

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2016 AT 3.00 PM

Present

Councillor RE Young – Chairperson

S Aspey	M Butcher	N Clarke	HJ David
G Davies	GW Davies MBE	PA Davies	E Dodd
DK Edwards	L Ellis	N Farr	EP Foley
CA Green	M Gregory	EM Hughes	CJ James
P James	RD Jenkins	PN John	B Jones
CL Jones	M Jones	RC Jones	DRW Lewis
JE Lewis	JR McCarthy	HE Morgan	LC Morgan
MEJ Nott OBE	D Patel	G Phillips	DR Pugh
CL Reeves	M Reeves	D Sage	CE Smith
JC Spanswick	M Thomas	RL Thomas	JH Tildesley MBE
HJ Townsend	E Venables	KJ Watts	C Westwood
DBF White	PJ White	HM Williams	R Williams

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Andrew Jolley	Assistant Chief Executive Legal & Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer
Gary Jones	Head of Democratic Services
Deborah McMillan	Corporate Director - Education & Transformation
Darren Mepham	Chief Executive
Mark Shephard	Corporate Director - Communities
Ness Young	Corporate Director - Resources & Section 151 Officer

576. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:-

Councillor M Winter
Councillor E Venables
Councillor RM James
Councillor A Owen

577. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made by Members:-

Councillor L Ellis – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7, in that a family member was affected by the proposals in the report.

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Councillor DBF White – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7 and 8, in that his wife works for BCBC.

Councillor JC Spanswick – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7 and 8 in that his wife works for BCBC

Councillor G Phillips – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7 and 8, in that his wife works for BCBC

Councillor PJ White – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7 and 8, in that his sister works for BCBC

Councillor B Jones – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7 and 8, in that his sister works for BCBC

Councillor MW Butcher – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7 and 8, in that she has a close relative working in BCBC

Councillor CA Green – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7 and 8, in that her sister works for BCBC

Councillor DR Pugh – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7 and 8, in that his daughter works for BCBC

Councillor C Jones – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 10, in that he is a Trade Union Representative on the Central South Consortium.

All the above Members left the meeting whilst these items were being considered.

The following declarations of interest were made by Officers:-

D Mepham, S Cooper, D McMillan, M Shephard – Interest in Agenda item 7 and 8 as employees of the Authority affected by the Policies subject of the reports, and left the meeting whilst these items were being considered. N Young and PA Jolley declared an interest also in these items, but remained in the meeting to present the reports and/or respond to Members questions in their capacity of S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, respectively. MA Galvin and G Jones also declared an interest in these items, but remained in the meeting to take the Minutes and provide support in respect of electronic back-up, respectively.

D Mepham, S Cooper, D McMillan, M Shephard, N Young, PA Jolley and MA Galvin – Interest in Agenda item 9 as they were directly affected by the Pay Policy of the Authority. These Officers left the meeting whilst this item was being discussed. The item was presented by the Cabinet Member Resources. G Jones declared a personal interest in this item but remained in the meeting to take the Minute and provide electronic back-up.

578. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of Council dated 20 January 2016 be approved as a true and accurate record.

579. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:

Mayor

The Mayor welcomed those present to the meeting of Bridgend County Borough Council on 17 February 2015. As Members/Officers aware, an annual Holocaust Memorial is held every year within the county borough. The Mayor had the great honour of being part of the event, and this year's theme was "Don't Stand By". It asked people to consider their personal responsibility, and not be a bystander to persecution and genocide. Listening to the life stories of individuals who chose not to stand by during the Holocaust was both moving and humbling he stated, and illustrated that there is always the capacity for good in the face of such evil. He was privileged to light the Holocaust Memorial Day candle, and fully supported this ongoing remembrance which demonstrates that we continue to value a free, tolerant and democratic society.

Litchard Primary School hosted 30 Chinese children who were visiting from the Beijing area recently, so the Mayor had taken the opportunity to invite them into the council to meet him and see for themselves how local government works. He felt that they fully enjoyed the visit, and he was also pleased to be able to attend their farewell presentation at the Sony Theatre in Bridgend College where he wished them a safe journey home.

The Mayor and his Consort were also delighted to host a school council at Betws Juniors after children aged between five and 11 expressed an interest in visiting the civic offices to find out more about his role as Mayor. They were an absolute joy, and we had a very lively question and answer session that Jeremy Paxman would have been proud of he added! The children were a real credit to their school throughout this event.

Porthcawl Comprehensive has a long established record of staging outstanding musical productions, and this year was no exception. His Consort and himself attended their "We Will Rock You" show at the Grand Pavilion and thoroughly enjoyed this celebration of the life and music of Freddie Mercury and Queen. The hard work and talent of pupils and teachers was evident, and he congratulated them all on another excellent show.

Finally he announced that, tickets were still available for his Charity Lunch at the Great House on Friday. The guest speaker will be Non Evans MBE, a former sports broadcaster and rugby, judo, wrestling and weightlifting international. He hoped Members could find time to attend this lunch.

Deputy Leader

The Deputy Leader announced, that when children at Afon y Felin Primary School in North Cornelly wrote to rugby legend Gareth Thomas to ask about how he became a Welsh sporting hero, he did not think they expected a personal visit, but that's exactly what happened. 'Alfie' spent several hours talking to the children and answering questions as part of a special project they were working on, and left them with the message that it takes hard work, commitment and resilience to accomplish a goal (or even a drop kick) in rugby terms. The event was a triple celebration for the school as in addition to moving from red to yellow in the school classification tables in just under a year, they also recently learned that attendance increased over the last academic year and is up to 94.9 per cent. The school had done a great deal of work to encourage improved attendance, including the production of a weekly school newspaper, working with our Educational Welfare and Family Engagement officers and encouraging pupils to compete for a class attendance trophy. He was sure that Members would join him in offering our congratulations.

Talking of school categorisation, Members would have no doubt noted that just over 40 per cent of our local schools received a top 'green' rating indicating that they are 'highly effective'. This was a significant rise from last year's figure of 24.6 per cent and confirmed that Bridgend County Borough has the highest percentage of 'green' schools in the Central South region. Our 'green' primary schools increased from 26.5 per cent to 41.7 per cent, while the increase for our secondary schools was up from 12.5 per cent to 33.3 per cent. While it is important not to view the school categorisation as any kind of ranking system, we are still never the less delighted with this year's results. Overall, we have 53 schools in the green and yellow categories with seven classed as being amber or red, so I think that Members would agree that the new categorisation process has demonstrated some very interesting results.

Estyn had carried out an inspection of Newton Primary School and while the inspectors found that the school is generally good, they have recommended that Bridgend County Borough Council monitors the school's progress over the next year as it carries out work on a small number of specific areas that require attention. BCBC were currently working with the governing body of the school on an action plan to address these issues, and he looked forward to being able to confirm to Members that progress has been made.

To share best practice, the Deputy Leader confirmed that BCBC would continue to provide support and advice to families. The next steps would also include regularly reminding all schools, including independent schools, of the protocol when families de-register, in addition to carefully monitoring and capturing de-registrations on the pupil database.

Cabinet Member Communities

The Cabinet Member Communities extended his thanks to staff and workers who were out in the thick of Storm Imogen recently making sure that roads remained open, premises weren't flooded and people could stay safe. This was a particularly bad storm, as it had brought down a number of trees at locations throughout the county borough and delayed refuse collections after part of the M4 was closed, preventing refuse lorries from getting to the waste transfer station at Crymlyn Burrows. The high winds also dislodged roofing tiles from seven different properties in Bridgend town centre and brought them crashing down into the pedestrianised area. Following a prompt response from South Wales Police, the council and the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, this led to the town centre being effectively closed to the public until the following morning in the interests of public safety, something that he didn't think had ever been done before. Thankfully, no one was hurt and the town was able to re-open as normal the following day. Needless to say, staff worked around the clock and were absolutely fantastic, so he was sure that Members would join him in offering them our thanks and appreciation.

It was also that time of year again when green-fingered residents can start to register for the return of the garden waste collection which begins in April. The fortnightly collections will make it possible to recycle green waste including plants, flowers, weeds, grass, leaves and hedge clippings. The service will run during the main growing season up to the end of October, and residents can sign up to the service for a one-off payment of £27 per household with a discounted rate of £23 for pensioners. Once payment is confirmed, households will be supplied with two reusable sacks for their green waste which will be collected every two weeks on the same day as their black bags. All of the green waste collected in Bridgend County Borough is taken to local firm Cowbridge Compost where it is turned into a fertilizer.

Around 2,400 homes signed up for the scheme last year, which was 20 per cent more than in 2014. He hoped Members will help encourage constituents to take part in the

scheme, as it helps cut down on the amount of recyclable materials that have to be disposed of as landfill. Garden waste can also be taken to household recycling centres located at Tythegston, Brynmenyn Industrial Estate and the Heol Ty Gwyn Industrial Estate in Maesteg.

Cabinet Member Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing

The Cabinet Member Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing, confirmed that Members will be aware that the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act is a new law that aims to give people more of a say in the care and support they receive.

He was sure that this was going to be of interest to people across all of our communities, so Members may like to help spread the word about a new FAQ document produced by the Welsh Government, that explains what the new Act will mean for local people.

In general terms it aims to enable people to make decisions about their care in partnership with professionals, provide easier access to information and advice about what is available, give carers an equal right to be assessed for support to those that they care for, and ensure that more people are entitled to direct payments.

A new assessment process for care and support will be based on what matters to you as an individual which will consider personal strengths and what support is available to you from your family, friends and others in the community.

The assessment will be simpler and can be carried out by one person on behalf of a range of organisations.

There will also be more services to prevent problems getting worse, so the right help is available when it is needed.

When it comes into force on 1 April 2016, the Act also aims to create stronger powers for keeping people safe from abuse or neglect.

The FAQ document is available to view either at the Welsh Government website or via the front page of the council's own website, and Members may find it useful to familiarise themselves with it as well as letting constituents know that it is available.

Cabinet Member Children's Social Services and Equalities

The Cabinet Member Children's Social Services and Equalities, stated that Members may be aware of the Invisible Walls project at Parc Prison which is doing excellent work with prisoners and their families. Delivered by the council alongside G4S, Barnado's, Gwalia and the Welsh Centre for Crime and Social Justice, the project aimed to reduce re-offending and intergenerational offending by strengthening family ties. As such family intervention workers at both the prison and in the local community provide offenders who are 12 months away from the end of a sentence with access to parenting programmes, advocacy services, family group conferencing, volunteering programmes and more. They also work with them for six months after release. The project received some official recognition recently after Parc Prison received the Investors In Families Award from Andrew Selous MP at the House of Lords. David Wright, the Family Support Services Manager for the Central Hub, was in attendance and the award was presented in recognition of work undertaken with prisoners and their families, with the Invisible Walls project playing a major role in this success.

She congratulated Mr Wright and everyone who is involved in the Invisible Walls project. It is undertaking important work and is helping to raise aspirations and improve lives throughout our local communities.

She also wished to mention that Bridgend Youth Council was organising its second youth democracy conference for 15th April here at the Civic Offices.

The conference aims to help educate young people about the meaning of democracy and the 'who's, why's and what's' of Bridgend County Borough Council. Year nine and ten pupils from local schools will be invited to attend and she was sure that the event is going to prove every bit as successful as last year's.

Cabinet Member Resources

The Cabinet Member Resources felt that Members would be pleased to hear that arrangements are being made for the official opening of an all-new £2.4million health and wellbeing centre in the borough next month.

Based at Celtic Court in Tremains Road, the centre has been designed and built by the council's Built Environment team to offer support for local residents who are experiencing issues with substance misuse. The opening will mark the culmination of a nine month project that has used Welsh Government funding to transform Celtic Court into a purpose-built base for a wide range of support services offered by the council's third sector partners. The centre will also offer bespoke modern healthcare provision. The official of the new facility is planned for 11 March and more news on this project would be available very soon.

The next pre-Council presentation has been provisionally scheduled as a briefing on the Welsh Language Standards. The new requirements are going to have a significant impact on how the council provides services in future, and it is important that all members are fully aware of the implications. This will be confirmed and put into Members calendars shortly. Members may also wish to note that the presentation prior to April's meeting of Council will be on the subject of digital transformation.

As regards regional events, the joint training with Swansea and Neath Port Talbot by Disability Wales will take place next Tuesday 23 February starting at 10am in Committee rooms one, two and three. This was a one off session delivering a training programme on behalf of Welsh Government to support understanding of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the Wales Specific Equality Duties and the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People and how they can be used to underpin a human rights based approach to service delivery. Places were limited, so it would be appreciated if Members could confirm their attendance by accepting or otherwise the appointment in order that the Democratic Services Section could track numbers.

In terms of Member Development sessions, an update session on the Social Services and Wellbeing Act will be scheduled for March, and an information session on carbon reduction for April. Dates and times were in the process of being agreed.

A number of elected members were experiencing difficulties streaming the recent webcasts and this may be due to laptops running an old version of internet explorer. If Members had not already done so, he asked if they could you take their laptop into Member Services, so that they could check for updates and resolve this issue. Members would need to log onto their machine and take into consideration that if some time has elapsed between updates, it may take a while for the downloads to complete.

The works to improve the disabled access in the Civic Suite were continuing and have to date been very unobtrusive with minimal disruption, however, he thanked Members and Officers you for their patience during this period.

Cabinet Member Regeneration and Economic Development

The Cabinet Member Regeneration and Economic Development advised that a new cycling-friendly café in Porthcawl was on the road to success with the help of a 'Kick-start' grant from Bridgend County Borough Council and UK Steel Enterprise. The Broom Wagon café on Station Hill opened only a few months ago with £1,000 grant-funding. Designed as a family-friendly stop that can cater for people making the most of the local cycle network, it has already attracted a wide range of clientele from both the local community and visitors to the seaside town. He felt this was a great example of why the Kick-start grant was put in place. It had given start-up or new businesses a helping hand to develop products and services, and as a keen cyclist himself, he thought this new business offers a fantastic feature in the newly regenerated Station Hill area. Anyone who would like to find out more about opportunities for starting up a new business in the area is advised to visit the Business Zone website or contact the council's economic development team for expert advice.

He also advised Members that the demolition works at the site of the former Rhiw multi-storey car park have been completed ahead of schedule. A small ceremony is being organised to formally mark the start of construction on the all-new car park and apartments, and some very visible progress would be seen in this respect over the coming months.

In addition to establishing a community of people living within the town centre who will help support trade, when it is completed, the new car park will incorporate a number of features including customer lifts, dedicated parking for drivers with children, disabled parking bays, a ground-level pedestrian crossing to give easy access to the nearby market and town centre shops, flexible parking payment options, modern security measures including CCTV coverage and improved lighting, new safety standards designed in partnership with South Wales Police and much more. All 248 spaces at the new car park will be aimed at shoppers and visitors, while residents of the 28 apartments will have separate parking, and there will be provision for up to 54 cycles as well, so this will be a very modern facility that will serve the town well.

Chief Executive Announcement's

The Chief Executive announced that he wished to keep Members abreast with latest developments in the efforts to establish the Capital Region City Deal that could bring in excess of one billion pounds worth of investment to the region over the next 10 to 15 years.

Significant progress has been made in recent months, with both the Welsh Government and UK Government making public statements of their intention to each commit 580 million pounds of additional funding to an investment fund for the region.

In the next few weeks, a Proposal or Offer Document will be finalised and presented to all ten council Leaders for approval.

This will set out a strategic statement, the proposed funding composition of the Deal, the proposed governance structure for the local authority partners and a series of asks and offers. Before the document is finalised, challenge sessions are due to be held with both the Welsh Government and UK Government to test the robustness and deliverability of our outline proposals.

Subject to these sessions and agreement of the proposals document by all parties, a formal announcement may be made in the week commencing 7 March, with the signing of a City Deal in principle taking place quickly thereafter.

Signing the deal proposal document would not commit BCBC to any expenditure. Over the next six to 18 months the full Business Case would then be developed and this will

lead to greater clarity over the anticipated costs and benefits for Bridgend County Borough.

Further reports will then be brought to Members, as appropriate, to set out the financial implications and how these would be met.

The Leader had already mentioned that we are adding a new YouTube channel to our social media activities.

He wished to advise Members that he would be participating in a social media debate next week, where he would be answering questions and gathering opinions on how we should measure the Council's delivery against its corporate priorities.

As Members were aware, we've developed three new priorities to help improve lives across the County Borough while dealing with significant financial savings. They are of course supporting a successful economy, helping people to be more self-reliant, and a smarter use of resources.

We found as part of last year's 'Shaping Bridgend's Future' consultation that there was widespread support for the priorities, so we now want residents to put forward ideas of their own on how the council should measure its success in achieving these three aims.

As Members would also know, some performance indicators that we are measured by can be a bit esoteric, counter intuitive or not immediately accessible or meaningful to people outside of the workings of councils. So it may be that people can come up with some useful measures for us. It will also serve to raise more awareness of the corporate plan.

For the budget consultation, our Facebook event was viewed 49,811 times while for Twitter the figure was 79,861. The recent waste event drew a Facebook audience of 8,446 and on Twitter it was 15,977, so we know that this is an effective way to communicate with our residents.

As part of this he confirmed that he would be talking to Facebook for a live Q&A on Tuesday 23 February between 6pm and 7:30pm.

He hoped Members would encourage their constituents to come and take part, and that they also advise them, that they can express their views by completing a short online survey which can be found on the consultation page of the Council's corporate website.

580. LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader reported that he was sure Members would be aware of the increasingly important role that social media is playing in how people choose to contact and interact with local councils. Bridgend County Borough Council already has well-used Facebook and Twitter pages in place, and with more than 10,000 followers they have proven to be especially useful when we are consulting over things like the budget or the recent proposals for changing how we handle waste in future. This was bolstered recently with the addition of a brand new YouTube channel where the authority can share videos about council and community news as well as information on local events. The channel already features a library of short films and these range from an early look at plans to bring the Jennings Building back into public use to footage taken at last month's annual Holocaust Memorial Day event.

The channel is expected to strengthen the council's growing social media presence and provide residents with a fresh perspective on the latest events and developments, so the Leader urged Members to take a look at this, and to let others know that it is available.

Social media also played an important role in the recent consultation on waste. This finished on 8th of February and attracted a total of 2,795 completed feedback forms which was a higher than usual response. A lot of publicity work was undertaken around the consultation, including media coverage, radio broadcasting and social media promotion. A Facebook and Twitter debate was held which attracted more than 100 questions and 15,000 views. The feedback was currently being analysed so that a report could be produced. More news would be available on this soon.

Finally, Bridgend County Borough, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea councils joined with ABMU Health Board recently to launch the 'Time To Change Wales' pledge and he had been pleased to lend his support. The pledge demonstrated that each organisation recognised the importance of supporting both employees and people who are struggling with mental health issues, and was accompanied by detailed action plans which outlined what practical steps was being taken to promote mental health and well-being for example, by offering counselling services for staff or courses and events designed to reduce stress. Mental health issues touch the lives of thousands of people across Bridgend County Borough. If Members would like to find out more, the time to change Wales website is well worth a visit he concluded.

581. WALES AUDIT OFFICE - CORPORATE ASSESSMENT REPORT ON BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL, JANUARY 2016

The Chief Executive presented a report, in order to make an introduction on the Auditor's General report, attached at Appendix 1 to the covering report.

He advised that this Corporate Assessment report was very positive and put the Council in a strong position compared to other councils in Wales. It had been commented on in a positive light by other neighbouring authorities. He added however, that there were areas within the report comprising the Appendix that could be improved upon in the future, and the Council were presently looking at ways to secure improvement in these areas.

Mr Barry, Wales Audit Office, referred Members to Appendix 1 and confirmed that the Wales Audit Office had since 2013 become involved in producing corporate assessments of local authorities, where in particular, issues such as good governance and performance being attained within local government were examined.

He advised that page 23 of the report highlighted the key messages and findings arising from the assessment, and he was pleased to inform Members that the Council was well placed to secure improvements that were required in the future, and that there were good systems and ways of working adopted within the Authority that could be built upon in the future. He was fairly confident of this, given that BCBC had a good track record and had shown both in the past and currently, that it had innovative ways of working. He also felt that BCBC were focusing on the right areas, and had plans in place or pending, to secure the further improvements that were required.

He concluded by stating that the Welsh Audit Office would do a follow-up assessment, in order to ensure that progress was being made against those areas within the report where it was considered that further progress could be made.

A Member referred to page 45 and paragraph 66 of the report, where it highlighted that the Authority could possibly be more proactive in its number of staff apprenticeships.

The Corporate Director Resources advised that the Corporate Management Board had been actively discussing just today its Workforce Strategy going forward in the future, and in line with this, how these fitted into key areas such as its Corporate Priorities, including succession planning. She advised that the Authority currently had 12 apprentice positions, and whilst it was looking to expand this number, it could only manoeuvre within existing budget and there was obviously financial restraints attached to the MTFs. She added that the Council were looking at initiatives such as the SEWSCAP framework for the 21st Century School Programme, as well as looking at partnerships with other organisations to introduce apprenticeships, funded from the Council's Capital Programme.

A Member referred to page 43 of the report and paragraph 58 where SOCITM had assessed the Council's website in 2014 as 1 star out of a possible maximum of 4 stars, and she asked if any improvement had been made since the carrying out of this assessment.

The Corporate Director Resources explained that this assessment was undertaken annually, and whilst she thought that this rating had not yet been improved upon in 2015-16, she expected the website to be considerably improved as part of the Council's Transformation Programme by the end of 2016-17.

A Member considered that the Authority should look to better develop key areas such as those relating to Human Resources (HR) and ICT to ensure 'best practice' is achieved in these areas, as they provided some of the more key functions of the Council, particularly in readiness for Local Government Reorganisation.

The representative from the Wales Audit Office confirmed that a considerable number of Welsh local authorities were not performing to full capacity in these work areas, largely due to local government cuts which had resulted in reduced workforces. These were also fairly specialist areas, and therefore, there was also a problem with recruitment and retention of employees in HR and ICT, which compounded the problem.

A Member noted from page 23 of the report, that though the Local Service Board (LSB) had been in-being since 2009, there was scope for more progress to be made by this Board in terms of its development.

The Chief Executive confirmed that steps were in place to form a Public Service Board, where development plans in respect of further utilising the LSB would be examined and subsequently progressed. He added that both the LSB and the PSB had broad and long term ambitions, and that within the longer term future, further work would be progressed and evidenced by these bodies. The representative from the Wales Audit Office added that they would work with the Council to develop the role of collaborations such as the LSB, and to evaluate its future achievements and outcomes.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the Corporate Assessment Report produced by the Wales Audit Office.

582. **FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT POLICY AND EARLY RETIREMENT ILL HEALTH RETIREMENT AND REDUNDANCY POLICY**

The Corporate Director Resources submitted a report, detailing a small number of proposed changes to the Flexible Retirement, Ill Health Retirement and Redundancy Policy, and recommended the adoption of the revised policies, included within the suggested attached documents shown at Appendices 1 and 2 of the report, respectively. She explained that some amendments were required to the above, in order to reflect certain changes in respect of pension regulations. These changes were reflected in paragraphs 4.2 of the report.

The Corporate Director Resources confirmed that Trade Unions had been consulted on the proposed amended policies, and whilst GMB and Unite had confirmed their agreement to the changes, Unison had not to date replied on these.

She concluded her submission by advising that there were no financial implications as a result of the changes that had been made.

A Member referred to page 70 of the report and paragraph 12.7 entitled 'Re-engagement of employees made redundant', whereby in instances of termination under Scheme B, C and D employees will be prevented from being re-engaged until the expiration of a period equivalent to the discretionary element of the redundancy payment. He asked if employees made redundant were made aware of this provision when facing redundancy.

The Corporate Director Resources confirmed that they were.

The Member asked a follow-up question namely, if employees left the Authority without pension or redundancy entitlements, was there any discretion for them to return to the Authority in a consultancy role.

The Corporate Director Resources advised that the Authority would not usually agree with employees returning in a consultancy role, in terms of most different job positions within the Council.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the revised Flexible Retirement and Early Retirement, Ill Health Retirement and Redundancy Policy as appended to the report.

583. DISCRETIONS WITHIN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME

The Corporate Director Resources submitted a report, detailing a number of discretions within the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), which have resulted in a draft policy statement being compiled, setting out the general position of the Council in respect to each one, which required Council approval prior to implementation.

The report gave some background information, which included confirmation that the Local Government Pension Scheme contains many areas where the employer, or the Administering Authority, can or must exercise a discretion. Some of these were already covered by existing policies, however, the Council is required to document the position on the remaining mandatory discretions together with any optional discretions it wishes to include. She pointed out to Members, that attached at Appendix A to the report was the draft Discretions Policy, and should this be approved by Council, the effective date of the change(s) will be one month following the publication of the policy statement.

She added that where a discretion has not already been exercised, consideration had to be given to each mandatory and optional discretion and a recommendation put in the form of the policy statement.

The Corporate Director Resources confirmed that Trade Union colleagues had been consulted on the policy, and whilst GMB and Unite had confirmed their agreement to the proposals, Unison had not yet replied.

She advised that the decision to award additional pension benefits in only very exceptional circumstances was taken with financial considerations in mind, and that additional pension awards created further strain on the Pension Fund.

She added that the decision not to extend the twelve month period for incoming transfers to the LGPS takes into account the potential increased cost to the Pension Fund of career progression and longevity factors to a final salary scheme.

She culminated her submission by further adding that the decision to review cases where forfeiture of pension benefits in some form is possibly appropriate, is to ensure that the Council has the option to make good any financial losses caused by the member.

A Member referred to page 78 of the report and paragraph 3.5, where reference was made to the fact that if a member was convicted of a relevant offence, his former employing authority may apply to the Secretary of State who may issue a forfeiture certificate. She asked what Secretary of State this was.

The Corporate Director Resources confirmed that this was the Local Government Secretary of State in Whitehall.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the Policy Statement on Discretions in the Local Government Pension Scheme, as detailed in the report.

584. **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2016/17**

The Cabinet Member Resources presented a report, recommending that Council were being asked to consider the content of the report on the Authority's Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2016/17.

He advised that Councillors were accustomed to this report being provided annually since 2012, and also receiving interim updates when necessary and this may be so this year, as at the time of writing the report, national negotiations were continuing, for example, Chief Executives, JNC, NJC and Youth and Community Workers.

He highlighted for Council the significant changes since it last received a report on the Pay Policy Statement, ie that:-

- A nationally negotiated pay rise has not yet been agreed for NJC Officers with Unison and Unite rejecting the current offer whilst GMB have accepted it.
- However, in order that the Council is compliant with the introduction of the National Minimum Wage, national pay negotiations have led to an agreement for a temporary uplift to the NJC spinal column points 6,7 and 8, pending the conclusion of the pay negotiations. Details were provided at 4.3 of the report.

- A recent Welsh Government amendment to the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (Wales) Regulations 2006, effective from 1 July 2014 has introduced a new requirement.

“Welsh Government recommends that Council should be offered the opportunity to vote before severance packages of £100,00 and above are approved for staff leaving the organisation. However, Members must be aware of the statutory or contractual entitlements due to an employee and the consequences of non-approval by Council which may allow an employee to claim damages for breach of contract.”

He recommended that Council accepted the report and the content of the Pay Policy Statement.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That Council approved the updated Pay Policy Statement as attached at Appendix A to the report.
 - (2) That Council also approved the proposals outlined in Paragraph 4.3 and 4.6 of the report.

585. **CONSULTATION ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) DRAFT BILL**

The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer, submitted a report that provided Members with information to enable a response to be drafted for the consultation on the Local Government (Wales) Draft Bill.

In terms of background information, he confirmed that the Minister’s introduction to the draft Bill was attached at Appendix A to the report, and that responses to the consultation could be made on the form provided for Members at Appendix B to the report. He had provided Members with a briefing in advance of the meeting (in the form of a Presentation) on the implications of the draft Bill, prior to the consideration of the report, as well as tabling proposed draft responses from Members as a result of that briefing.

The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer, stated that Members would note that the contents of the report provided a broad overview of the draft Bill, rather than an in-depth view. He added that there were questions asked within the consultation on matters that were not contained within the draft Bill, and the report advised on those matters.

He confirmed that the remainder of the report provided an overview of the draft Bill, and reminded Council that the consultation questions were outlined in Appendix A to the report.

He then advised that the draft Bill covered the following areas, and these specific areas were both covered and elaborated upon in the report:-

- Part 1 – Local Government areas and County Councils
- Part 2 – General Power of Competence
- Part 3 – Dealing with promoting access to Local Government
- Part 4 – Dealing with the functions of County Councils and Members
- Part 5 – Providing for the improvement of governance
- Part 6 – Providing for the review of Community Council arrangements
- Part 7 – Dealing with workforce matters

- Part 8 – The interpretation section

A Member referred to Part 7 of the Bill, in relation to workforce matters and the setting up of a Public Services Staff Commission and recruitment and retention of staff issues, and questioned clarification of the role of the Commission and its legislative position. He questioned whether this was an example of micro management.

The Leader referred to a response made in respect of the type of question raised by the Member as outlined above as part of the consultation as follows, (ie under Part 7 of the draft Bill), as follows:-

“The WLGA has previously supported the establishment of a Public Service Staff Commission (PSSC) to specifically assist with the development of guidance to help Councils manage their workforces as part of any local government re-organisation. Section 178 does repeal the role of the PSSC in 2021 to reflect that the PSSC is specifically to assist with local government reorganisation planned for 2020.

The WLGA would not wish to see a statutory PSSC set up if there is no local government re-organisation. Therefore the WLGA would wish to see that that the establishment of the statutory PSSC and its role is predicated on and explicitly linked to local government re-organisation. There would need to be clarity and a renewed agreement on the matter of any continuation of a non-statutory PSSC if no local government re-organisation should take place.”

A Member also felt that power in terms of the governance of bodies such as the Central South Consortium for Education, should as part of the Bill proposals be the responsibility of BCBC as local authority, as powers regarding schools and proposals for their improvement should lie with the local authority, rather than directly through the arm of an outside organisation as part of a collaboration agreement. He felt that this should be considered in conjunction with Local Government Re-organisation proposals (LGR), and moved a motion to this effect which was duly seconded.

Members then proceeded to have an electronic vote on this amendment, which fell by 31 votes to 9, with 1 abstention.

The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer advised that any individual views expressed by Members, regarding the consultation on the Local Government (Wales) Draft Bill, could be sent directly to Welsh Government for their consideration.

The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer then responded to a number of questions raised by Members, following which it was

RESOLVED: That Council determined its response to the consultation as outlined in the report and the paper tabled at the meeting, together with the recommended amendments suggested to the points made in respect of the tabled paper.

586. **DEBATE ON THE IMPACT AND CAUSES OF REDUNDANCIES WITHIN THE STEEL INDUSTRY**

The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer submitted a report, to inform the debate on the impact and causes of recent announcements of redundancies within the steel industry. The report also provided

information on what are thought to be the main causes of the present situation within the domestic steel industry, for example:

- Energy costs
- Business rates
- Strength of Sterling
- Cheap imports particularly from China
- Over-supply

The report gave some background information, then gave a resume of each of the above problems, and how they were impacting in a detrimental way on the steel industry.

The remainder of the report, outlined responses received in relation to the impact of the problems on the Steel Industry, including from the Business Minister (Westminster) and Welsh Government.

The report finally advised that the Leader on behalf of the Authority issued a press conference on 22 January this year, calling for swift action on the national steel crisis, and he had also written to the Prime Minister and the First Minister in the Welsh Assembly.

Members debated the report, following which the following motion was made, which was duly seconded and carried unanimously:-

“That Council notes with deep concern the recent announcements by Tata Steel of the loss of jobs across South Wales and across the UK steel industry.

The Council urges Tata Steel the trade unions, Welsh and UK Government and the European Union to work together to help build a sustainable future for the steel industry in Wales and the UK.

The Council believes that all levels of Government should support the UK steel industry, not only as a source of tens of thousands of jobs, but also given its role as a foundation industry of key strategic importance to the wider and local economy.

The Council recognises that a sharp slowdown in the Chinese economy has sapped domestic demand, and that Chinese source steel is sold on the world market at low prices. Equally, the cost of energy and European rules on carbon emissions makes the UK a challenging climate in which to produce steel.

The Council are concerned that the impact on the steel industry if China was to be granted Market Economy Status, would result in the European Union, would be unable to impose tariffs on goods from China, if it was found that they had been dumped at below market prices and this would result in the increase in Chinese imports of steel into the European Union.

The Council, therefore, resolves to support the ‘Charter for Sustainable British Steel’ as promoted by the ‘UK Steel’ organisation. The Council also supports the proposals of UK Steel and Community regarding the EU Emissions Trading System proposals, which call for the steel sector to be helped to decarbonise in a way that ensures its future and the many thousands of valuable jobs it provides.”

This motion was supplemented as follows, and Members agreed unanimously to this being added to the above motion:-

“That BCBC contact local MEP’s, in order to utilise trade defence instruments available, so as to prohibit the dumping of Chinese steel below cost price in the UK”

RESOLVED: That Council debated the issue and proposed the above Notice of Motion (as supplemented) as a response to Central and Welsh Government on the Steel Industry crisis.

587. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION FOR THE LEADER/MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Question from Councillor RC Jones for the Deputy Leader:

‘How many parents in BCBC have registered to home school their children and how many children are currently being home schooled? What action is the Authority taking to support parents who choose to educate their children at home?’

Response from the Deputy Leader to Councillor RC Jones

Background

“Current data shows that Bridgend County Borough Council has 91 pupils known to be home educated. It should be noted that this database is fluid and can change daily, as some pupils return to school or move and others de register. Also, we may not be aware of all families whose children are home educated as there is no requirement in law to inform the Local Authority if the children have not been educated through the state system.

Data from the last 3 years shows that Elective Home Education figures are rising. In July 2013, 34 pupils were known to the Local Authority compared with 76 pupils in July 2015. This is due to our robust attempts to ensure EHE children do engage with us and our significant efforts to engage with every family who elects to home educate.

Since 2013, a partnership has been established with parent representatives of the Bridgend Elective Home Education community which has proved to be successful. Due to this partnership the Local Council is in a better position to understand elective home education, share good practice and develop a working relationship built on trust.

Since 2013 we have also worked closely with other Local Authorities to establish a Professional Learning Community. Currently, the consortium elective home education link workers meet termly to discuss trends in data; policy matters; current issues; cross border de registrations and to share ideas. This is an excellent opportunity to share experiences and best practice.

Within the Welsh Government’s Consultation Summary of Responses: Registering and Monitoring Home-based Education (2013), Bridgend Local Authority was recognised as working effectively with it’s home educating community and suggested that this example of good practice should be emulated by other authorities across Wales.

In 2015, the Elective Home Education Policy was revised to reflect the need to ‘develop effective relationships’ as highlighted in the WG circular No 47/2006 (Inclusion and Pupil Support). Cabinet approved the updated policy in April 2015.

A teacher is employed by Inclusion Services as an Elective Home Education Link worker to work with families that decide to electively home educate. The Link worker contacts

families to ensure they feel supported whilst home educating and to ensure that children do receive an education.

Links with other agencies such as health, inclusion, early help and Safeguarding are established and maintained in order to increase awareness of the law, Welsh Government Guidance and also to ensure wherever possible to full range of needs of these children are met.

Current Law

Parents are not legally required to register with the Local Authority; it is a legal choice to educate your child at home. It is the schools not the parent's responsibility to inform the Local Authority of a de registration and we work closely with our school through the fair access panel to ensure that all our schools advise us when there is a decision to home educate.

Parents can refuse to meet with the Local Authority and can opt to just provide a report outlining the education provided to their child.

The Welsh Government guidelines suggest that the Local Authority make contact with parents on an annual basis.

Considerations

Parents might not be choosing to home educate for the right reasons, e.g., in some cases opt to home educate, sometimes because of behaviour issues in school, occasionally because of a difference of opinion between school and parents or for a multitude of different reasons. The young people can then become disengaged and not in education employment or training (NEET) despite being recorded as Elective Home Education.

A few home educated pupils have difficulty attending mainstream school and have been de registered whilst undergoing a diagnosis for example for Autistic Spectrum Disorder and we work intensively with those parents to try and reassure them that we can meet their children's educational and support needs.

Next Steps

Continue to maintain a database of those elective home educated children and young people known to the Local Authority and link with the Central Pupil Database to ensure all de registrations are captured.

On-going work to develop a systematic, confidential but accessible Information Technology system of recording contact and other related matters.

Ensure that all schools, including independent schools are reminded of the protocol and procedure when families de-register.

Continue to provide support and advice to Bridgend families when home educating, or thinking about home education in order to continue to develop a trusting relationship built on mutual respect.

Supplementary question from Councillor RC Jones for the Deputy Leader

“In engaging with the parents of Children who are being home educated, does this authority positively encourage participation in sports activities as part of the home education process?”

Response from the Deputy Leader to Councillor RC Jones

‘The Authority does advocate support between education and physical activity for children and parents are encouraged to undertake this as part of the home education process. He added that he would provide further details to Members regarding this outside of the meeting’

Supplementary question from Councillor DBF White to the Deputy Leader

“The Member referred to the point made in the first response above, namely, that parents can refuse to meet with the Local Authority and can opt to just provide a report outlining the education provided to their child. He asked if this report was voluntary or mandatory”

Response from the Deputy Leader to Councillor DBF White

‘The report was mandatory’

Supplementary question from Councillor CA Green to the Deputy Leader

“Do the Education Authority examine the reasons why parents elect to educate their children at home, as opposed to sending them to school to be educated and is information to this effect collated and recorded”

Response from the Deputy Leader to Councillor CA Green

‘This data is both retained and analysed, and the Education Authority give as much support and guidance as they can to parents who choose to educate their children at home. He would arrange for this data to be sent to all Members’

588. URGENT ITEMS

None

589. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

The report relating to the following item was not for publication as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.

Following the application of the public interest test, Council resolved pursuant to the Act to consider this item in private, and excluded from the meeting the press and public during such consideration.

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2016

Minute No

Summary of Item

Application for VER

590. APPLICATION FOR VER

The meeting closed at 6.10 pm