

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN REMOTELY VIA SKYPE FOR BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2020 AT 15:00

Present

Councillor KJ Watts – Chairperson

S Aspey	SE Baldwin	TH Beedle	JPD Blundell
NA Burnett	MC Clarke	N Clarke	RJ Collins
HJ David	P Davies	PA Davies	SK Dendy
DK Edwards	J Gebbie	T Giffard	RM Granville
CA Green	DG Howells	A Hussain	RM James
B Jones	M Jones	MJ Kearn	DRW Lewis
JE Lewis	JR McCarthy	D Patel	RL Penhale-Thomas
AA Pucella	KL Rowlands	B Sedgebeer	RMI Shaw
CE Smith	SG Smith	JC Spanswick	RME Stirman
G Thomas	T Thomas	E Venables	SR Vidal
MC Voisey	LM Walters	CA Webster	DBF White
PJ White	A Williams	AJ Williams	HM Williams
JE Williams	RE Young		

Apologies for Absence

JC Radcliffe and JH Tildesley MBE

Officers:

Deborah Exton	Interim Deputy Head of Finance
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Gill Lewis	Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Kevin Stephens	Democratic Services Assistant
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

460. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S Baldwin declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 6 and withdrew from the meeting when this report/presentation was considered.

461. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of Council dated 16 September 2020, be approved as a true and accurate record, subject to the following:

1. That Council noted that the declaration of personal interest made by the Mayor in respect of the City Deal item, was made subsequent to the meeting and not at the meeting itself.
2. That it be further noted that the Mayor had made an apology at the Annual meeting of Council, in that he confirmed that he was wrong to announce that a Conservative Councillor had made an incorrect statement on an item at the meeting of Council on 16 September 2020, when it could have in fact, been any

Councillor in attendance at the meeting, regardless of which political group they were a member of.

462. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR

Prior to going into his formal announcements, the Mayor felt that it was incumbent to state to those that were in the Member briefing immediately prior to Council, that as both Mayor and the partner of Councillor J Williams, that this Council collectively acknowledges her bravery in providing an example to us all in the face of great adversity and in vocalising the situation that faces not only herself, but so many other individuals in the face of the pandemic.

The Mayor following this, welcomed all those present to his first Ordinary Council meeting since being invested as Mayor. He hoped that all Members and Officers and their families were keeping safe and well.

He announced that despite these unusual times, he had the pleasure of carrying out his first official engagement, albeit virtually. He had spoken to Mr. Laurence Brophy of Pencoed who at 88 cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats and back again to raise over £5,000 for the homeless charity Llamau. Not only did Laurence complete this amazing journey, he did it with no support team and slept rough along the way to better understand the challenges of being homeless and feeling vulnerable. Laurence is already planning his next challenge which is possibly going to be the three peaks challenge.

The Mayor added that it was very enlightening to speak to someone who has so much enthusiasm, drive and desire to help those less fortunate than himself. He had subsequently written to Laurence and expressed the Council's admiration and support for his future endeavours.

As he had advised in his Mayoral acceptance speech, the charities that the Mayor would be supporting during his term of office, are Parkinson's UK and the Epilepsy Society. He was looking at the feasibility of holding some virtual fundraising events and will of course update those present, with any future details. In the meantime he added, donations could be made via the Mayor's Just Giving account. The link for this could be found on the BCBC Mayoral webpage.

463. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader announced that earlier this week, Welsh Government confirmed that the whole of Wales is to enter a two-week 'fire-break' period of lockdown that will begin on Friday 23 October, and end on Monday 9 November.

With as many as 2,500 people contracting coronavirus every day in Wales, the First Minister confirmed the action as being essential to turn this around, and to prevent hospitals and critical care units from becoming overwhelmed in the weeks and months ahead.

The move will also support efforts to limit restrictions around the forthcoming Christmas and New Year periods, and follows efforts by Welsh Government to keep Wales safe by preventing people travelling to Wales from coronavirus 'hot spots' in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The fire-break will impose a number of restrictions upon households and businesses throughout Wales throughout its duration.

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People will need to stay at home, and also work from home wherever possible.

People can only go out for essential reasons, e.g. to buy food or pick up a prescription medicine, and can also leave home to exercise either alone, with members of your household or with a carer.

Adults living alone or single parents will be able to join with one other household for support, but visits to other households or meeting with people you do not live with, either indoors or outdoors, will not be possible.

Outdoor gatherings, including organised activities such as Halloween or Bonfire Night, will not be able to take place.

However, an exception will be made for small-scale Remembrance Sunday events that have already been organised.

While community centres, libraries and recycling centres will all need to close, local parks, playgrounds and outdoor gyms can remain open.

As regards the impact upon local schools, primary and special schools will re-open as normal after the October half-term holiday, and secondary schools will re-open for children in years seven and eight.

Pupils will be able to attend school to take exams, but other children will need to continue with their learning from home for an extra week.

All non-food retail and hospitality businesses, close contact services, and events and tourism businesses are required to close during the lockdown.

This will include hairdressers, beauticians, hotels, cafes, restaurants and pubs, but take-away and delivery services will still be able to operate.

Health and NHS services will continue to operate, and where indoor public spaces remain open, face coverings must be worn, including on public transport and in taxis.

To support businesses during the lockdown fortnight, Welsh Government has announced a new £300m fund.

Every business covered by the small business rates relief will receive a £1,000 payment, while all small and medium-sized retail, leisure and hospitality businesses that have to close will receive a one-off payment of up to £5,000.

A recently announced fund to help businesses develop in the longer term is being increased from £80m to £100m, with the additional £20m ring-fenced to support tourism and hospitality businesses.

Additional discretionary grants and support will also be available, and businesses will be able to access the existing Job Retention Scheme or the newly expanded Job Support Scheme.

UK Government is also continuing to make wage-support schemes available.

Together with our partners, the Council is making preparations for the start of the fire-break, and to ensure that we can continue to prioritise vulnerable people and provide vital services.

Throughout this, the Welsh Government's rationale for instigating the fire-break remains very clear.

Nobody wants to enter into another lock-down situation, but all across Wales, the coronavirus pandemic is getting worse, not better. People are dying, and the situation needs to be taken far more seriously across all levels of the community.

The fire-break is necessary to prevent our hospitals and essential services from becoming overwhelmed by coronavirus cases this autumn and winter.

The worsening situation has meant that the Ysbyty'r Seren field hospital on Bridgend industrial estate has already started accepting patients from the Royal Glamorgan, Prince Charles and Princess of Wales hospitals.

As Members were aware, the field hospitals are designed to ease the strain upon our main facilities, and to ensure that they can continue to focus upon patients who require more specialist care.

Everyone needed to play their part, to support these efforts in order to protect ourselves, our friend and families, and our communities.

As community leaders, the Leader knew all members will support these efforts, and will encourage constituents to abide by the lockdown rules.

To help people better understand this, Welsh Government has published a highly-detailed series of frequently asked questions on their website.

As well as providing a broad context for why the fire-break is necessary, it also supplies answers and confirms details around a wide range of topics, and is a useful resource in the event you receive any enquiries.

Following the end of the fire-break, Welsh Government will be announcing a new set of national rules that we anticipate will cover how people can meet, how the public sector and businesses can operate, and more.

Further details would be forthcoming as they become known, but with hospital admissions rising rapidly, critical units already full and a real risk of the NHS becoming overwhelmed, it is clear that action must be taken now, and that we must all act together in order to make it work and to save lives.

464. PRESENTATION BY VALLEYS TO COAST & PROGRAMME OF FUTURE PRESENTATIONS TO COUNCIL

The Chief Executive submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to introduce a presentation to Council from Valleys To Coast and to inform Members of the programme of future presentations to Council.

The Mayor introduced to the meeting Jo Oak, Chief Executive of V2c together with colleagues to give a presentation on the work of V2c and how they integrate with partners such as BCBC and others.

The Chief Executive of V2c, thanked Members for the opportunity to come and speak with them today and hoped this will be the start of BCBC and V2c forging stronger relationships, not just at a senior level but across all parts of its organisations.

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She advised that she had been in conversation with the Chief Executive of the Council, in order to develop an understanding of the pressures, priorities and common goals we share as organisations and she felt confident that the levels of collaboration and engagement would be increased in the future, in order to reap the benefits of a fresh approach, a fresh start.

The Chief Executive V2c stated, that just like the local authority, the Housing Association were planning for a future it did not foresee at the beginning of this year. Now more than ever collaborative working together was required, in order to recognise the areas where we can add value, the areas where we can signpost people to others who can too, and find ways to empower ourselves and others to help us with the transformation, due to the untimely pandemic.

V2c saw now as the right time for that organisation and the Council to work closer together and be seen as a partner of choice by BCBC. She did not want V2c to be known as just a housing association, but also to be recognised for building homes and communities too.

The relationship between the two, was starting now from a position of strength, though she acknowledged that there is more that could be achieved to be more closely joined-up and more that could be done, to ensure that we make ourselves part of the conversations and move towards being planned and not reactive in their responses.

The Chief Executive of V2c stated, that as an organisation they were listening, learning and responding and there was a willingness to improve and grow. Of equal importance, there was an enthusiasm and desire to do this too. Whilst she conceded that V2c were not fully where they wanted to be yet with the organisation being no means perfect, she had been encouraged by the collective response from her colleagues to this difficult year and she felt, that V2c were coming into this second phase of the pandemic, much stronger than they had started it.

She advised that she, together with colleagues, wanted to talk through the key areas where it was felt with BCBC it could work together to both add value and also demonstrate some developing areas, where progress was being made.

She wished to take a look back at the last year, before starting to talk about the journey forward. V2c had prepared an annual review video that would reflect the work undertaken over the last year to 18 months. This would be forwarded to all Members in due course

The Chief Executive, V2c confirmed that despite the curve-ball of the pandemic, it had been a positive year and progress has been made as data and statistics reflected in some of her presentation slides.

The pandemic had, however, changed the situation for everyone, and given us all a different lens through which to view the future. It had also forced individuals to accept a need for accelerated transformation and like BCBC, it had changed the priorities of V2c, in ways we could not have imagined only as far back as February this year.

Unprecedented was a word few of us had ever used before this year but none of us have been faced with a threat like this before, she added

Learning as matters progressed, V2c ensured that the organisation maintained open communications with customers, adopting a traffic light system to inform them of the status of services, using its website, social media, texts and regular letters to keep tenants informed and up to date.

Since last July the Chief Executive of V2c confirmed that within the organisation V2c had challenges too, with a number of staff going onto the furlough scheme while its core services were shut down and they completed emergencies only. Despite the restrictions V2c were able to carry out over 3,000 emergency repairs, keeping both our customers and their homes safe.

There were lessons learned from this, however, and V2c had listened to feedback it had received and put in place the start of a number of changes that will ensure that the housing association in the future, makes connective links with not only BCBC, but other partners to ensure that there is a joint response to any subsequent wave.

She explained that on 5 October 2020, V2c's repairs and maintenance teams returned to full service and started working through outstanding repairs that had arisen since covid-19. She felt the organisation had already made significant progress, in clearing many of these and V2c were now accepting new repair requests through its Hub.

In terms of its Lettings and Housing services, V2c were now letting properties as normal and working with BCBC, to let homes as and when they become available. They were also advertising properties on HomeHunt.

Services such as "money matters" were being conducted remotely over the phone with home visits only happening if there was an urgent need.

In terms of new ways of working in the 'New Norm', the Chief Executive of V2c advised, that internally the organisation had worked hard to comply with both the guidance from Welsh Government and Public Health Wales. V2c were covid compliant and had robust risk assessments in place to safeguard both colleagues and customers alike. V2c were now conducting 'track and trace' at the time of appointment and on the doorstep. It would also cancel and re-book appointments, if it was deemed not safe, to conduct them first time around.

This adjustment was being seen as normal custom and practice going forward, as it was not known how long operations would need to be conducted this way. This way of working, was hopefully reflecting that V2c was doing all it could do, in order to show colleagues and customers that they were keeping them safe and that the organisation also had confidence in the 'new normal'.

The Chief Executive V2c, then shared a few statistics with Members, as follows:-

- £1.26m of value had been generated for customers from V2c's Money Matters team;
- V2c had rented 5,888 homes in Bridgend;
- V2c had taken 80,361 phone calls through its Hub;
- 81.82% of V2c's customers were satisfied with its performance;
- V2c had committed £6.9m to planned repairs and improvements;
- V2c had built 33 new properties

Now V2c had made progress in establishing new ways of working, the Chief Executive confirmed that she wanted to dedicate the housing association to finding new ways of working together with BCBC, as the local authority were the democratic representative for all communities that comprised the BCB and very much part of the 'community voice'. Hopefully, those present had seen V2c's new Members' enquiry process which should result in it being easier to contact a representative of the organisation. Also, Members would, if they hadn't already, receive an invitation to walk around our communities and jointly understand the issues (with representatives from V2c).

In terms of direct contact with customers, the Chief Executive of V2c said she was committed to:

1. Staying in touch with those who needed them most, from rent calls to welfare calls. Contacting sheltered customers weekly. Pro-active work was ongoing with the money matters team, with there being over 3,000 welfare calls with referrals to food banks, money advice and sometimes, just for the purpose of having a conversation with tenants to see how they are and how they are coping during the coronavirus.
- 2. Understanding how issues have changed and looking to engage with local Councillors and other partners as community needs were changing. Work had been ongoing with both Heol-y-Cyw and Wildmill local Members to this end.
3. With the view to looking after the homeless, V2c had been involved in 'Rapid rehousing', ie working with BCBC to provide homes for people in temporary accommodation. This was co-produced with BCBC and other key stakeholders/partner organisations and had been a largely successful venture.
4. No evictions or any other legal action had been taken against tenants during the pandemic, added the Chief Executive of V2c. Partnerships were also being developed, with the view of connecting services to the customers who needed it most.

V2c had also entered into a supportive partnership with The Wallich. Not only would they be its company charity for the next 18 months, but V2c would also be conducting knowledge exchanges with them, with the view to improving understanding of how an assurance could be made, whereby people don't find themselves back on the streets without a home.

V2c were also putting steps in place, so that the right homes in the right places could be found for tenants. This was being achieved through development and asset management strategies and understanding and meeting local need.

The Chief Executive of V2c added it was also about working with the right partners to achieve its aims and objectives, for example with BCBC and housing developers in order to establish the size and type of developments that were needed throughout different locations within the County Borough.

V2c were also looking to provide affordable and cheap to run homes, whilst thinking about de-carbonisation, asset investment or de-investment.

The Chief Executive of V2c further added, that the housing association had split its goals and what it wished to achieve and by when, into the short medium and long term as part of its future Planning Strategy, recognising therefore, that all it wished to aspire to, could not be achieved overnight.

V2c also wished to ensure that its customers were kept safe and happy, by putting them at the heart of what they done. It also wished to maintain making homes safe and energy efficient, as well as maximising the opportunity to grow to meet the required needs.

V2c also wanted to keep its tenants safe and happy, by building a high performing organisation through creating talented and diverse teams and being a partner of choice, by building thriving and connected communities.

The Chief Executive of V2c was fully aware that BCBC's vision was to be an organisation that is united and working together, ie "Being one Council working together to improve lives". As a key partner V2c wanted to replicate that approach.

She added that:

- **BCBC wants to help people and communities become more healthy and resilient -**
V2c valued those things too and want to bring back that sense of community, many people say has been missing. Allow communities to stand on their own two feet and take back some pride and initiative that may have been lost.
- **BCBC want to support a successful and sustainable economy**
V2c also had that high on its agenda and were looking to focus on the foundational economy, building low-energy homes and creating job opportunities locally too,
- **BCBC want to use its resources more wisely**
V2c believed that working together the two bodies can reduce duplication and make the most of the resources we have.

The Chief Executive of V2c then responded to a questions from Members relating to their local areas, following which, it was

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That Members noted the presentation by the Chief Executive and Director of Development of Valleys To Coast.
 - (2) That Members noted the programme of future presentations to Council as outlined at paragraph 3.3 of the report.

465. **ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20**

The Chief Executive submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to present the Council's Annual Report 2019-20 (at Appendix A) for Council to consider and approve.

The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change stated that, in accordance with the Shared Purpose Shared Future statutory guidance (SPSF: 2) for the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, individual public bodies must annually review the progress of their well-being objectives and publish a report to assess the extent to which these objectives contribute to the 7 wellbeing goals in accordance with the sustainable development principal.

Under section 15 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and in accordance with the related statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Government, the authority must also publish its assessment of performance for the previous financial year before 31 October.

- II She explained, that in March 2019, the Council published its Corporate Plan 2018-22, revised 2019-20. The Plan sets out its vision, which is, always to act as 'One Council working together to improve lives', and its three well-being objectives. The Plan also reiterates the well-being objectives for 2019-20.

The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, stated that the Plan defined 41 commitments to deliver the three well-being objectives and set out 56 outcome focused indicators to measure the progress for the financial year.

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Overall, the Council performed very well in 2019-20, she advised. Of the 41 commitments 34 (82.9%) were completed successfully with 3 (7.3%) achieving most of their milestones and 4 (9.8%) missing most of their milestones. There were justifiable reasons why some targets were missed.

Of the 56 indicators identified for the Corporate Plan, 52 can be compared against their target: 35 (67.3%) met their target, 9 (17.3%) were off target by less than 10% and 8 (15.4%) missed the target by more than 10%. Detailed information about the Council's performance was included in Appendix A to the report.

The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, explained further, that due to Covid-19, Welsh Government confirmed that there would be no data collection of Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) for 2019-20 therefore no analysis has been undertaken in relation to these indicators.

A summary of funding and financial performance for the year, regulators' findings and themes that underpin the Council's work were also set out in the report, which due to the pandemic had looked forward as well as back, something which had not been custom and practice for the Annual Report, in the past.

A Member referred to page 11 of the Annual Report and the Aim to create successful town centres. He noted the number of visitors to the town centre of Bridgend in terms of its target of 7.2m for 2019/20 had not been achieved and by quite some margin. He further noted whereby, that the footfall in Porthcawl town had actually increased from 2018/19. He asked for some clarification why this was the case, particularly given that GFK had increased in all areas of the UK.

The Leader and the Chief Executive in turn, advised that they would look at the relevant data outside of the meeting and update the Member accordingly with the reasons for this.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the Annual Report 2019-20 (at Appendix A to the report).

466. CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE - QUARTER 2 2020-21

The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change presented a report, the purpose of which, was to:

- comply with the requirement of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) 'The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities' (2017 edition).
- provide an update of the Capital Programme for the period 1 April to 30 September 2020 (Appendix A to the report);
- seek approval for a revised capital programme for 2020-21 to 2029-30 (Appendix B);
- note the projected Prudential and Other Indicators for 2020-21 (Appendix C)

She reminded Members, that on 26 February 2020, Council approved a capital programme covering the period 2020-21 to 2029-30 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The capital programme was last updated and approved by Members on 22 July 2020. This report provided an update on the following areas:

- Capital Programme 2020-21 Quarter 2 update;
- Capital Programme 2020-21 Onwards;
- Prudential and Other Indicators;
- Capital Strategy monitoring

Turning to the Capital Programme, the Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, referred to paragraph 4.1 of the report. This section of the report provided Members with an update on the Council's capital programme for 2020-21 since the budget was last approved by Council and incorporates any new schemes and grant approvals. The revised programme for 2020-21 currently totals £53.541 million, of which £27.850 million is met from Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) resources, including capital receipts and revenue contributions from earmarked reserves, with the remaining £25.691 million coming from external resources, including General Capital Grant.

Table 1 in this section of the report, showed the capital programme for each Directorate from the July 2020 (Quarter 1) approved Council position to quarter 2.

Table 2, then summarised the current funding assumptions for the capital programme for 2020-21. The capital resources are managed to ensure that maximum financial benefit for the Council is achieved. This may include the re-alignment of funding to maximise government grants, she explained.

The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, then referred to Appendix A of the report, which provided details of the individual schemes within the capital programme, showing the budget available in 2020-21 compared to the projected spend.

A number of schemes had already been identified as requiring slippage of budget to future years (2021-22 and beyond). At quarter 2 the total requested slippage was £13.875 million. Details of these schemes were shown at paragraph 4.4 of the report.

She advised that since the last capital report in July 2020, there have been a number of new externally funded schemes approved and internally funded schemes, which have been incorporated into the capital programme. These were included on page 123/124 of the report, with a Revised Capital Programme included at Appendix B (to the report).

In February 2020, Council approved the Capital Strategy for 2020-21, which included the Prudential Indicators 2020-21 to 2022-23 together with some local indicators.

Appendix C to the report, detailed the actual indicators for 2019-20, the estimated indicators for 2020-21 set out in the Council's Capital Strategy and the projected indicators for 2020-21 based on the revised Capital Programme. These showed that the Council is operating in line with the approved limits.

The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change concluded, by giving a short narrative on the Council's Capital Monitoring Strategy.

A Member noted from paragraph 4.5 of the report, that £0.5m had been set aside to replace some of the Council's Fleet, ie Council Wide Vehicles. He asked Officers if they were also considering providing Alternative Energy methods by which to operate some of its vehicles.

The Corporate Director – Communities, advised that BCBC had within the last couple of days, been in consultation with a Japanese company following a directive by Welsh and

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Central Government for local authorities to consider adopting alternative energy sources not just for heating purposes, but for its transportation also.

Whilst electrically energised vehicles did not suit the topography of the BCB, hydrogen fuelled vehicles were an option for BCBC's HGV fleet and this would be actively looked at as part of future fleet provision proposals. It was also possible for the local authority to examine electrically charged vehicles for some of its smaller fleet, she added.

The Deputy Leader advised that this was the Capital programme update for the 2nd quarter of the Year. He pointed out that there was some slippage in respect of certain schemes, as identified in the report. The reasons these schemes had been delayed were beyond the control of the Authority he added, however the commitment was still there for these to be delivered.

He also welcomed the new grants received from Welsh Government towards Highway Improvements and the Active Travel Programme, as well as the financial support received, in order to convert 10 Affordable Homes in Bridgend into Commercial Units.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- noted the Council's capital programme update for 2020-21 for the period to 30 September 2020 (Appendix A to the report);
- approved the revised Capital Programme (Appendix B);
- noted the projected Prudential and Other Indicators for 2020-21 (Appendix C).

467. INFORMATION REPORT FOR NOTING

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

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

468. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION FROM:

Councillor A Hussain to the Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member – Communities:

In UK about 11 billion wet wipes are used every year - causing 93 percent of blockage in UK sewers. In Wales, Welsh waters deals with around 2,000 sewer blockage every month and the major cause of which are wipes.

Knowing that 90 percent of wipes contain more than ¾ plastic and since we are doing well with our recycling waste collection, should we not be the first Council to introduce separate collection for these wet wipes as any other single use plastic?

Response:

Bridgend Council is already proudly amongst the top recycling authorities in Wales. Well ahead of the statutory 64% recycling target set by Welsh Government. Thanks to the public's commitment and engagement with our leading recycling service.

On the 1st April of 2024 two important milestones will be passed in terms of our waste and recycling services. Firstly the Welsh Government statutory recycling target will rise to 70% recycling and secondly, our current contract which defines our service collection methodology with Kier will expire.

Officers are already working on the options for the service post 2024, and over the coming months and years, engagement with council members and the public will be carried out to define the next phase of our service provision.

A process that will include reviewing strategically and holistically what the future range of materials we recycle is composed of. Ensuring we achieve maximum environmental benefit in a cost effective way. Guaranteeing that BCBC remains a leader in this field of protecting the environment and surpassing statutory targets.

With respect to the specific request to recycle wet wipes, whilst it is possible to recycle them (not with our normal kerbside plastic) but with our outlet for Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP) who can take them from us, it is not recommended at this time.

In order to recycle the wet wipes the AHP service would need to be extended to all household to collect a relatively small extra tonnage of material separately. This would be both prohibitively expensive and questionable in terms of environmental benefit when taking into account the carbon impact of sending vehicles to every household for such limited quantities of recyclable material.

To summarise and conclude, we will continue to provide a market leading recycling service, actively promote and engage with the public in regards to the current service. Whilst undertaking a wholesale review of the provision in readiness for implementation of a revised collection regime in April 2024. Mid-term contract and service changes are not recommended.

Supplementary question from Councillor A Hussain

Wipes at present are either used for land fill or are incinerated which contributes to more carbon emissions and poor air quality than vehicular which is avoidable and let us hope and wait for our electric fleet for waste collection.

We are putting tea bags in our food waste bin as marked on our household food waste caddy, knowing that the skeleton left behind however is the non-biodegradable polypropylene (PP) and therefore not 100 per cent compostable. Should we allow this contamination which affects the quality of the compost, to continue?

Response

The Deputy Leader advised that the most important issue was trying to change the public's behaviour, by encouraging them not to buy wherever possible, anything that wasn't recyclable. He was aware of the tea bag issue in that some makes of these, came with a small level of plastic components in them. However, some were also completely compostable. Where the Council currently sends its compost for recycling, ie at the Kenning site, they were able to manage to take small particles of plastic out of those products that contained this however, and in turn, re-direct these for energy production.

Second supplementary question from Councillor B Sedgbeer

We need to encourage people more not to use or purchase items, including certain types of wipes and tea bags that contain plastic, as Councillor Hussain referred to in his above questions. She asked if the Cabinet could work with organisations, such as the Health Board and Early Years etc, in order to encourage the use of re-usable products such as wipes and nappies, so that any unnecessary plastic remnants in products such as these amongst others, was not contained in them from the outset when they are produced, as opposed to subsequently attempting to recycle such plastic material that may be contained within these items when they are initially produced.

Response

The Deputy Leader confirmed that he was a member of the Ministerial Programme Board that met on a quarterly basis with the Welsh Government Minister. He would raise this at the next meeting, as ideas how to better improve methods of recycling materials and to reduce the amount of waste that was fed into the main waste stream(s), were always looking to be improved.

Third supplementary question by Councillor PA Davies

The real issue was the production of items such as wet wipes in the first instance. Could the Council write to the UK Government asking Ministers to introduce legislation to stop the production of these that contain plastic in them.

Response

This suggestion was agreed to by assent.

469. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Mayor accepted the following question as an urgent item, in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.

Question from Councillor MC Voisey to the Leader

Could the Leader outline the discussions he has had with the First Minister and other Welsh Government officials before the announcement of the 'circuit-breaker' lockdown. What evidence was he provided with to ensure that this was the only necessary course of action and does he support it?"

Response

All Leaders of local authorities in Wales met with the First Minister on 15 October 2020, regarding the above proposal. Similarly, all Leaders met with the Local Government Minister on 16 and 18 October. Welsh Government officials as they had made publically, then made a compelling case based on scientific and medical information produced by the Chief Scientific and Chief Medical Officer in Wales and following the holding of Covid-19 Specialist Advisory Groups that considered this information. The circuit-breaker decision was subsequently made, due to the increase in coronavirus cases across Wales, which confirmed in turn, that hospital admissions were rising and would continue to do so in the immediate future, if no action was taken. If no action had been taken, then a loss of further lives would have taken place, together with a risk of the NHS in Wales being overwhelmed by an increase in hospital admissions as a result of increased Covid-19 cases. This case was made to all Leaders of Welsh local authorities and the Leader confirmed, that he had not heard an alternative set of measures being proposed, including by an opposition party, to the one suggested by the First Minister. This action was required, in order to stem the rise and spread of Covid-19 cases within our Welsh communities. Our Instant Management Team, a Multi-Agency group for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region, that includes Bridgend, Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taf local authorities, have agreed with the recommendation made by Welsh Government that urgent action is required at this time, in order to stem the tide of the virus in order to ensure any loss of life as a result of the pandemic, is as limited as possible.

Supplementary question from Councillor MC Voisey

The national lockdown will have the danger of damaging the economic and health wellbeing of more people, than the potential effects of Covid-19. I understand all 22 Local Authority leaders requested secondary schools remain open, and that greater use of regional lockdowns, in hot spots be used. Clearly your voices were ignored by the First Minister. We now have businesses like gyms (now open in Liverpool) important to

the wellbeing, physical and mental health of our citizens, closed, without evidence of them being of danger of spreading Covid, likewise hairdressers etc. When the two week lockdown is reviewed, what will you as Leader do to support the unheard voices of the people and businesses you represent, to ensure they get a fair hearing.

Response

The Leader stated that he was disappointed that the Councillor had not asked a similar question in the pre-Council briefing today, when experts such as Professor Nnoaham and Public Health Wales, were present there.

He added that he shared the concerns regarding the impact the 'circuit breaker' would have on businesses. However, the Leader was pleased to note, that Welsh Government had announced an extra financial commitment of £200m for Welsh businesses, which he believed was the biggest support package delivered thus far across all of the UK and far larger than had been committed by the UK government, ie £65m for Greater Manchester. He acknowledged however, that there was still a need to ensure that the support was comprehensive and to this end, local authorities were continuing to work with Welsh Government regarding the finer detail of this funding. A bigger risk than that referred to in the supplementary question, would be that if Welsh Government hadn't acted now through the circuit breaker, there would be harsher and probably even longer restrictions facing the Welsh public and possibly these would have been extended over the Xmas period. This would have an even greater detrimental effect in terms of damage to the economy and businesses across the BCB. He felt that Members should recognise that any decisions that were made in relation to lockdown due to the pandemic, were very difficult to make and these would all to varying degrees result in a negative impact on both the public and the economy in local areas and/or in Wales as a whole. He felt that the most important thing was that Welsh Government had to act when it did, to stem the flow of the virus that was increasing throughout all areas of Wales and proving a danger to life.

Second supplementary question from Councillor S Baldwin

Could the Leader confirm, that throughout the detailed discussions Welsh local authority Leaders had with the First Minister regarding the circuit breaker lockdown, what opposition groups in Wales including in the Senydd, offered as an alternative course of action to this in the face of rising Covid-19 cases and the failing track and trace app.

Response

The Leader replied that he was unaware of any alternative proposals put forward as an alternative to the circuit breaker, by political groups other than Labour, though he was aware that Plaid Cymru supported Welsh Government's decision to introduce this, together with certain other Independent Leaders/ Members across Wales. However, the Leader reiterated, that the correct packages of support still needed to be put in place and local authorities were working with Welsh Government currently, in order to attempt to reach an agreement on how this could be best achieved.

The meeting closed at 17:30