

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON WEDNESDAY, 8 JANUARY 2014 AT 3.00PM

Present:

Councillor C J James - Mayor and Chairperson

<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>
S Aspey	P James	A D Owen	J H Tildesley MBE
N Clarke	R M James	D G Owen	H J Townsend
H J David	B Jones	G Phillips	E Venables
G Davies	M Jones	D R Pugh	K J Watts
P A Davies	R C Jones	C E Rees	C Westwood
G W Davies MBE	D R W Lewis	C Reeves	D B F White
E Dodd	J E Lewis	M Reeves	P J White
D K Edwards	J R McCarthy	J C Spanswick	H M Williams
E P Foley	H E Morgan	G Thomas	R Williams
C A Green	L C Morgan	M Thomas	R E Young
E M Hughes	M E J Nott OBE	R Thomas	

Officers:

D Mepham	-	Chief Executive
M Shephard	-	Corporate Director - Communities
S Cooper	-	Corporate Director - Wellbeing
D McMillan	-	Corporate Director - Children
P A Jolley	-	Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer
J Smith	-	Head of Finance and Performance
J Monks	-	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
A Rees	-	Senior Democratic Services Officer – Committees (Electronic Support)

285 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of an ordinary meeting of Council held on the 11<sup>th</sup> December 2013 were approved as a true and accurate record.

286 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members/Officers for the reasons:

Councillor M W Butcher	-	Holiday
Councillor D M Hughes	-	Family Funeral
Councillor L Ellis	-	Unwell
Councillor M Gregory	-	Holiday
Councillor R D Jenkins	-	Unwell
Councillor C L Jones	-	Work Commitments
Councillor P John	-	Holiday
Councillor D Sage	-	Hospital Appointment
Councillor C Smith	-	Work Commitments

287 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J C Spanswick - Item 6A – Councillor Spanswick declared a prejudicial interest under this item as his mother is in receipt of benefit. Councillor Spanswick withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

- Councillor D B F White - Item 6A – Councillor White declared a prejudicial interest as his mother is in receipt of a war widow's pension. Councillor White withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

288 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The Mayor wished colleagues a happy New Year. He described how the festive season had been very busy for both him and the Deputy Mayor, attending many events throughout the Borough. He informed Members of forthcoming events due to take place in the New Year which included the annual Holocaust Memorial Day on the 24<sup>th</sup> January, a post-Christmas charity lunch in Porthcawl on the 26<sup>th</sup> January, as well as a number of 60th Wedding Anniversary celebrations.
2. The Mayor announced that in December he had been pleased to attend a special awards evening for local job seekers who had been out of work as a result of serious illness, disability or social disadvantages. The event was organised by the Creating Opportunities and Skills Team, commonly known as 'COAST' and the awards recognised those job seekers' achievements and efforts following a programme of support that had helped them to develop a range of skills such as writing job applications, as well as CV's and interview techniques. He especially congratulated Amy Abbott who was Achiever of the Year, Kerry Lloyd for winning Learner of the Year, Karina Edwards as Trainee of the Year and Ian Lowrie for Achievement of the Year. The overall prize for Participation of the Year went to Anthony Crocombe.
3. Finally, the Mayor reminded Members that this was the last opportunity to submit nominations for the 2013-14 Mayor's Citizenship Awards. The Awards offered an opportunity to sing the praises of people who helped to improve life in their local community, and was open to residents of the Borough, as well as local groups and businesses. Nomination forms could be downloaded from the Council's website and the deadline for returning them was the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

289 CABINET MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) Cabinet Member - Communities

The Cabinet Member - Communities confirmed that Bridgend had been awarded a Homelessness grant of £7,000 to provide a Winter Watch scheme to assist rough sleepers during the cold weather periods up to the end of March 2014. He advised that the project would be carried out in partnership with the Wallich who had undertaken similar successful projects in previous years.

He informed Members that the Authority had proposed to the Welsh Government to match fund the project from the Supporting People budget to a maximum of £5,000 in order to provide additional support aimed at encouraging rough sleepers to come indoors over a longer period, with a view to being permanently housed. He advised that the scheme had been designated as "Winter Watch Plus", the first such arrangement to be agreed by the Welsh Government.

(2) Cabinet Member - Children and Young People

The Cabinet Member - Children and Young People informed Members that in order to meet the rising demand for Welsh medium education at schools across the South of the Borough, two new mobile classrooms were to be installed at Ysgol Cymraeg Bro Ogwr in Brackla, which were handed over to the school last month, as programmed. Work was also due to commence on the installation of a new classroom at Ysgol y Ferch O'r Sger in North Cornelly this month to meet rising demand for places in the west of the Borough. A planning application was submitted last

month to site a double classroom and upgrade the car park within the school grounds of Tondy Primary School to meet the need for extra school places for children in the Valleys Gateway area.

He further reported that urgent, unplanned repairs were currently being carried out at Pencoed Primary School, leaving two classrooms out of action, which meant that the nursery children started back later following the Christmas holiday. However, the Authority had worked closely with the school to reorganise classrooms to accommodate all children on site until repairs were completed, which was estimated to be three weeks.

Following on from the inspection of the Adoption Service, an annual inspection of the Fostering Service was carried out by CSSIW. The inspectorate had further notified the Authority that next month an inspection would also be carried out on the safeguarding and planning of those Looked After Children and care leavers who exhibit 'Vulnerable and Risky Behaviour'.

The Youth Centre at Y Dderwen was now open, and was proving popular, with regular activities every Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. The Centre's facilities offered a range of classes such as boxercise, circuits, football and basketball, and the school's dance studio included a girls' dance crew, led by a professional instructor.

Finally, the Cabinet Member - Children and Young People was delighted to announce that since April last year, the Council's 'Just@sk Plus' and 'Changing Tracks' programmes had helped 42 out of work young people to gain employment in a range of careers, from construction to child care and customer services. These achievements had come about through a range of support, including one-to-one and work clubs. A further 48 youngsters had also been supported in starting and successfully completing training placements through organisations such as Bridgend College and the Prince's Trust. He congratulated both the teams and the young people on their success.

### (3) Cabinet Member - Wellbeing

The Cabinet Member - Wellbeing announced the commencement of a consultation by the ABMU Health Board regarding its proposal to re-configure Acute Mental Health facilities to a single site, with Neath Port Talbot being the preferred option. Members had been given a presentation on the proposals from ABMU prior to the November Council meeting. The public consultation for Bridgend was Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> January at the Heronston Hotel, Bridgend.

## 290 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chief Executive announced that the Authority had been extremely disappointed that Morrisons' Board had made the decision not to go ahead with the Porthcawl superstore scheme, despite various assurances to the contrary over recent months since they were appointed preferred bidder. He further expressed the Authority's disappointment at hearing the news 'second hand' through a telephone call from their agent.

He explained that the news had been particularly disappointing in view of the concerted effort the Council had made to deliver this phase of the regeneration scheme for the benefit of the local community and wider economy. The superstore deal would have been the catalyst to allow the highways and infrastructure works to go ahead, which in turn would have enabled residential development and proposals for community and leisure facilities and enhanced healthcare facilities.

He advised Members that he had written to Morrisons prior to Christmas, seeking an explanation and/or an urgent meeting, and had followed that up this week with a further letter giving them a week to respond, otherwise the Authority would consider that their interest had ended. Once it was absolutely clear that Morrisons were no longer interested in the development, all other options would be considered in order to deliver this part of the Porthcawl regeneration. There would be engagement with local Members and discussions with Cabinet to consider all options, and as the situation developed, further updates would be issued.

The Chief Executive thanked the many teams of staff who had prepared for and responded to the recent bad weather, including a great deal of work behind the scenes since before Christmas, which was still on-going. He reported that some teams had been actively and visibly involved, notably the highways teams, who had responded rapidly to support those individual residents and communities who were most affected. He also thanked the Communications Team who had been instrumental in getting messages out to residents, both from this Council and on behalf of other agencies. He advised that this work had not gone unnoticed, and there had been a high volume of positive feedback from residents, both directly to him and also via Councillors. The local MP had also been complimentary of the Council's response. The Chief Executive advised that throughout this period, the Council would be in regular contact with partners through the South Wales resilience arrangements, and within this Forum partners had also singled out BCBC for particular praise and thanks for its responsiveness. He reported that the total cost of damages was still being assessed, and within the next week the position would be confirmed as to the apportionment of costs to be recovered from the Welsh Government.

291 ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE - LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES

1. The Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services announced that it had been necessary to change the date of the next scheduled meeting of the Town and Community Council Forum from the 7<sup>th</sup> April to the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014 commencing at 4.00pm in the Council Chamber. Also the date of the next scheduled meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been brought forward from the 3<sup>rd</sup> February to the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014 to enable the Committee to be able to produce a report in time for the Cabinet meeting scheduled in February.
2. The Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services announced that the Labour Group had made the following changes to nominations on Committees:
  - Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Councillor C E Rees to replace Councillor L Ellis;
  - Town and Community Council Forum - Councillor C E Rees to replace Councillor L Ellis;
  - Democratic Services Committee - Councillor J C Spanswick to replace Councillor L Ellis.

292 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader announced that the official opening of the all-new Bridgend Library would be carried out by John Griffiths, Minister for Culture and Sport, and was due to take place on Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at 10.00am. Since it moved to Bridgend Recreation Centre last November, the library had seen a massive increase in the number of visitors compared to the same period last year at its previous location. It was understood that specialist counting equipment had recorded almost 10,000 visits by the end of that month, and in that time 7,500 books, DVD's, CDs and other items were borrowed, with the library gaining more than 200 new members. He stated that this was fantastic news and suggested that Members visit the new library, if they had not already done so, as it was a first class facility.

The Leader reminded Members that the consultation on the Council's draft budget proposals was set to end this coming weekend. The consultation required people to consider the Authority's Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) before giving their views. Links to the consultation were available on the BCBC website and information was also made available at Council premises. Paper copies of the consultation could be provided by contacting the Authority's engagement team.

The Leader congratulated 14 year old Kieran Jenkins from Cynffig Comprehensive School who had designed the poster which had been chosen for the 2013/14 official anti-drug and drink driving campaign in Wales. The competition was organised by Road Safety Wales, and Kieran

used his graphic design skills to put together a hard hitting poster that was now being used across the country to promote the perils of driving under the influence of drink or drugs. The Leader commented that winning this very worthwhile competition was no mean feat, and he would be writing a letter to Kieran on behalf of Council congratulating him on his achievement.

Finally, he informed Members that the second stage of the school performance training would be delivered on Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January between 9.00am and 12.00noon, and also on Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> January between 2.00pm and 5.00pm. This training was in response to recent Estyn inspections and all Members were requested to make every effort to attend one of the sessions. He thanked those Members who had attended the Conflict Management and Lone Working Courses in December 2013 and advised that the certificates of completion had now been received and would be distributed shortly.

## 293 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

The Corporate Director - Resources submitted a report which sought approval from Council to adopt the implementation of the 2014-15 Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR). The CTR provides assistance for those on low incomes who had a liability to pay Council Tax, and the Welfare Reform Bill had detailed Central Government's intention to localise the allocation and administration of Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from 2013-14. Central Government devolved to the Welsh Government the establishment of localised schemes in Wales and stated its intention to reduce expenditure on CTB by the equivalent of 10%. As a result, the Welsh Government elected to develop a single nationally defined scheme, set out in the regulations, for the provision of Council Tax Support in Wales, which would also provide for a small number of discretionary elements individual Councils could choose to adopt, with any additional associated costs funded locally.

The Council adopted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2013-14 in January 2013, in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2012. Those regulations meant that they would become invalid after 31 March 2014.

There were currently 15,286 households in the Borough who were currently in receipt of CTR, with 100% liability met.

The Head of Finance and Performance explained that within the Prescribed Requirements Regulations, there was limited discretion given to the Council to apply discretionary elements that are more generous than the national scheme. These are:

- The ability to increase the standard extended reduction period of four weeks given to persons after they return to work where they have previously been receiving CTR that is to end as a result of their return to work;
- Discretion to increase the amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions which is to be disregarded when calculating income of the claimant; and
- The ability to backdate the application of CTR with regard to late claims prior to the new standard period of three months before the claim.

The Council is obliged to adopt a scheme by the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014 under the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, regardless of whether it chooses to apply any of the discretionary elements. The Council can only apply discretion if it makes its own scheme under the Prescribed Requirements Regulations.

The Head of Finance and Performance informed Members that, as required, the Authority consulted with interested parties and consultation took place between the 28<sup>th</sup> November and 17<sup>th</sup> December 2013; however the responses had proved to be limited, with just a total of 28 responses. The following was proposed:

- The extended payment period is maintained at the minimum standard of four weeks;
- War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions are fully disregarded when calculating entitlement to CTR;
- Backdating is extended beyond the minimum standard of three months to a maximum of six months (the same position as the 2013-14 CTR Scheme).

She advised that the estimated total cost to the Authority of these proposals would be £33,500 for 2014-15, which would be met by the Authority.

In conclusion the Head of Finance and Performance advised that Bridgend's 2014-15 final settlement from the Welsh Government would include £12.625 million to fund the CTR scheme. However, the amount is to be distributed on a fixed rather than a demand-led basis, therefore it does not take into account any increase in Council Tax charges or variations in caseload, and the difference in the amount would fall on the Council. Based on current caseload, the cost of the Scheme for 2014-15 is estimated at £13.6 million. Additional funding of £1 million to meet the cost of the CTR Scheme for 2014-15 had been included in the MTFs and would be kept under review, as the effects of Welfare Reform were not yet known.

RESOLVED: That Council:

1. Noted the Council Tax Reductions Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulated 2013.
2. Noted the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken by the Council on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
3. Adopted the Scheme, as detailed under paragraphs 4.23 and 4.28 of the report.

294 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services presented a report which sought Council's approval of the appointment to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee of a non-voting co-optee for a maximum term of four years.

He informed Members that a vacancy had arisen for a representative of the National Union of Head Teachers (NAHT), due to the resignation of the current representative, Mr P Booth. The NAHT had therefore nominated Ms S O'Halloran as its co-opted representative, which had been agreed by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in December 2013.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the appointment of Ms S O'Halloran as a non-voting co-opted Member to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, representing the National Union of Head Teachers, for a maximum term of four years.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm.