

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 15 MARCH 2023 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor M Jones – Chairperson

S Aspey	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	M R John	MJ Kearn
W J Kendall	M Lewis	J Llewellyn-Hopkins	RL Penhale-Thomas
J E Pratt	R J Smith	JC Spanswick	T Thomas
JH Tildesley MBE	G Walter	A Wathan	A Williams
HM Williams	I Williams	MJ Williams	R Williams
E D Winstanley	T Wood		

Apologies for Absence

P W Jenkins, E Richards and I M Spiller

Officers:

Debra Beeke	Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development
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
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

106. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Officers present other than the Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development and Democratic Services Officers, declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 6. and left the meeting whilst this item was being considered.

The following further declarations of personal interest were made by members:-

Councillor S Bletsoe – Agenda item 11. Question from Councillor S Easterbrook, as a resident of a housing estate that charges a management fee.

Councillor N Farr – Agenda item 12 as a member of a trade union.

Councillor JC Spanswick – Agenda items 6. and 8 as a family member works for BCBC. Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union.

Councillor M Kearn – Agenda items. 6 and 8. As a family member works for BCBC and Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union.

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Councillor P Davies - Agenda items 6. and 8 as a family member works for BCBC.
Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union.

Councillor E Winstanley – Agenda item 11. Question from Councillor S Easterbrook as an owner of two properties which incur management fees. Agenda item 11. Question from Councillor F Bletsoe as an employee of Awen who manage the venues cited in the question on behalf of BCBC. Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union.

Councillor F Bletsoe - Agenda item 11. Question from Councillor S Easterbrook, as a resident of a housing estate that charges a management fee.

Councillor C Davies - Agenda items 6. and 8 as a family member works for BCBC.
Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union.

Councillor T Thomas - Agenda item 11. Question from Councillor S Easterbrook, as a resident of a housing estate that charges a management fee.

Councillor JP Blundell - Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union.

Councillor M Lewis - Agenda item 6. and 9. as a member of a trade union.

Councillor J Gebbie - Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union.

Councillor RM James – Agenda item 6. and 8. as a family member works for BCBC.

Councillor P Ford – Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor RC Collins – Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor HJ David – Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor H Bennett – Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor A Berrow - Agenda item 6. and 8. as a family member works for BCBC.

Councillor H Williams - Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor R Goode - Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor G Walter - Agenda item 6, 8 and 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor J Pratt - Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor RM Granville - Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor M Hughes - Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor H Griffiths – Agenda item 6. as a family member works in BCBC

Councillor R Williams - Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

Councillor M Jones - Agenda item 12. as a member of a trade union

107. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the following meetings of Council be approved as a true and accurate record:-

18 January 2023
8 February 2023

Subject to the following paragraph being added to the preamble of the decision on Agenda item 7, entitled Porthcawl Metrolink, of the Minutes dated 8 February 2023:-

'A Member recognised and acknowledged that the Council had no option than to support the report's proposal. She raised concerns around access rights being approved from December 2024 to December 2034 with a train provider to operate daily return services to London from Carmarthen and the impact it would have on the Community of Pencoed.

The Member sought assurance that resources would be provided for the proposal works at Penprysg level crossing due to the lack of LUF and asked that consideration be given to a Plan B to progress such needed infrastructure works.

Officers assured the Member and other local Members from Pencoed, that further resources would be sought from all the potential relevant avenues, for this purpose.'

108. **TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:**

Mayor

I have had the recent honour of meeting recipients of this year's Mayoral Awards. There were too many people to mention, but I would just like to say that these are honest, decent folk going about their daily business, to help those less fortunate than themselves.

Together with other key members, I recently met with the Senedd member, Huw Irranca Davies to welcome the First Minister to a Maesteg based company that specialises in fire prevention, Sideris, one of the world's leading manufacturers of fire prevention technology in tall buildings. The company has expanded, with a £6m investment, doubling their production capacity in recent years. I am sure members will join me in congratulating the company and in wishing them well in their future endeavours.

I have also attended many St. David's Day Concerts, listening to the various choirs both within our schools and concert halls, which was a privilege. The Deputy Leader and myself also attended the High Sheriff's Award ceremony in Pencoed with other dignitaries, where it was also a privilege to witness incredible achievements undertaken by young people, with the top award going to the Bridgend Young Carers.

Additionally, our Youth Deputy Mayor Gwynllian Williams recently collected an award for raising awareness and promoting LGBT+ and I would like to congratulate him for this.

Last Sunday I attended Nolton Church, Bridgend, to witness the blessing of the new Standard for the Ogmor Branch of the Welsh Guards. In attendance was the Kings representative for the High Sheriff, Professor Peter Vaughan, the Lord Lieutenant, together with the Bridgend Town Mayor, Councillor Tim Wood.

Finally, can I thank you all for supporting the Mayor's Charity. The Lonely Dragon sits in the Members lounge waiting to be named. Those who wish to guess its name need to commit a £1 to the Charity, for this purpose.

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help

I was fortunate enough to see our children's social care workforce this morning, as we launched our practice model, Signs of Safety. I would like to reassure members that we are taking strides to address our challenges here in Bridgend and you will be receiving further information on this in due course

Bridgend County Borough Council has been marking New Family Social and LGBT+ Fostering and Adoption Week once again by encouraging members of the local community who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or other to consider adopting or fostering children in the county borough.

This time, we have been encouraging people to consider how many children they could adopt, and whether they might be able to accept sibling groups.

In Wales last year, there were more than 7,000 looked-after children, but finding adopters and foster carers for children who are also siblings can take a long time.

The service continues to welcome enquiries on fostering and adoption from the LGBTQ+ community, and in 2022, one in four applications came from same-gender couples.

This is a significant increase when compared to 2017's figure of one in eight, and it is good to see that more children who are waiting for adoption are finding permanent families.

Bridgend Foster Care and the Western Bay Adoption Service both provide extensive information about who can adopt and foster, as well as the process of adopting and fostering within the county borough.

We are looking for people aged 21 and over who do not have any cautions or convictions against them involving children, who can demonstrate a commitment towards keeping children and young people safe, and who can offer a loving and safe environment.

With plenty of support and advice available, by acting as a foster carer or adopter, you can also help to keep local children within Bridgend County Borough instead of them having to relocate to a different area elsewhere.

For further information on how to foster or adopt in Bridgend County Borough, visit W-W-W Dot Bridgend Foster Care Dot Wales, or W-W-W Dot Western Bay Adoption Dot Org.

I would also like to say well done to Ollie Malin, Ffion Jenkins and Charley Evans for their success at the High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan's annual Youth Awards.

As ambassadors for Bridgend Young Carers Network, all three were nominated in the group category and won a top prize of £1,000.

As well as being a lot of fun, the award has recognised all of the hard work that they have put in to promote the network, and to drive it forward.

As a result of their efforts, the number of young carer ambassadors has increased from three to eleven in less than a year.

More than 280 young carers have also been supported and supplied with the National Young Carers identity card.

The award also draws greater attention to the role that young carers play within the local community, and I am sure that members will want to join me in congratulating them and wishing them well.

The High Sheriff's Youth Awards ceremony also saw Deputy Youth Mayor G presented with the Ann Morgan Community Award.

G was chosen to receive this award for his fantastic work on developing trans awareness training, and his dedication towards making Bridgend County Borough a better, safer, more inclusive place.

This was a well-deserved accolade, and members will no doubt once again want to offer their congratulations.

Finally, I would like to give my unreserved thanks to our staff who support our Young Carers and the Bridgend Youth Service, which in turn, gives them the support they need in order to take their own agendas forward.

Cabinet Member – Communities

Members may want to let their constituents know that the council's optional garden waste collection service is now open for registration.

This year, the service will run between Monday 13 March and Friday 17 November, with collections taking place every two weeks.

Those who sign up for the service will receive two sturdy green sacks which can be used for the disposal of typical garden waste such as plants, flowers, weeds, grass cuttings, leaves and hedge clippings.

The service offers a convenient way of having your green waste collected and disposed of from the kerbside, and costs £46.01 per household or £41.73 for pensioners.

This year, Kier will also be offering a random selection of participants a free subscription to the service, which has become increasingly popular since it was first launched in 2013.

Last year, almost 8,000 residents signed up to the service and more than 13,000 tonnes of garden waste was diverted and recycled instead of being disposed of as landfill.

Residents also have the option of disposing of garden waste for free by using a community recycling centre.

More details are available at both the council and Kier websites.

Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations

Members may want to let their constituents know about a free event that is taking place tomorrow which aims to offer expert advice and support on how residents can deal with the ongoing Cost of Living crisis.

The event 'Help for Households', it has been organised by Employability Bridgend and will be available between 10am and 2pm tomorrow at Bridgend Indoor Market.

A wide range of partner organisations will be participating with the event, including Citizens Advice, the Bridgend Repair Café, Welsh Water, the Childcare Team, and Baobab Bach Community Pantries.

Examples of the type of advice on offer includes help with household bills, tips on the best energy deals, suggestions for ways to save money on food, advice on whether people may be eligible for additional benefits and support, and much more.

Each participant who calls in to the event will also receive a free bag featuring cost saving items, which will be tailored to each individuals needs.

The event represents our commitment as a council towards helping residents meet the challenges of the ongoing Cost of Living Crisis, and it provides an opportunity for people to access specialist advice that is relevant towards them and their own personal circumstances.

I hope that it will have a positive impact, and that members will help let people know that it is taking place.

Cabinet Member – Resources

I previously updated members on how the Welsh Government Fuel Support Scheme had successfully made more than 15,000 payments to eligible households and had provided much-needed support totalling around three million pounds.

While that scheme has now closed, the Energy Bills support scheme from UK Government is still running and will remain open to applications until 31 May.

However, the number of people applying for this support remains very low across Wales, so I would like to ask members for their support in ensuring that as many local residents as possible are aware of the scheme.

To be eligible, applicants must meet a number of criteria. The dwelling where they apply for the support must be their sole or main address, and they must be responsible for paying for energy used within the dwelling as part of a service charge, rent or some other arrangement.

The household must not be eligible for or already in receipt of payments from the energy support scheme, while the household must not double as a business premises or other form of non-domestic property.

This would be applicable to, for example, residents of park home sites such as the one at Happy Valley.

UK Government is also offering additional support via an Alternative Fuel Payment fund. This provides a £200 payment for households that use alternative fuel sources for their heating instead of mains gas.

Again, criteria applies, but it is aimed at someone who uses oil or bottled gas as their main source of heating or who does not pay for electricity by direct debit, such as those who live in rural areas or at remote spots in the county borough.

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Applications for both schemes must be made online at GOV DOT UK, and there is also a freephone telephone number for anyone who cannot get internet access – 0808 1753 287.

I am sure that members will want to help make people more aware that these schemes are available, and I am grateful for your support in doing so.

I am aware of recent correspondence between the Mayor and others, so if I may offer further comment regarding Bridgend's position within the StatsWales table for council tax.

In Wales, there are 9 Council Tax bandings (A – I). Council tax bands are based on property values in April 2003. Under the current system, local authorities can only set their council tax levels for Band D properties - with lower and higher bands charged a fixed proportion of that.

In terms of Bridgend, we have a higher percentage of properties in lower bands than the all-Wales average.

Cardiff University's Wales Governance Centre has reported that councils with more low-band houses tend to set their Band D rates higher to compensate" for their lower tax base.

In Bridgend, 68.14% of our residential properties are in Council Tax Bands A – D with 50% being in Bands A – C. Therefore, 50% of all households who pay the full Council tax will pay less than the Band D level in the coming financial year.

Cabinet Member – Education

I am sure that members will be aware that the National Education Union has postponed the two days of industrial action that were scheduled to take place on the 15th and 16th March.

The union has announced that constructive talks with Welsh Government have resulted in a new pay offer, and that its members are currently considering the deal on offer.

In the event that this latest offer is rejected and that further industrial action is announced, the council will once again work closely alongside local schools to make necessary preparations, and will prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of pupils.

In other news, I welcome Welsh Government's announcement that free school meal provision will continue to be available to children from lower income families across the Easter and Whitsun school holidays.

More than £9m has been invested to help councils across Wales offer nutritious meals to eligible pupils up until the end of the May half-term holiday.

This includes all bank holidays during this period, and I will bring you further details in due course.

I would like to briefly remind members that residents have until 24 March to apply for full-time nursery places in time for the start of the new school year in September, while applications for part-time places must be submitted by 31 August.

You can find out more and apply online through the council's My Account service, which is accessible by visiting the corporate website.

Cabinet Member – Regeneration

Two informal consultation events are set to take place in March which will ask people how they think new public open space planned as part of Porthcawl's ongoing regeneration should be used.

With the first session taking place at the Grand Pavilion today until 7pm and again between 9am-5pm on Thursday 23 March, the sessions will showcase a number of potential options as well as designs for how public open space could be developed to benefit residents and visitors alike.

Potential ideas range from skateparks, pump tracks and water-based facilities such as a 'splash park' to community gardens, green walking routes and outdoor gym and multiuse game zones.

We have already received a number of excellent ideas, such as an open-air amphitheatre and performance venue, or space suitable for staging seasonal events such as visiting speciality markets, Christmas ice rinks and more.

We want to capture all of these views so they can be properly analysed and investigated.

Once the drop-in sessions are complete, the exhibition boards will be made available to view online at the council's website, with comments sought over a further three-week period.

All feedback received by 7th April will help shape and inform an open space concept design, and to capture a shared vision for the look, feel and use of key open spaces within the regeneration area.

Organised by Bridgend County Borough Council in line with the Placemaking Wales Charter, businesses and residents are being encouraged to visit one of the drop-in sessions, view exhibition boards, speak to regeneration staff and give their thoughts on the proposals.

We want to ensure that the open spaces within the planned regeneration area respond to the needs of current and future generations alike, and I hope that residents and visitors will take full advantage of this opportunity to have their say.

Finally, can I take this opportunity to wish all the best to Sean Warrington, from the Communities Directorate, on his new job – he had been head hunted for his expertise - he will be a great loss to BCBC. I would like to personally thank him for the support he gave me as a new cabinet member.

Chief Executive

Members will be aware that we recently carried the 2022 staff survey, which provides valuable information on our employees' opinions and attitudes across a wide range of work-related issues.

Such surveys are an important part of our approach to staff engagement and building a motivated workforce, they help to inform our working practices, and enable us to make progress as an organisation.

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We have now completed the analysis of the results, and I would like to briefly share some of the key outcomes with members.

Overall, 42 per cent of all council staff responded to the survey and shared their views across seven specific themes. This represents a 9 per cent increase on the previous 2021 staff survey.

At 85 per cent, the majority of respondents stated that they enjoy their role, with 66 per cent adding that they feel valued at work.

Sixty-seven per cent of respondents told us they are satisfied with the council as an employer and that they are also aware of our priorities, while 88 per cent said they were satisfied with our seven proposed new objectives.

Eighty-four per cent of respondents stated there are opportunities for two-way communication where ideas and issues can be raised and discussed.

In relation to staff wellbeing, 68 per cent of respondents said they are comfortable with their work demands, and 73 per cent stated that they are aware of the support the council makes available for the workforce in relation to health and wellbeing.

Seventy-three per cent agreed that they are satisfied with the new Flexitime working hours staff flexi time scheme 83 per cent said they can work productively within their remote working environment.

Staff were asked to share their views across seven specific themes: Culture, the council's priorities, work performance, communications, knowledge and skills, employee wellbeing, and hybrid working.

Across all seven themes, 65 per cent of staff delivered a positive result, 25 per cent remained neutral, and 10 per cent were negative.

One area that we were particularly interested in was how staff had received the new hybrid working arrangements. It was pleasing to note that 76 per cent of all respondents provided positive responses and indicated that they were satisfied with the new interim Hybrid Working policy.

While 71 per cent said that they keep up to date with latest council news via their work email, only 35 per cent said that they always read the weekly Bridgend's email, and 25 per cent indicated that they will always read the quarterly staff newsletter as long as it contains something of interest.

This is obviously just a flavour of the results from the staff survey, but I think that it has clearly highlighted a number of encouraging views and has helped to highlight some of the areas which we will need to look at going forward.

Work will now take place to study the results in closer detail, and to see how they can be best applied to deliver further improvements for the council, both as an organisation and as a good employer.

109. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER

I am delighted to be able to inform members that Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help, Councillor Jane Gebbie, has been presented with a prestigious national award from the Ron Todd Foundation.

Set up following the work of trade union leader Ron Todd, the foundation supports people who are living in poverty and works to prevent its root causes, promote equality and diversity, and to recognise individuals who undertake outstanding work in these areas.

Every year, it announces winners at its annual memorial lecture event, and this year has declared Councillor Gebbie to be the winner of the Ron Todd Award for Equality.

Councillor Gebbie won the award after she was nominated by no less than eleven different organisations and individuals.

The Deputy Leader has a deep-rooted commitment towards social equality, this award recognises that, and I am sure that members will join me now in offering her our warmest congratulations.

I was also delighted to attend Maesteg Sports Centre where its 40th anniversary has been marked by a £400,000 investment and the newest facilities were officially opened by the Mayor in the presence of the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations, Cabinet and local members.

The upgrade includes a larger gym area with new cardio machines, a dedicated strength and conditioning space, a wellness zone, a new exercise studio, additional room for training and workshops, and a new accessible changing space.

The sports centre has been a popular and well-used facility in the Llynfi Valley since March 1983, and since the council partnered with Halo Leisure in 2012, it has recorded well over one point five million users and more than a million gym workouts.

Further improvements are planned, including the soon-to-be-finished strength and conditioning zone, and I know all local members are looking forward to the additional benefits future phases of investment will deliver.

Demolition of Bridgend town centre's former police station will begin on Monday 20 March as preparations get underway for clearing the site read for the development of the planned new Bridgend College campus.

With work expected to take up to twelve weeks, access to Cheapside and local businesses will be maintained throughout the demolition process.

Some temporary narrowing of the carriageway and minor alterations to pedestrian crossing points will be required, and the contractor has been liaising with local businesses directly to ensure that they are aware.

As you know, the site forms a significant part of our regeneration plans for Bridgend town centre. We intend to lease it to Bridgend College and enable the Cowbridge Road campus to relocate there.

The college plans to create a net-zero carbon building, with 21st century learning and teaching facilities for post-16 further and higher education in Bridgend, with community benefits including a 200-seat theatre space, design workshops and flexible meeting spaces.

It represents a £50 million investment into skills and training for the people of Bridgend County Borough which will cater for at least 1,000 staff and students.

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We also want it to act as a catalyst for wider regeneration by increasing footfall and supporting local businesses.

We will bring you further news on this as the development starts to take shape.

Finally, I was saddened to hear from her son that the former Mayor of the County Borough Mari Jones recently passed away at the age of 92.

The member for Llangynwyd, Mari devoted herself to many years of public service. Mari served on many committees within the authority and was vice chair of Planning and Development Committee.

Outside of the council, she served as a governor for both Cwmfelin and Llangynwyd primary schools, and as a director at Valleys To Coast Housing and Maesteg Town Hall.

Mari was also very active within several community groups, such as the Llangynwyd Village Hall Working Group, as vice chair of the Glamorgan Women's Institute arts and leisure committee, and as a past president for Tir Larll WI.

A fluent Welsh speaker, Mari was passionate about the Welsh language, and I am sure that I am not the only member present here today who remembers her as a very committed colleague, one who was wholly dedicated towards her role as an elected member, and towards helping to improve her local community.

Mari's funeral service will be held at St Ceitho's Church, Llangeitho, Tregaron, the village where she grew up, on Wednesday 29 March.

Members and Officers then stood in a minutes silence as a mark of respect to Mari Jones, a past Mayor of BCBC.

110. PAY POLICY STATEMENT - 2023/2024

The Group Manager Human Resources and Organisational Development presented a report, the purpose of which, was to seek Council approval of the Pay Policy Statement for 2023 2024.

She advised that the Pay Policy Statement provided a framework to ensure that employees are rewarded fairly and objectively without discrimination and recognised the importance of having a clear written policy on pay for employees.

She proceeded by confirming that the Council has a statutory requirement under the Localism Act 2011 to prepare a Pay Policy Statement on an annual basis. The first statement was in place in 2012, and they have been produced annually since that year. The statement is developed in accordance with Welsh Government guidance, added the Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development.

The focus of the legislation was about transparency of pay for Chief Officers and how their pay compares with lower paid employees in the Council. However, in the interests of transparency and accountability the Council's Pay Policy Statement covered all employee groups, with the exception of teachers (as their remuneration is set by Welsh Government and therefore not in local authority control).

The Pay Policy Statement also excluded Members of the Council, as they are not employees and are governed by separate legislation via the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

The Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development stated that Members were being asked to note paragraphs 4.5 to 4.7 of the report, which summarised the changes which have been reflected in this year's statement, including as follows:

1. the Council's accreditation as a Real living Wage employer and payment of the Real Living Wage - £10.90 per hour;
2. the changes to the pay structure as a result of the 2022/2023 pay award which included the deletion of spinal column point 1 from the National Joint Council pay spine, with effect from 1 April 2023.

The Pay Policy Statement was attached at Appendix 1 to the report, which set out all pay arrangements including all pay grades, related policies and the Single Status collective agreement, as well as subsequent addenda to the collective agreements.

A Member asked if there was another Policy within the Council for benefits over and above those contained in the report, such as for example, car allowances.

It was confirmed that no car benefits had been made available for any Council Officers, as a result of a Collective Agreement made in 2013 when the Authority implemented Single Status.

A Member referred to page 51 of the report and paragraph 7.5.1 and performance pay related payments. She noted that the Council did not operate performance related pay at any staffing level. There were however, a number of managerial processes in place to monitor, evaluate and manage performance. She asked if the Officer could elaborate on these and their effectiveness.

The Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development stated that, there were a number of processes in place to manage staff performance levels undertaken at an employee/manager level. These included activities such as 1 : 1's, team meetings and staff appraisals, where objectives were set out for staff and managed through service arrangements.

As this was the last meeting of Council to be attended by the Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development, the Leader and the Mayor together with other Members, paid tribute to her hard working career, due to her pending retirement from BCBC at the end of this month.

This was echoed by all those present in the meeting, who all wished her the very best in her future retirement.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the Pay Policy Statement 2023/2024 attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

111. **RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS 2022-23 & STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change presented a report, so as to inform Council of the requirement for Members to formally declare any related party transactions for the 2022-23 financial year by completing the declaration attached at Appendix A to the report even if it is a nil return, and that this must be completed no earlier than 31 March 2023 and returned to BCBC by Wednesday 12 April 2023.

The report gave some background information, following which, it confirmed that the requirement to declare related party transactions is not new within the Statement of

Accounts. Audit Wales scrutinised these returns closely as part of their audit of the Statement of Accounts and have recommended that the Council should:

- formally remind all Councillors of the importance of completing and submitting their annual related party return by the deadline set by the Finance Department; and
- ensure that any outstanding related party returns are always pursued promptly.

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change added that this report was therefore to inform Members of the requirement to complete the declaration attached at Appendix A, with reference to the guidance attached at Appendix B, by 12 April 2023. It was essential that the form was completed as at 31 March 2023 and covered the full financial year or period for which the individual was a Member of the Council.

Members should note that a copy of the declaration will be emailed separately to their Bridgend County Borough Council email address for completion and return.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the requirement for Members to:

- formally declare any related party transactions for the 2022-23 financial year;
- complete and date the return no earlier than 31 March 2023;
- submit the return the same by Wednesday 12 April 2023

112. **PENSION POLICIES**

The Human Resources (HR) Service Centre Manager presented a report, in order to seek Council approval for the following 3 local government pension policies:

- Discretions Policy
- Early Retirement, Ill Health and Redundancy Policy
- Flexible Retirement Policy

He advised that as part of the review of HR policies, the 3 pension policies have been updated with a small number of proposed changes.

He confirmed that Trade Union colleagues had been consulted on the amended policies and the three recognised trade unions had confirmed their support in relation to the changes.

The HR Service Centre Manager then briefly outlined the respective policies and their changes.

Discretions Policy

In reviewing this policy, it is proposed to introduce Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contribution (SCAVC) pension arrangement for LGPS members.

This will be implemented through a salary sacrifice scheme, which means that employees will receive tax and national insurance relief.

The Council would also make savings through reduced employer national insurance contributions

Early Retirement, Ill Health Retirement and Redundancy Policy

The revised policy has been updated to reflect the current organisational roles and strengthens the position in relation to re-engagement of leavers under certain circumstances.

Flexible Retirement Policy

The revised policy provides more flexibility for part-time employees to apply for flexible retirement.

RESOLVED:

That Council approved:

- the Discretions Policy (Appendix 1 to the report)
- the Early Retirement, Ill Health Retirement and Redundancy Policy (at Appendix 2)
- the Flexible Retirement Policy (at Appendix 3)

113. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to advise Council of the Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in respect of the level and range of remuneration the Authority must make available to its elected members for the 2023/24 municipal year.

She explained that the Panel's Determinations for 2023/24 were shown at page 19 of the Annual Report (attached as Appendix 1 to the covering report).

Section 153 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 empowers the Panel to require a relevant authority to comply with the requirements imposed on it by the IRWP Annual Report.

The Panel's Annual Report 2023/24 proposed some changes to the current remuneration prescribed for elected members at Principal (County Borough) and Town and Community Council levels. The following paragraphs summarised the key elements of the Report applicable to principal councils.

- Basic salaries (to increase to £17,600 – the Monitoring Officer advised that it was the gift of members whether or not to accept such increase);
- Salaries paid to Senior, Civic and Presiding members of principal councils (see paragraph 4.3.2 of the report for further information);

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that there were no further changes to the payments and benefits paid to elected members and therefore, all other Determinations as set out in the 2022 to 2023 Report, still stood and should be applied in 2023 to 2024, including those covering:

- Travel and subsistence
 - Care and personal assistance
 - Sickness absence
 - Assistants to the Executive
 - Additional salaries and Job-sharing arrangements
 - Co-opted members.
- Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees (The salary of a chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be £8,800 and £4,400 for a vice-chair. There are no other changes)

The Authority must implement the Panel's determinations in this report from the date specified within the Annual Report (April 2023).

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The Monitoring Officer concluded by stating that the Panel will monitor the compliance with the determinations in its Annual Report by relevant authorities against those requirements detailed in paragraph 4.5.2 of the report.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the Annual Report for 2023/24 and approved:

- (1) The adoption of the relevant Determinations of the Panel contained within the Annual Report (attached as Appendix 1 to the report);
- (2) Those posts (shown in the revised Members' Schedule of Remuneration at Schedule 1 of Appendix 2) who will receive a senior / civic salary;
- (3) The revised Members' Schedule of Remuneration (Appendix 2) and for it to become effective from 1 April 2023;
- (4) That the Members' Schedule of Remuneration be updated with any changes to senior / civic salary positions subsequently made by Council during the 2023/24 municipal year.

114. **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.

115. **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FROM:**

Councillor RC Collins to the Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations

I welcomed the opportunity to view the exciting work underway to refurbish and improve Maesteg Sports Centre. Please can the Cabinet Member update us on progress to complete the scheme?

Response

Thank you for the question regarding the refurbishments of Maesteg Sports centre and also Pencoed Library. Firstly, at Maesteg, this is an exciting project and the result of a number of years of work behind the scenes to access funding to support this development through BCBC, Halo and Sport Wales Capital funding. The centre helped to support the covid vaccination programme and has been identifying how it can further build centre usage since the easing of restrictions on the leisure sector.

The first phase of the works were officially opened on the 1st March 2023 by the Mayor of Bridgend County Borough, Cllr Martyn Jones, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Huw David and myself also accompanied by local members who had been invited. The centre was also celebrating its 40th birthday since opening as a leisure venue.

The most recent works have seen the start of the creation of the new fitness and wellbeing spaces within the site which will grow into a new 54 station fitness and wellbeing area which is twice as big as the previous space. The design has included new toilet provision including an accessible toilet and new ventilation system. This work has taken place within an area of the former Y Llynfi reference library that is planned to

migrate to Maesteg Town Hall. This area is now already in use by the public and receiving positive comments.

The next stage of the works will see the redesign of the original and smaller gym space to become a functional fitness area by the middle of April and the mezzanine floor to be a wellbeing area with a focus on a range of health and community programmes being delivered for residents.

These works will then continue through the building with the changing areas being redecorated with new showering facilities, lighting and flooring. This will be complemented by a change to the current family provision making it a “changing places” style space with improved accessibility and still allowing family access alongside towards the end of May

The final stages of the works over the coming months will see the construction of 2 flexible multi use rooms in former office space and another area alongside the previous soft play section towards the end of June. This will allow multiple partner events such as training, meetings and delivery of targeted support such as the health board supported Joint Care Programme amongst others as the centre develops a wider diversity of services.

These works are also underpinned by energy investments into new lighting and energy reduction elements as part of our commitment to the council reducing the carbon footprint.

The works cost when completed will be in excess of £400,000 and when achieved will mean over £500,000 has been invested into the Maesteg site in the last year linked to the redevelopment of the soft play area and squash court enhancements.

Supplementary question from Councillor RC Collins

With the recent announcement from Tennis Wales and BCBC for the provision of tennis courts in 3 areas of the County Borough, can I ask for some reassurance that the Authority will pursue further opportunities to provide more facilities that will promote health and wellbeing for individuals across the Bridgend area.

Response

We are committed to investment for the above. I was recently at Maesteg Sports Centre with Ward members from the Maesteg area to see some of the refurbishment works that had been carried out at the Centre and indeed which were still ongoing. At Cabinet yesterday we also approved the proposals for tennis facilities at Maesteg Welfare Park, Griffin Park Porthcawl, and at Ogmores Vale and Heol-y-Cyw also, This was part of a rolling programme in terms of further investment for health and wellbeing facilities planned across the County Borough.

Second supplementary question from Councillor M Hughes

There is a particular need for further health and wellbeing provision in the valley areas of the Ogmores and Garw. What is being proposed there to improve the current situation.

Response

The newly approved Council Corporate Plan identifies investment in our valley areas as a key priority for the BCB which will be realised. The Ogmores Life Centre has benefited in recent years from some investment and in the Garw valley we co-located the library in

the Garw Valley Leisure Centre which had proved a success. Plans were also proposed to developing youth provision at this Life Centre, in order that support is available for all age groups and all backgrounds. Welsh Government had also provided additional funding for the roll out of Flying Start in Blaengarw and Nantymoel.

Question from Councillor S Easterbrook to the Leader

Management companies operating on Bridgend for residents of new build housing estates have for a number of years been taking a management fee, yet have failed to carry out the maintenance. Issues that have occurred and needed resolving range from street lighting, road repairs, sweeping of leaf litter from gullies and boundary maintenance of hedges. Residents are not only charged Council Tax at the same rate as every other householder but are also subject to this additional fee to a third party maintenance company, there are often issues for residents contacting these companies with contacts within the company not responding to emails, yet residents are still expected to pay the fee every year that varies from house to house. Does the Leader feel that this acceptable that residents in this Borough are charged twice for the same service offered by two separate entities, when it appears neither are delivering a service residents are paying for.

Response

With regards to the management fee referred to in your question. These fees apply where a new estate has been built and the housing company charge a management fee for the upkeep of communal areas that are not in the control of the council. This would cover the costs to maintain, renew and repair the shared community amenities and spaces which the local council has not adopted – predominantly green spaces. This agreement is between the landlord, or their agent, and the homeowner. The service provided will not also be provided by the Council in this area. I don't consider it acceptable that residents pay a fee to a third party maintenance company and doesn't receive a service; however, the Council is not involved in this arrangement and any concerns with regards to this should be dealt with directly with the agents.

The Welsh Government has previously called for evidence on the impact of this practice and is in talks with the UK Government over potential new England and Wales legislation to give freeholders the same rights as leaseholders to challenge management fees and even force a change of companies. I have asked Welsh Government for an update on this call for evidence.

With regards to the Council Tax, I can confirm that this will be charged as soon as the property is completed and the full charge for the property is made, unless certain exemptions apply. I would also draw your attention to the information that was included in the recently approved Corporate Plan which illustrates how the Council's budget is spent. As you will be aware, the Council Tax only fund 27% of the total spend of this Council. Using the total funding available, the Council provides over 800 services for residents in this area and council tax is not broken down into component areas for each household.

Supplementary question from S Easterbrook

Welsh Government has previously called for evidence on the impact of this practise and is in talks with the UK Government over potential new legislation for England and Wales to give freeholders the same rights as leaseholders to challenge management fees and even force a change for these companies. I would welcome this information as and when it is received. I note that you did not include the Authorities role at the outset of the planning process and how management companies are allowed to charge this

management fee at all. I believe that developers of some new developments considered by the Development Control Committee, have to put this condition of management companies into their plans and proposals, before they are approved. Should the Council therefore not be allowing this practise in the first place and stop placing this condition on developers which ultimately ends up costing our residents, ie a form of double taxing. Constituents have said to me, that they don't get a lot from these management services they are having to pay for. I do understand more management fees being imposed for the occupier of a flat in a complex, due to for example, the maintenance of shared communal areas etc.

Response

We have a situation whereby not all developers wish to have their areas of build adopted by the Council and this is not something by statute that we can legislate for. So therefore, on occasions, new developers are now very much akin to wanting the local authority to adopt roads and play areas at new developments. There are occasions though, whereby developers when they construct new estates, do not wish to commute these type of facilities over to the Council to maintain them as this comes with a S106 agreement commitment and a commuted capital fee. So instead, some developers choose to impose a management fee which can be placed upon occupiers of the development. Residents are aware of this situation as part of the purchase of their property and that this fee is for estate maintenance and it is then up to the resident(s) whether or not they would wish to bear this cost going forward, or to arrange for maintenance of, for example, grassed/open areas, maintenance of roads etc, themselves. Those that do accept this, can form a Management Committee (comprising of committed residents), in order that they can have meetings with the Management Company, in order that they are able to form a relationship with the company going forward in order to plan such maintenance works. Local authorities have very limited ability to prevent developers taking on management companies for this purpose. The Development Control Committee has no involvement whatsoever in this, it was added.

Question from Councillor M Williams to the Leader

Junction 36 of the M4 is a notorious bottleneck which causes congestion, restricts development & investment opportunities to the north of our county and causes misery to residents in neighbouring communities, which are being used as increasingly dangerous rat runs. Could the Leader please outline what efforts this authority has made to improve junction 36 and the surrounding highway network (including re-consideration of the once proposed Bryncethin by-pass) to alleviate the traffic issues once and for all.

Response

Improvements to Junction 36 is identified as a strategic transport project for Bridgend. As the junction is part of the trunk road system it falls within the purview of Welsh Government, which effectively owns the asset. WG has commissioned WelTAG (Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance) studies on M4 motorway junctions including those within Bridgend. However, following the publication of the recent report from the Roads Review Panel, it is clear that any improvements to the junction to ease traffic congestion or to facilitate car travel is not going to be supported by Welsh Government. Furthermore, national planning policy does not favour car-based transport solutions. In terms of any future road building projects, there is no specific allocation for a new bypass at Bryncethin in the current Local Development Plan or its replacement. Any such project will unlikely receive permission and any solution to capacity issues within the area will have to be active travel or public transport based.

Supplementary question from Councillor M Williams

Given situations such as the Y Bont and Highways Yard depot moving to Bryncethin and the Kenning Development only going to get worse, together with the Welsh Government moratorium going to discourage active travel etc, we are now as far away as ever of having some serious investment committed to the problems at Junction 36, together with increased housing being proposed in this and surrounding areas which will only exacerbate the current problem, what tactical or affordable interventions can be made or have been considered, that could help communities such as Coity village and Bryncethin etc, to cope with the impacts of this junction. Also, could the Leader agree to a meeting with the relevant Officers and Cabinet member and the local members of Coity and St. Brides Minor, in order to consider some options to improve the situation here going forward.

Response

We will arrange for the meeting with Ward members along the lines you suggest. When the announcement was made by the Deputy Minister for Climate Change I arranged to meet with him about the review and I made it clear that we would wish for Welsh Government to consider alternative ways to improve Junction 36 to include enhancements for Active Travel routes and public transport priority corridors and I will be ensuring that this is followed-up as part of the overall infrastructure of our motorway and transport network. This would also need to be funded by WG. I will keep members informed of the outcome of this accordingly.

Second supplementary question from Councillor T Thomas

In terms of road improvements in this area, could we have an update on the suitability of bus and train provision within the Valleys Gateway and in that statement could he also give an update on the Tondu Loop, which provides a service every half hour to the Llynfi valley.

Response

The bus industry is experiencing a very difficult time at present with the Welsh Government now having to provide additional funding through the Bus Emergency Support Grant, which is a multi-million pound package of support. However, this support is likely to come to an end in the coming months. In view of this, we will be working closely with the industry in order to support them as they make this very difficult transition. The reason for the decline in passengers, stems from the pandemic and unfortunately this has not fully recovered nor with it the income previously generated pre-pandemic. We are discussing ways to resolve the situation as best we can, with First Cymru. I will provide a response to the Tondu Loop part of the question, outside of the meeting.

Question from Councillor F Bletsoe to the Cabinet Member – Regeneration

In light of the recent announcement that Porthcawl Grand Pavilion will see significant investment from the Central Government “levelling up funding” and the ongoing improvements to Maesteg Town Hall, what undertaking will the cabinet member for regeneration give to all residents in all corners of our Borough that we will see our own county wide “levelling up” that will ensure a full and equitable investment in all areas of our Boroughs cultural heritage?

Response

The recent news of this council's successful bid to the UK Government Levelling-Up Fund, in partnership with Awen Cultural Trust (AWEN), for the Grand Pavilion, Porthcawl has been welcomed by Cabinet, members and the public across the county borough. The beneficiaries of this investment into a cultural asset such as the Grand Pavilion will not be limited to Porthcawl but will be felt by people across the county borough and indeed the wider region. Users and audiences from a wider area view the Grand Pavilion as their creative / cultural home. It is too simplistic to suggest that the location of the theatre determines that the impact of investment is restricted to the immediate locality.

In order to preserve and enhance the longer-term future of cultural services and activity-based opportunities, the Council supported the development of the cultural partnership with AWEN in 2015. This was for a period of 20 years and sought to sustain a range of cultural assets and opportunities at a time where the only alternative would have been to reduce provision in order to meet medium-term financial strategy efficiencies. The partnership model has returned over £800k in savings to the council since 2015, at the same time as enhancing the provision as was transferred in 2015.

The Grand Pavilion is included in the portfolio and fulfils a strategic role for residents of the County Borough and beyond including the needs of visitors. This exciting re-development will result in enhanced performance spaces, gallery and event space – all with the flexibility to incorporate broader activities and art forms, a more environmentally friendly asset and a more inclusive and accessible offer with related infrastructure improvements to support facility users with diverse needs.

The Levelling Up investment has been secured through a competitive process and via UK government with the strategic and cultural role of the asset needing to be evidenced. The submission was the highest scoring in Wales and many other applications across Wales were unsuccessful. Opened in 1932, the Grand Pavilion is a Grade II listed building and one of the County Borough's most treasured cultural and heritage assets. Levelling Up funding will ensure that long-identified works needed to secure the building's fabric into the long-term will be completed as well as the exciting additions listed above.

The Grand Pavilion project is only the latest in a number of investments made into the Council's cultural estate over the last decade. In 2014 Bridgend Library was completed at Bridgend Life Centre, Pyle Library was refurbished in 2019 and Pencoed Library is currently in the process of undergoing a £400K refurbishment. In the Llynfi Valley the Council, again working with Awen, are nearing the completion of the re-development of Maesteg Town Hall, which like the Grand Pavilion will have benefit for the wider valley area and also boost the socio-economic life of the town centre. The co-location of library services within existing assets at Pontycymer and Ogmore Vale in partnership with Halo Leisure have sustained library services for these communities with capital investment secured to develop the facility at Pontycymer.

Awen have also invested in Blaengarw Workmen's Hall and have re-established an events and community programme to support cultural life in the Garw Valley. This year a new stage, cinema and event equipment has been installed to further to Hall's ability to support the local community, and cultural activity within the Valley.

Bryngarw Park is another cultural asset which serves the whole county borough and attracts in excess of 220, 000 visitors every year. Over the last three years, the park has benefited from near £700, 000 of investment through the Council's participation in the Welsh Government's Valleys Regional Park programme. This investment allowed Awen to develop a new education centre, redevelop the visitor centre, improve accessible facilities and improve car parking, walking and toilet facilities. The park is now considered one of the best in the South Wales area for its facilities and programme, with

a commitment to accessible play and the range of activities and events it offers, which include discovery walks, storytelling events, exhibitions, open air theatre and concerts.

We are also committed to working with Bridgend College to bring forward a new modern teaching and learning campus to Bridgend town centre which will include classrooms, IT suites, multi-purpose studios, catering kitchens, recording and dance studios, design workshops, performance areas and more. The development will also include a 200 seat theatre offering a wide range of opportunities for community uses and engagement, and will provide a great benefit to the night time economy in the town.

The Welsh Government have committed to the development of a National Cultural Strategy during 2023 and the Council and its partners will be keen to identify any opportunities that can preserve or further enhance local assets and opportunities.

The scope of the cultural strategy includes venues like the Grand Pavilion but also services such as libraries, museums and archives. The Maesteg Town Hall project will be able to support a broad range of cultural activity for the longer term and again has a strategic role in supporting the cultural needs of our resident population. In addition to supporting performances the two venues identified will expand their potential to support community arts groups and third sector organisations. The venue at Maesteg will have made best use of resources by co-locating the town library, the reference library and county family history service in one space.

Beyond facility based library services there has been success in terms of the Books on Wheels mobile library service supporting the more vulnerable at home; highlighting the potential to support people in different ways and in different places. Digital access to resources also increased significantly during the pandemic and this trend has not changed in terms of remote accessing of books, magazines and music. Specific support is in place to support people with sensory impairments also and outreach programmes that connect with schools and other partners to extend the reach of services. In partnership with Awen we will continue to support those who need remote access. It will be important to identify innovative approaches to reaching people and improving accessibility beyond the use of physical assets in the future also.

Awen also now directly operating the Bridgend Youth Theatre programme and are in a position to ensure that opportunities can be accessed across the County. In addition, the ability to develop access to opportunities in less traditional spaces via outreach programmes and pop-up opportunities in smaller settings is actively being pursued. Recent examples would be using virtual reality approaches in care homes, pop up cinema in day services, and carer friendly events, to name a few.

Responsibility for our heritage and cultural assets is taken very seriously. A Built Heritage Strategy for the County Borough is currently being prepared, the aim of which is to conserve protect and enhance the built heritage of Bridgend County. Listed Building Consent delegation that has recently been awarded to this authority will assist with the aims of the strategy and the efficiency of determining applications to facilitate protection and enhancement and improve certainty and confidence of historic building owners. Within the County Borough, there are 374 Listed Buildings, 60 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 16 Conservation Areas, 6 Historic Parks and Gardens and 2 Landscapes of Outstanding / Special Historic Interest. A project is currently underway at Bedford Iron Works, involving significant vegetation clearance, masonry repairs and health and safety works to facilitate its reopening to the public, funded by BCBC it is with a view to establishing a potential heritage partnership agreement with Cadw for future maintenance.

Aside from the formal cultural services provision, there are other avenues being implemented and explored to support Bridgend's cultural heritage including a Heritage trail for Bridgend Town, bringing together history and points of interest along a guided route. On-going support is also being provided to Hut 9, to progress feasibility work for the site, deliver events and explore funding opportunities with Cadw to conserve the site and paintings.

Earlier this year we commissioned a series of surveys of vacant churches and chapels across our three valleys to update a previous 2014 chapels survey. This is with a view to complete an assessment of their historic & architectural character, and cultural value alongside identifying potential funding, support and best practice for potential conversion to new uses.

Hopefully this provides the members with reassurance that investment in all areas of our County Borough's cultural heritage is an ongoing process and is continuously being sought and delivered.

Supplementary question from Councillor F Bletsoe

Numerous third parties such as Arwen Trust, Cadw, Halo and the Bridgend College are doing a great job in delivering cultural heritage and leisure opportunities in the County Borough. As Bridgend is known for producing some superb bands and duo's such as Bullet for my Valentine, Funeral for a Friend, Sex Clone Utopia, Dave and Griff and Those Damn Crows amongst others, can I ask what support BCBC (and not the 3rd parties mentioned above) are doing and have done, to support the growing music scene in Bridgend as part of a cultural and heritage reach.

Response

A detailed response on this question will be given to members outside of the meeting. The Leader added that Arwen Cultural Trust was created by BCBC and it is only able to support organisations that deliver arts and culture throughout the County Borough because of the annual support the local authority provided through a partnership arrangement. In terms of the town centre, we were instrumental in securing Cheapside for a new College Campus that will be able to accommodate arts and cultural events in the future.

Second supplementary question from Councillor M Lewis

With regards to the Boroughs Cultural Heritage, how successful were the recent celebrations of the tricentennial birthday of Dr. Richard Price, Llangeinor, which I unfortunately missed due to illness.

Response

This was a very satisfying occasion where there was involvement from Arwen, the Garw Valley Community Council and the Richard Price Society and BBC broadcaster Huw Edwards who originates from the Garw Valley. He unveiled a blue plaque in London where Dr. Price lived and at this location there was an excellent turnout for Dr. Price due to his influence on both the French and American revolutions. This included pupils from Blaengarw who attended there to celebrate the valleys wonderful heritage.

116. **NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR JANE GEBBIE AND
SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR ALEX WILLIAMS**

The above members in turn, gave verbal submissions, outlining their reasons behind supporting the following Notice of Motion:-

**“MOTION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY TO COUNCIL: A FULLY FUNDED,
PROPER PAY RISE FOR COUNCIL AND SCHOOL WORKERS**

This council notes:

- Local government has endured central government funding cuts of more than 50% since 2010. Between 2010 and 2020, councils lost 60p out of every £1 they have received from central Westminster government.
- New research by UNISON has shown that councils across England, Wales and Scotland are facing a collective funding shortfall of £3bn by the financial year 2023/24 and a cumulative funding gap of £5bn by 2024/25.
- At a local level, Bridgend County Borough Council has made savings totalling nearly £73m since 2010 / 2011. This represents almost 23% of the Council's current net revenue budget
- Councils led the way in efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a huge range of services and support for our communities. Local government has shown more than ever how indispensable it is. But Covid has led to a massive increase in expenditure and loss of income, and as we emerge from the pandemic, local authorities and schools need far more support from Westminster. Recent funding announcements from the Westminster Government relating to schools did nothing to help.
- Council and school workers kept our communities safe through the pandemic, often putting themselves at considerable risk as they work to protect public health, provide quality housing, ensure our children continue to be educated, and look after older and vulnerable people. Since 2010, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing at least 25 per cent of their value since 2009/10. Staff are now facing the worst cost of living crisis in a generation, with inflation hitting 10% and many having to make impossible choices between food, heating, and other essentials. This is a terrible situation for anyone to find themselves in.
- At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity. Across the UK, 900,000 jobs have been lost in local government since June 2010 – a reduction of more than 30 per cent. Local government has arguably been hit by more severe job losses than any other part of the public sector.
- There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three-quarters of the local government workforce.
- Recent research shows that if the Westminster Government were to fully fund the unions' 2023 pay claim, around half of the money would be recouped thanks to increased tax revenue, reduced expenditure on benefits and tax credits, and increased consumer spending in the local economy.

This council believes:

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1. Our workers are public service super-heroes. They keep our communities clean and safe, look after those in need and keep our towns and cities running.
2. Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services our residents rely on would not be deliverable.
3. Local government workers deserve a proper real-terms pay increase. The Westminster Government needs to take responsibility and fully fund this increase; it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding is still picking up the service pressures from the Covid-19 pandemic.

This council resolves to:

- A. Support the pay claim submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council and school workers, for an increase of RPI + 2%
- B. Call on the Local Government Association **and the Welsh Local Government Association** to make urgent representations to central government to fund the NJC pay claim.
- C. Write to the Chancellor and Secretary of State to call for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government.
- D. Meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the council can support the campaign.
- E. Encourage all local government workers to join a union.

Council unanimously supported this Notice of Motion, subject to the addition to point B immediately above (shown in bold), that was also unanimously agreed.

117. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 18:10