

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON
WEDNESDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2014 AT 2.00PM

Present:

Councillor C J James - Mayor and Chairperson

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

Officers:

D Mepham	-	Chief Executive
N Young	-	Corporate Director Resources & Section 151 Officer
M Shephard	-	Corporate Director - Communities
S Cooper	-	Corporate Director – Wellbeing
P A Jolley	-	Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer
A Rees	-	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
G P Jones	-	Head of Democratic Services (Electronic Support)

305 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members for the reasons so stated:

Councillor S Aspey	-	Work Commitments
Councillor L Ellis	-	Medical Appointment
Councillor D M Hughes	-	Unwell
Councillor P James	-	Unwell
Councillor R D Jenkins	-	Unwell
Councillor J H Tildesley	-	Holiday
D McMillan – Corporate Director Children	-	Bereavement Leave

306 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

307 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader informed Council that this had been the most challenging budget that Bridgend County Borough Council has ever had to set and the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Corporate Plan had been developed to protect essential front-line services and drive improvement in areas that people feel are most important. The Leader stated that education remains a priority, and the Council is continuing to invest in local schools with capital

improvements planned between now and 2022-23 which are set to include a new primary school for Kenfig Hill, all-new premises for Coity Primary and a new primary for Pencoed. The Leader also stated that the Council remains committed towards regeneration and ensuring that the main towns in the County Borough can compete in a difficult economic climate. He stated that on top of recent enhancements such as the all-new outdoor area at Maesteg Market or the brand new premises for Bridgend Library at Bridgend Recreation Centre, the Council is going to invest in work such as new infrastructure and coastal defences in Porthcawl, improvements at Bridgend Indoor Market, ongoing highway maintenance across the County Borough and support for town and community council projects. The Leader informed Members of the success the Council had in working collaboratively with its partners Halo in the redevelopment of the facilities at the Bridgend Recreation Centre and with May Gurney where it had developed one of the most best kerbside recycling schemes in Wales. This was being delivered at a time of reduced resources and finances. The Leader indicated that budgeting is about making choices that are often difficult, however the Council is directing its money to where it considered it can achieve the greatest impact and where it is most needed. At the same time, areas had been identified where some services can be delivered more effectively by refocusing Youth Services provision, while in other areas it had been a case of being realistic about the situation and accepting that the Council not subsidise everything.

The Leader informed Council that the choices it had to make had not been easy and there was an understanding of how greatly people value many of the services that the Council has traditionally provided. This was reflected in the great deal of consultation and scrutiny undertaken on the budget proposals while preparing those plans in order to try and arrive at the right balance, which the Leader believed had been achieved. The Council would no longer be seeking to cease operating the complex needs play scheme during the Easter and summer holidays, and had postponed proposals for removing the subsidy to the meals at home service in order to give officers more time to carry out further investigations into this very complex issue.

The Leader believed that it was highly significant that more than half of the £13 million budget shortfall for 2014-15 was set to be found through internal efficiencies at the authority, and the Council was delivering further savings through a range of collaborative projects, contract renegotiations and the potential transfer of specific services to partner organisations. The Leader stated that as well as striving to protect services, Cabinet was committed to minimising job losses, and had therefore agreed to contain the staff pay bill in 2014-15 by implementing a pay freeze across the Council for all staff with the exception of Grades 1 and 2 who will receive a 1% uplift. The Leader requested all Members forego any pay award that they may be entitled to receive.

The Leader stated that he remained proud and ambitious for the County Borough but that it would be necessary for the way in which services are delivered to change to be sustainable for the future.

308 CORPORATE PLAN 2013 – 2017

The Chief Executive presented a report on a review of the Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017. He stated that the Plan is reviewed annually to ensure it reflected the Council's six improvement priorities and to also update its commitments and performance indicators. The Plan had also been subject to public consultation, which confirmed the Council's six improvement priorities and provided specific commitments for 2014 – 15.

The Chief Executive reported that the Corporate Plan is aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), providing a link between the Council's resources and priorities. He stated that the review had concluded that the six improvement priorities in the Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017 were still relevant. The review had also considered the Council's recent performance, citizens' views gathered through the Council's ongoing engagement activities and the Citizens' Panel, and the Council's new outcome agreement with Welsh Government.

The Chief Executive reported that the Corporate Plan had been the subject of an eight week public consultation period and that over 90% of respondents found that improvement priorities one to five were clear and easy to understand, 79% for improvement six and over 70% of respondents agreed that the commitments were the right matters to focus on to achieve each of the six improvement priorities. He also informed Council that the reviewed improvement priorities had been the subject of scrutiny by the Community Safety and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members of the Council questioned the reason why the target was not higher in 2014-15 for the percentage of citizens surveyed who found the Council was good or very good at telling them about the services it provides and Council related news and the percentage of change in carbon dioxide emissions in the non-domestic public building stock. Members also referred to the reason for the question not being asked in the percentage of citizens surveyed who said that their individual access requirements are met when contacting the Council in 2012-13. The Corporate Director Resources informed Council that these were new measures which had been introduced in 2012-13 and were based on a different cohort and that 2013-14 results were not available when the report was published, but actual figures for 2011-12 and 2012-13 were published in the Corporate Plan. Officers would seek each year to strengthen and prioritise measures in the Corporate Plan. She stated that carbon dioxide emissions in the non-domestic public building stock had been set by the Welsh Government. The Corporate Director Resources informed Council that trends were being looked at and how the Council was contributing towards those trends. The Chief Executive informed Council that the Corporate Plan is high level and was underpinned by the Directorate Business Plan which contains more detail on achieving the Council's improvement priorities.

Members referred to the Success Indicators and questioned the steps being taken by the Council to increase the percentage of 16 – 24 year olds in employment and to reduce the percentage of all children under 16 who are living in working age households with no one in employment. The Chief Executive informed Members that the Council could partially influence these indicators and worked in partnership with a number of organisations and was confident the Council was doing what it could to support the local economy and was sufficiently ambitious with its targets. He informed Council that the Senior Management Team and Cabinet outside of the Corporate Plan process consider how ambitious the Council is at this time he believed the Council is being realistic in its aims.

Members questioned the reasons for a target not being set in 2014-15 for the number of working days lost per full time equivalent due to sickness absence. The Corporate Director Resources informed Council that the target for reducing sickness absence in 2014-15 had not yet been set corporately although tomorrow's Corporate Performance Assessment will be considering performance in relation to sickness absence and an assessment would be made on setting a target closer to the end of the financial year.

Members questioned the reason for Maesteg not being included in the number of visitors to town centres and whether the targets should be more ambitious and not static. The Corporate Director Communities informed Council that the targets for visitors to town centres are at present provisional and confirmed there was a case for the target for the number of visitors to Porthcawl to be more ambitious, however the Council was operating with reduced resources.

Members complimented officer on the increase in the number of visitors to public libraries and on the impressive new library facilities at the Bridgend Recreation Centre.

RESOLVED: That Council approved and adopted the Corporate Plan 2013-17 reviewed for 2014-15.

309 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2014-15 TO 2017-18**

The Section 151 Officer submitted a report, the purpose of which was to present to Council the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2014-15 to 2017-18, which included a financial forecast

for 2014-18, a detailed revenue budget for 2014-15, a revised Capital Programme for 2014-15 to 2023-24 and a Treasury Management Strategy.

She stated that the Council had reviewed its Corporate Plan to ensure it reflected the Council's corporate improvement priorities and to update its commitments and performance indicators. The plan had been the subject of public consultation which confirmed the Council's six corporate improvement priorities and provides specific commitments for 2014-15. The Corporate Plan and MTFS will be fully aligned and include explicit links between resources and corporate priorities. The Medium Term Financial Strategy included principles that will govern the strategy and a four year financial forecast, comprising detailed proposals for 2014-15 and outline proposals for 2015-16 to 2017-18, the capital programme for 2014-15 to 2023-24 linked to priority areas for capital investment and Capital Financing Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy.

The Section 151 Officer set out the Medium Term Financial Strategy within the context of UK economic and public expenditure plans and Welsh Government priorities and resource allocation. In the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2013 the Welsh Government revenue budget was reduced by -0.1% in 2014-15 and -0.4% in 2015/16. The Section 151 Officer stated that the final Local Government Settlement showed an average reduction in Aggregate External Finance (AEF) across all Councils in Wales was -3.4%, with the reduction in Bridgend being -2.7%. The true average reduction across Wales was -3.9% and -3.3% for Bridgend, which was a slight improvement on the Provisional Settlement and included a £382k contribution towards protection for schools. The Section 151 Officer reported on the budget implications for 2015 to 2018 and that indicative AEF allocations showed an all Wales average decrease of -1.57% on 2014-15 funding which for Bridgend meant -1.35% or -2% when adjusted for the Local Government Borrowing Initiative and Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Council's current AEF planning assumption for 2015-16 is -3% and an assumption had been made in the MTFS for a projected reduction of AEF of -4% in 2016-17 and -2% in 2017-18. Based on the revised AEF and other key assumptions the most likely scenario for the Council was a budget shortfall of £36m over the period 2014-15 to 2017-18.

The Section 151 Officer reported on grant transfers into the 2014-15 final settlement in that three specific grants amounting to £2.4m had been transferred for the First Steps Improvement Package (£135k); Council Tax Reduction Administration Subsidy (£248k) and Private Finance Initiative (Maesteg Comprehensive School) (£2.024m). In addition £158k had been ring-fenced to meet the Local Government Borrowing Initiative for highways improvements and there would also be a transfer into the settlement from 2015-16 to fund a 21st Century Schools LGBTI.

The Section 151 Officer that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme regulations had been renewed and will remain a national scheme based on 100% liability. The Council would have to fund £1m to meet the additional costs above the funding already transferred by the Welsh Government for the scheme in 2013-14. In addition, the final settlement includes funding of £200k for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Pensioner Grant.

The Section 151 Officer reported that all projects funded through the Regional Collaboration Fund would continue with an indicative allocation for 2014-15 being £5m of which £1.6m was allocated to the Western Bay region. She stated that the Intermediate Care Fund would be used to encourage collaborative working to support people to maintain their independence and remain in their own home. The notional allocation for 2014-15 is £6.8m on a regional basis of which £1.9m allocated to Bridgend.

The Section 151 Officer informed Council that the Local Government Minister is prepared to use capping powers in the event of excessive increases in council tax. The Section 151 Officer also informed Council that annual Welsh Government capital funding would be flat lined from 2014-15 onwards and the local government settlement provides the Council with £6.324m in 2014-15 which is £30k less than 2013-14.

The Section 151 Officer reported on the net revenue budget and projected outturn for 2013/14, which at the end of December, an overall underspend of £433k was projected. She stated that

this was a significant improvement on the position reported at the end of September and on the same period last year, which had been as a consequence of very focused and determined action by Directorates to implement recovery plans. She stated that the forecast outturn masked some underlying budget pressures in respect of Looked After Children and Adult Social Care and reduced income from development control fees and car parking charges.

The Section 151 Officer set out the MTFs for the Council for the next four financial years which would be reviewed regularly and amended with the detail for future years being developed over the period of the strategy. The MTFs had been rolled forward a year to cover the period 2014-15 to 2017-18 and would continue to be led by Cabinet and the Corporate Management Board and be the subject of consultation with internal and external stakeholders as well as linking to the Council's corporate priorities, the Workforce Development Plan, the ICT Strategy, the Asset Management and Bridgend Change Programme. The Section 151 Officer stated that the MTFs had been the subject of greater involvement by Members who had participated in the planning process through the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel, Council briefings and a budget workshop. The draft MTFs and 2014-15 budget proposals had been considered by the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel and each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny providing observations and recommendations which had been responded to by Cabinet. The Section 151 Officer highlighted the responses received from citizens to the public consultation on the budget proposals.

The Section 151 Officer set out the fourteen key principles of the Medium Term Financial Strategy which will drive the budget and spending decisions over the period 2014-2018, the Resource envelope within which the Council will operate over the next four years and how the Council would need to manage its finances within the MTFs Resource Envelope in that there were a number of inescapable service and inflation pressures that need to be met from the resource envelope. The Section 151 Officer highlighted the potential net savings requirement of £35.770m based on the forecast resource envelope, the inescapable spending assumptions and an assumed increase in Council Tax of 4.5 – 5% each year. She also highlighted the MTFs net budget requirement for 2014-15 based on the most likely scenario taking account of the net percentage change in Aggregate External Finance, the inescapable budget pressures and the savings requirements. Savings proposals were being developed by offices to meet the full £36m requirement and the Section 151 Officer highlighted the risk status of these proposals which were categorised for each year. Over 50% of the planned savings identified were planned to come from Making Best Use of Resources, all of the proposals had implications for the Council's workforce given that 68% of the net revenue budget relates to pay costs. The annual real terms' reductions on Council budgets over the next four years would lead to a reduced workforce over the period of the MTFs. It was intended to manage such a reduction through the combination of a recruitment freeze, redeployment, early retirements and voluntary redundancies, although some compulsory redundancies may be necessary. Savings proposals relating to Collaboration and Service Transformation amount to 16.7%, which include the remodelling of Adult Social Care, the provision of leisure services and youth services. Policy changes amount to 17.3% which include reducing services to the statutory minimum as well as cutting some discretionary services and which were the subject to consultation.

The Section 151 Officer reported on the main risks which had been taken into account in the preparation of the MTFs which were the failure to use resources effectively and achieve the planned savings targets, the impact of Welfare Reform measures, the wider impact of UK government macro-economic policies on the local economy and increased support required for vulnerable and elderly and young people.

The Section 151 Officer also reported on a projected overspend on the Porthcawl Harbour project which was not likely to be as significant as reported to Cabinet, negotiations were continuing with the contractor and along with the Corporate Director Communities she was reviewing the management of the project to ascertain the reasons which had led to the overspend and to address the overspend which would be the subject of a future report to Cabinet and Council seeking approval to make amendments to the capital programme. The Section 151 Officer had

also requested Internal Audit to review the project management arrangements of capital schemes across the Council with particular emphasis being given to the Porthcawl Harbour project.

The Section 151 Officer set out the Council's revenue budget for 2014-15 which had been developed using the MTFs principles, which included proposals for increases in budget allocations in specific service areas to meet budget pressures and also budget reduction proposals. There had been an increase in funding of £184k in Revenue Support Grant and due to the agreement of the council tax base for 2014-15 it would result in additional income of £276k. Following observations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the budget savings proposal CH13 relating to play schemes for children with complex needs had been removed. In addition, budget proposal ACS21 relating to the assessment of charges for Meals at Home would now be considered as part of a wider review relating to the development of a new Assessment Framework for all aspects of adult social care. The inflation provision for the South Wales Fire Authority provided for in the draft budget would no longer be required as the fire authority's draft budget for 2014-15 indicated that its budget requirement would be reduced and therefore the Council's contribution would reduce by £70k. The Section 151 Officer highlighted the revenue budget for 2014-15 along with the grants transferring into the settlement and how the net budget of £255,131m would be funded by revenue support grant/non domestic rates of £194,862,657 and Council Tax income of £60,268,343, which would produce an average increase of 4.98% in council tax. The budget included an allocation of £3.6m to meet the cost of implementing the new Pay and Grading structure, an additional budget provision of £0.5m was required to meet the additional costs in 2014-15 with a further £0.4m required in 2015-16. The budgetary impact of changes to part 3 Terms and Conditions was still being assessed and £0.5m remains unallocated, which does not include the potential impact of any successful appeals which could not be quantified at this stage. Further savings proposals in 2015-16 may be required to compensate for this potential additional cost.

The Section 151 Officer commented on the position on the allocation of price inflation to service budgets which included provision for increases in energy costs based on forward contract prices, business rates, food costs and other major contractual commitments. Discussions were continuing with Neath Port Talbot Council on MREC and £780k would be held centrally to mitigate the risk of an agreement not being reached.

The Section 151 Officer reported that discussions had taken place with the Trade Unions to find measures of £1m per annum by containing the 2014-15 pay bill to limit as far as possible the need for job losses. Unison refused to participate in the consultation making a collective agreement impossible, whilst the GMB and Unite balloted their members on a pay freeze or an increment freeze, both of which would deliver the required saving. The majority of those who voted were not in favour of either of the measures and Cabinet had concluded following the result of the ballot and the need to find savings of £1m that the budget for 2014-15 should only include a pay award of 1% for those employees on Grades 1 and 2 (SCP5 to SCP9) of the Pay and Grading structure.

The Section 151 Officer reported that the delegated schools' budget had been completely protected from the average 8% savings required of other directorates and it also incorporated £382k contribution from the Welsh Government and took account of a slight fall in pupil numbers. The commitment to increase the amount of budget delegated to schools had been increased by £112k in an effort to meet the Welsh Government's requirement to increase delegation rates to 85%, the Council's delegation rate was now 81.5%.

The Section 151 Officer reported that inescapable budget pressures of £3.59m had been included in 2014-15 which comprise recurrent pressures in the 2013-14 budget along with forecasts of demographic growth, additional demand on services, the expected impact of new legislation and the Council tax Reduction Pensioner Discount. Savings proposals of £11.3m had been identified from service and corporate budgets to achieve a balanced budget.

The Section 151 Officer reported on the impact of the MTFs on the corporate budgets and that fees and charges would be increased by a CPI of 2.2% plus 1% and highlighted how the budget

allocations link to the corporate improvement priorities. The Section 151 Officer stated that it was proposed that the Council's reserves are maintained at the current level of around £7m throughout the MTFS period.

The Section 151 Officer reported on the proposed Capital Programme for 2014-15 to 2023-24, which formed part of, but extended beyond the MTFS and also covered the Council's Capital Financing plans (including prudential borrowing and capital receipts forecast). Both had been developed in line with the MTFS principles and reflect the Welsh Government capital settlement for 2014-15, which provides general capital funding for the Council for 2014-15 of £6.324m, of which £3.932m is un-hypothecated supported borrowing and the remainder £2.392m as general capital grant. A provisional allocation of £6.324m had also been indicated for 2015-16. Development of the Capital Programme had followed the MTFS principles and had involved a review of the current programme in light of the Final Settlement as well as historical annual allocations to certain service areas. The programme proposed contained a number of significant strategic investment projects that will support a number of corporate improvement priorities.

The Section 151 Officer reported that Schools' Modernisation and Investment Programme formed a cornerstone of the corporate priority to raise aspirations and improve educational achievement by improving the learning environment. In December 2011 the Welsh Government confirmed 50% grant funding for Band A projects and to receive this funding the Council was required to submit detailed business cases for each project including how the 50% match funding will be provided. She stated that Council had previously agreed this would be met from core funding allocations of £7m, anticipated Section 106 funding of £4m and projected receipts of £11.135m from the sale of school sites. The remaining £340k would be met from the balance of Prudential Borrowing previously allocated to the Schools Modernisation Programme. The Welsh Government had since announced plans to extend the Local Government Borrowing Initiative to inject around £300m on investment into the 21st Century Schools Programme between 2014-15 and 2015-16 to enable delivery of the Programme in full by 2018-19 two years ahead of schedule. The following projects had been included in the capital programme but funding for each project would not be confirmed until the Welsh Government approve the final business case and sufficient capital receipts had been generated:

- Coety / Parc Derwen Primary School
- Additional Learning Needs Provision
- Garw Valley South Primary Provision
- Pencoed Primary School
- Gateway Primary Provision
- Mynydd Cynffig Primary School
- Heronsbridge Special School

The Section 151 Officer reported that the capital programme included an annual allocation to fund the backlog of capital minor repairs and maintenance works to the Council's existing buildings with the original allocation being £1.1m which was top sliced by £50k in 2014-15 and 2015-16 to fund prudential borrowing of £500k in each year to enable the Council to progress more comprehensive major repair programmes. She stated that outline proposal had been developed for a number of projects including further town centre regeneration and office accommodation schemes.

The Section 151 Officer commented on the capital funding and stated that against the background of the reduction in capital funding, these annual allocations had been reviewed and certain proposals had been put forward for the 2014-15 Capital Programme. She stated that the financing of the Council's Capital Programme was underpinned by the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and outlined the key principles used in that strategy. The proposed capital programme assumed that £17m of capital receipts would be generated from asset sales over the next two years, of which £7m related to school buildings vacated through the 21st Century Schools Programme. The sum of £13.135m of capital receipts from the sale of school sites was required as part of the match funding for the 21st Century Schools Programme and confirmation of these receipts would be required before contracts could be awarded for those projects.

Prudential borrowing totalling £34.1m was approved by Council on 27 February 2013 and it was proposed that this borrowing be increased by a further £0.5m to allow for additional capital minor works. In addition, the Welsh Government would be making funding available to meet the cost of the Council borrowing an additional £2.1m to carry out works on the Highways Infrastructure and approximately £6.6m in 2014-15 and 2015-16 towards the costs of the 21st Century Schools Programme under the Local Government Borrowing Initiative.

The Section 151 Officer reported on the requirement for the Council to set a number of Treasury Management Indicators and to report them within the Treasury Management Strategy. The Council was required, prior to the start of the financial year to approve the Treasury Management and Investment Strategies for 201-15 and the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators for the period 2014-15 to 2017-18. The indicators summarise the expected activity or introduce limits upon the activity, reflect the underlying capital programme and provide assurance that capital investment decisions are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Section 151 Officer informed Council that the budget proposals had been the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment.

The Section 151 Officer reported that she was required as the Council's Chief Financial Officer to report annually on the robustness of the level of reserves and stated that the level of Council reserves was sufficient to protect the Council in light of unknown demands or emergencies and current funding levels, but emphasised that the biggest financial risks the Council was exposed at the present time relate to realising unplanned budget reductions in future years and the unknown impact of national legislative changes, further collaborations and local government re-organisation. The Chief Financial Officer was also required to report to Council if she did not believe she had sufficient resource to discharge her role as required by Section 114 of the Local Government Act 1988. She believed that there was sufficient resource to discharge this role.

The Cabinet Member Resources thanked the Section 151 Officer for her report and commented on the difficulties facing councils throughout Wales as a result of reduced funding from central Government have been well publicised over the last few months, there had also been news coverage of some of the very challenging choices that other local authorities have already had to make. He stated that the reality of the situation is that the Council found itself faced with having to set a budget for the year ahead in circumstances that are unprecedented in the lifetime of this Council.

He also stated that Members did not enter politics expecting or wanting to trim the very services that councils have traditionally provided, but Members had to be totally pragmatic about what lay ahead. The Cabinet Member Resources informed Council that through the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Corporate Plan, he believed that the Council have achieved this in setting the budget. He stated that the Council had listened to local people, taken account of the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and have done its utmost to try and ensure that as many frontline services as possible have been protected. The budget proposals for 2014-15 have been designed to safeguard essential services and minimise job losses wherever possible and are also designed to help the Council achieve its aims of developing the local economy, raise aspirations and educational achievement, support children and their families, help people to live healthier lives, make better use of our resources, and help vulnerable and older people to live independently for as long as possible. Against the backdrop of having to save £36 million over the coming four years, this budget demonstrates that the Council has been entirely realistic about the very limited choices available and had sought to keep the inevitable impact on services to an absolute minimum.

The Cabinet Resources informed Council that this carefully planned budget provides Bridgend County Borough Council with a very clear future, and armed the Council with a way forward which is both strategic and sensible. He thanked officers for their hard work on both the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Corporate Plan and months had been preparing for this moment. While this had not been an easy process, the Cabinet Member Resources believed that this

budget clearly demonstrated how the Council was facing up to the challenge while not ignoring its responsibilities towards the people the Council serves.

In response to a question from a Member, the Section 151 Officer confirmed that in relation to the Porthcawl Harbour project she would review the governance arrangements of the project and had instructed Internal Audit to review the way in which capital projects are managed with the Porthcawl Harbour project being used as a case study.

In response to a further question from a Member, the Section 151 Officer confirmed that a realistic allocation had been set in the revenue budget for pension related costs and that the Council was in regular dialogue with the pension authority.

The Section 151 Officer informed Council that the receipt from the rationalisation of depots and regeneration in Porthcawl was predicated on generating £5m - £6m in capital receipts.

In response to a question from a Member the Section 151 Officer informed Council that the intention of the hybrid mail project was for the authority to move towards a paperless office and a more efficient way of receiving and transmitting mail.

The Cabinet Member Children and Young People informed Council in relation to budget proposal CH9 that the proposal to amalgamate Pontycymmer Nursery and Ffaldau Primary School was the subject of consultation and that a public notice had been issued. He also stated that in relation to CH16 there would be no reduction in the quality of service in the catering service which is an award winning service.

The Section 151 Officer informed Members that there was no commitment by the Council to proceed with the Porthcawl Infrastructure scheme without a retail partner on board and no contracts had been signed.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014- 15 to 2017-18 Revenue Budget, the Capital Programme 2014-15 to 2023-2024 and the Treasury Management Strategy 2014-15 and approved the following specific elements:-

- The MTFS 2014-15 to 2017-18
- The Net Budget Requirement of £255,131,000 in 2014-15.
- A Band D Council Tax for Bridgend County Borough Council of £1191.87 for 2014-15.
- The 2014-15 budgets as allocated in accordance with table 7 of the report.
- The Capital Programme 2014-15 to 2023-24.
- The Treasury Management Strategy 2014-15 and Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators 2014-15 to 2017-18.

310 2014/15 COUNCIL TAX

The Section 151 Officer submitted a report which provided details of the Council Tax requirement for the County Borough Council together with the precept requirements of the Police & Crime Commissioner for South Wales and Town and Community Councils. She reported on the 2014-15 budget which had been approved earlier in the meeting and provided details of the Council Tax calculations, which included the Council Tax Base Band D equivalents.

The Section 151 Officer reported that the Council as the billing authority was required to formally approve the Council Tax for its area, which must be set to meet the net budget requirement of the Council and its precepting authorities. The Council was also required to approve Council Tax charges for Band D properties for the chargeable financial year beginning the 1st April for each of the community areas which was presented in tabular form.

RESOLVED: That Council:-

- (i) Approved the Council Tax for the Council of £1191.87 for 2014-15, and the Council Tax for the area outlined in Paragraph 4.4 of the report.
- (ii) Approved the Council Tax charges for Band D properties for 2014-15 for each of the community areas outlined in Paragraph 4.5 of the report.

The meeting closed at 3.45pm.