on long term empty homes and second homes. The discretion given to local authorities to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to help authorities to bring long term empty

homes back into use and also to support local authorities in increase in the supply of affordable housing within their areas.

There were exceptions where premiums cannot be charged and these were detailed at paragraph 3.5 of the report.

The report before Members, outlined the options available to the local authority with regards to empty properties. Paragraph 3.10 the report, provided details of those local authorities that have applied a premium in Wales. At the current time 11 of the 22 local authorities do charge a premium, whilst other were currently in the process of reviewing their position on this.

In Bridgend, as at the end of October 2022, there were 701 long term empty homes and the details of where these were and how long they have been empty, was shown at paragraph 3.11 of the report.

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change stated that the Empty Homes Strategy for the Council, seeks to reduce empty properties to contribute towards increasing the availability of housing for sale or for rent. Charging a Council Tax premium on empty properties is in line with the aims of this Strategy, explained the Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change.

The report also looked at the proposal to charge a premium on second homes and again details of where this is currently being applied in Wales, was outlined in the report. The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change drew attention to the fact, that in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992, should a decision be made to apply a premium it could not be applied to this category of homes until April 2024.

The proposal to introduce Council Tax Premiums on long term empty homes and second homes, had been the subject of consultation and the matter was reconsidered by Cabinet in January this year. At that meeting it was decided that Cabinet recommended the implementation of a council tax premium on long term empty homes and second homes, to Council, with the proviso that additional work be carried out regarding second homes and wider factors, concluded the Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change.

A Member stated that there was a definite need for home owners to bring their properties back into a habitable state and that there was a real need for further housing, in particular affordable accommodation, in the Llynfi and other valley locations within the County Borough.

The Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations agreed with this ie particularly the point that increased housing accommodation was needed for families on low income and to support the homeless etc. He added that there was support for owners of empty properties to assist them to carry out essential remedial works that could then result in the homes being brought back to a habitable condition, for example, through the like of the Housing for Homes Fund. He added that only yesterday, Cabinet agreed a new agreement with Welsh Government that will secure £1.2m of funding to assist homeowners to this end.

A Member felt that the above should not only apply to empty homes but to empty properties also, so she asked if the local authority were thinking of something similar with commercial properties, particularly when being mindful of placemaking in our towns and the number of empty residential properties available there that could be converted into flats, which would result in an increase of housing stock in the County Borough.

The Constitution would however, now require a change to the delegation, to add that the Committee can determine applications for Listed Building Consent for Grade II buildings without the need for referral to Welsh Ministers, if it has on any application for Listed Building Consent received and adhered to the advice of the Senior Conservation and Design Officer Moira Lucas.

Similarly, the Corporate Director – Communities stated, that the existing Scheme of Officer Delegation also includes powers for Officers, where appropriate, to determine applications for Listed Building Consent subject to the requirement to notify Welsh Ministers in line with Section 13 of the Act.

The Council's Scheme of Delegation will require a change to add that these Officers can determine applications for Listed Building Consent for Grade II buildings without the need for referral to Welsh Ministers, if it has on any application for Listed Building Consent received and adhered to the advice of the Senior Conservation and Design Officer Moira Lucas.

The suggested amendment to the wording of the provision of that part of the Constitution affected by the change, was detailed in paragraph 4.5 of the report.

The Corporate Director – Communities added that, the Scheme of Delegation contained presently a delegated power for officers to determine applications for listed building consent except applications falling within any of the categories of excepted applications from time to time prescribed by the Council (paragraph 6.1(b)). Officers are also given (paragraph 6(1)(c)) delegated powers to determine planning applications in accordance with the scheme approved for the time being by the Council. The suggested amendment is to add the words "and listed building consent applications" into paragraph 6(1)(c) in the Scheme of Delegation was therefore recommended.

Following consideration of the report, Members

RESOLVED:

That Council approved the proposed changes outlined in paragraph 4.2 - 4.6 of this report to the Constitution and proposed change to the delegation and the Officer Scheme of Delegations, to add that the Committee and Specified Officers can approve applications for Listed Building Consent without the need for referral to Welsh Ministers if it has on any application for Listed Building Consent received and adhered to the advice of the Senior Conservation and Design Officer Moira Lucas.

94. **PORTHCAWL METROLINK**

The Corporate Director – Communities submitted a report, the purpose of which was to seek Council approval to consolidate the balance on the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Metro Plus Scheme capital budgets in the capital programme against the Porthcawl Metrolink scheme and vire funding from the Porthcawl Regeneration scheme, to meet the additional costs resulting from the tender process for the Metrolink Scheme, subject to Cabinet's recommendation on this matter dated 7 February 2023.

She explained that the Porthcawl Metrolink project is the provision of a modern bus facility within the heart of the Porthcawl Regeneration area offering a multi bay, fully enclosed building with room for a concessionary stand.

Cardiff City Region (CCR) through its Metro programme, together with Welsh Government (WG), provide the principal funding mechanism for large strategic transport projects within the region. This included the Porthcawl Metrolink bus facility which, as well as being an important regional strategic transport facility on the South Wales Metro, is also a key piece of infrastructure within the Porthcawl Regeneration site. Without the Metrolink facility the regeneration programme will not be able to proceed as per the approved strategy by facilitating more sustainable modes of transport.

The Corporate Director – Communities reminded Council that there were currently two Metro schemes presently included in the Capita Programme, as detailed in paragraph as detailed in paragraph 3.4 of the report.

An informal agreement as expanded upon in the report, required that the contract for the Metrolink be let before the end of March 2023 and demonstrable progress be made, in order to retain the funding for spend in 2023-24 until the completion of the project. As such, if the contract was not awarded by the end of March 2023 there is a significant risk that all unspent regional funding of £2,707,000 will be lost.

The Corporate Director – Communities added, that remaining Metro funding allocated to the Penprysg project will also have to be spent by 31 March 2023, or this will also have to be returned to CCR. This project was the subject of an unsuccessful Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid in 2022 and further progress on this scheme is limited until further funding opportunities are investigated. However, it is intended to submit the scheme for future CCR Metro programme funding in 2023-24.

She explained that through the tender process undertaken, the highest scoring bidder had submitted a tender with a value which is considerably above the original estimated costs. The factors involved with the higher than expected bid, included significant increases in the cost of materials and labour since the estimated cost was calculated.

Procurement advice given, was that it is not possible to re-visit the tender evaluation or award the contract to a lower cost bidder, on the basis that there is no additional funding available as doing so would breach transparency and equal treatment requirement. It would be unlawful to award the contract to anyone other than the bidder assessed to offer the most economically advantageous tender as evaluated against the published award criteria of this tender. The only other alternative option would be to abandon this tender and re-tender with alternative award criteria and / or a revised specification should additional funding not be forthcoming, in which case, the current tender will be closed-down, making it invalid, and the process started again with a full new tender. For reasons shared in the report and explained to Members in the meeting, this was not considered to be a viable option for the Council to pursue.

The Corporate Director – Communities, advised that there were other additional costs associated with the scheme over and above those associated solely with the tender. This included a contingency fund of £500,000 and project management costs of £75,350. These costs are normal for a project of this nature and will also have to be met from the Capital budget. The total cost of the scheme is £3,836,834. The majority of this cost had been accounted for in the Capital Programme.

In summary therefore, the report requested Council's approval to transfer all remaining funds for the Metro programme (£961,613 from Penprysg) to the live Porthcawl Metrolink project, in order to maximise the available CCR spend, and to vire £571,221 from the Porthcawl Regeneration capital budget, also to the Porthcawl Metrolink project, to fund this essential infrastructure project.

The Cabinet Members for Communities and Future Generations commended the report and the recommendations contained within it.

A Member advised that seemingly Council had no option other than to support the proposals detailed in the report, as the alternative was to lose a significant amount of monies that we currently have at our disposal, in support of the regeneration of Porthcawl. He asked that in terms of timing, if the Council has not learnt that sufficient time should be allowed for reviewing potential increases in tender processing and allowing for a decision to be reached, to look for an alternative tenderer before any timescale dictates making a decision on the scheme, through the procurement process. He added, what lessons could be learnt that the Council are having value for money for this and other schemes going forward in the future.

The Corporate Director – Communities assured Council that the bid in question was a good, high-quality bid that Cabinet and Management considered to be value for money and that this would not have been placed before Members today, if that was not the case. She pointed out however, that all schemes being put out to tender face an unprecedented risk in terms of price/cost inflation increases. All local authorities were faced with this not just BCBC, she added. This was due to a number of reasons, that included the cost of living crisis, increase in material costs and rising energy bills, amongst others.

She also assured Members that the tender process had been robust with the successful tenderer being a high-level, well regarded contractor.

Funding allocated to the Porthcawl Metrolink therefore had to be fully committed to this project by the end of March 2023, or this would be lost.

Therefore, in summary, this was a fully compliant bid considered as value for money, hence there being no requirement to re-tender for the works. Should the Council have retendered the work, there was a significant possibility that the tender sum would have increased further. In terms of lessons learnt, the Corporate Director – Communities advised that both BCBC and grant funders could look at any ways to improve situations regarding allocation of funding and the requirements around deadlines for when this should be spent, in the future.

A Member felt that that the project detailed in the report, would not only benefit Porthcawl, but it would also be a regional enhancement of improved facilities that others visiting the area would enjoy. He noted that it met the Net Zero Carbon criteria and that the scheme needed to be pursued both in its own right and so as not to lose close on £3m. He asked if there were any commercial opportunities linked to the facility, for example, naming rights and sponsorship and/or advertising hoardings, etc.

The Corporate Director – Communities confirmed that issues such as these could be considered as part of the works.

A Member sought assurance that the delay to proposed works at the Penprysg Level Crossing, Pencoed, due to the lack of LUF, would be pursued at the earliest opportunity.

The Corporate Director – Communities, gave an assurance that this project was a Council priority and therefore, work would be carried out in relation to the scheme (as alluded to in the report), when this was possible.

Details further debate in terms of other Members questions and the responses to these by the Cabinet and Corporate Management Board, can be found [here](#)

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Following it being moved and seconded, Members agreed to conduct a vote on the recommendation of the report, the outcome of which was as follows:-

<u>For (the recommendation)</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Absentions</u>
38	0	6

RESOLVED: That Council agreed to vire funding within the Capital Programme, as outlined in paragraph 8.4 of the report, to enable the Metrolink scheme to progress.

95. **INFORMATION REPORT FOR NOTING**

The Chief Officer Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy, reported on the Information Report which had been published since the last meeting of Council.

RESOLVED: That Council acknowledged the publication of the document listed in the report.

96. **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION FROM:**

Councillor Tim Thomas to the Cabinet Member – Education

Is the Cabinet Member for Education satisfied that enough is being done to ensure children, school staff and members of the public are safe during times when pupils are dropped off at and picked up from school. If not, what needs to be done?

Response

- The Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014 outlines the statutory responsibility of parents as follows:
 - It is for parents to decide at what age it would be appropriate for their child to walk unaccompanied to school.
 - In the event of a child not being eligible to receive free transport and having to walk to school, it will be for parents to make suitable travel arrangements for their children between home and school.
- All schools have traffic management arrangements in place.
- The local authority continues to work with its schools to ensure individual traffic management plans are appropriate and that all reasonable measures are taken to ensure children and adults are safe when accessing individual sites.
- The Schools Transport Advisory Group (STAG) meets regularly to consider the management of school sites. STAG also considers the areas outside and in the immediate vicinity of schools.
- The local authority has recently appointed a Schools Transport Advisor to support school site safety and to support future school modernisation projects.

- The use of the local authority's camera car 'Roly Patroly' is prioritised around schools on a rolling programme to tackle dangerous and illegal parking outside schools.
- Enforcement of the existing restrictions outside the schools will be subject to resources, and Roly Patroly can, when resources allow, enforce on parking restrictions where there are traffic orders in place (such as bus stops, zigzag markings, 'School Keep Clear' zones and yellow lines).
- However, it is important to note that the local authority is limited in respect of how it can enforce statutory highways requirements as this is largely the responsibility of South Wales Police. Local authority officers can only enforce the limited parking restrictions as identified in the bullet point above.
- Many schools work closely with their school communities to develop innovative solutions to ensure pupil safety on the journey to school, for example, the 'walking bus' developed by Pencoed Primary School.
- There are currently 14 active crossing patrols in the vicinity of our schools at peak times.
- The Road Safety Team also offers Kerbcraft training and cycle training for schools.
- The local authority continues to invest in pedestrian safety arrangements (such as formal pedestrian crossings).
- The local authority has invested significantly in active travel arrangements across Bridgend. Over the years, the local authority has been creating routes that enable and encourage school children to walk or cycle to school. This is funded under the Welsh Government 'Safe Routes to Schools' and 'Safe Routes in Communities' programmes.
- 'Safe Routes to Schools' schemes are different from active travel routes. The two categories of scheme serve different purposes of journey, although in some areas, active travel routes serve journeys to school as well.
- In preparing plans for safe routes, attention is paid to ensuring that they complement active travel routes. Active travel routes serve all journeys and do not necessarily have to be close to schools, although where distance allows, links can be provided.
- To promote walking and cycling among schools, the local authority engages with schools to develop school travel plans in which routes are identified. The principal purpose of this process is creating awareness and interest in walking and cycling.
- Some school travel plans are, however, being developed as part of the planning process for new or expanding schools.
- The following schools have school travel plans:
 - Maes yr Haul Primary School
 - Llangewydd Junior School

- Ogmores Vale Primary School
 - Trelales Primary School
 - Cwmfelin Primary School
 - Coychurch Primary School
 - Brynmenyn Primary School
 - Penyfai Church in Wales Primary School
 - St Robert's Catholic Primary School
 - Cefn Cribwr Primary School
 - Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School
 - Maesteg School
 - Brynteg School
- There are schools that do not have school travel plans but have benefited from safe routes to school based on a Community Access Plan. Coety Primary School and Litchard Primary School are examples of such schools.
 - The local authority works in partnership with Sustrans to educate and engage school children in active journeys. Sustrans recently engaged with schools to take part in the Active Journeys programme. Sustrans is keen to work with school clusters, especially where active travel infrastructure has been put in, or is planned to go in.

Supplementary question from Councillor Thomas

If the Cabinet Member cannot categorically give a positive outcome or update on this, could he commit to bringing together all relevant stakeholders in order to resolve such concern and to look for a holistic solution, given that there appears to be multivariate problems such as the one given, at a number of schools across the County Borough.

Response

We do meet regularly with stakeholders including the Star Group and the Police regarding these kind of issues, but I am happy to extend any invitation be that to Members or other key individuals or groups, to engage in this, with the view of finding a workable solution to these problems.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support added, that all schools in the County Borough now had in place Management Plans that would assist the above and other issues and school staff were working to ensure that these were as effective as possible.

Second supplementary question from Councillor Melanie Evans

Could you clarify what schools are doing with regards to making sure children get to and from school safely, for example, through a walk-in bus etc, such as is used at Pencoed Primary?

Response

The walk-in bus at the above school has been very effective and was welcomed by the community. We work closely with all schools, together with colleagues in the Communities Directorate, in order to make school pic-up/drop-off points as safe as they can possibly be. We also communicate these to parents/carers and stakeholders. We also work with School Site Managers and Caretakers, so that they too can effectively monitor school site areas and ensure that they are as free as possible, in order to

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provide swift and ready access to parents and learners at key points in the day. On-site traffic is also monitored again particularly at busy times such as Breakfast Club and After School Club hours, when school staff where high viz. vests.

97. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.