

**COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2021**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS  
ON WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2021 AT 15:00**

Present

Councillor KJ Watts – Chairperson

S Aspey	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
JC Radcliffe	KL Rowlands	RMI Shaw	CE Smith
SG Smith	JC Spanswick	RME Stirman	G Thomas
T Thomas	SR Vidal	MC Voisey	LM Walters
DBF White	PJ White	A Williams	AJ Williams
HM Williams	JE Williams	RE Young	

Apologies for Absence

SE Baldwin, B Sedgebeer, E Venables and CA Webster

Officers:

Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Deborah Exton	Interim Deputy Head of Finance
Laura Griffiths	Principal Solicitor
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Janice Jenkins	Benefits and Financial Assessments Manager
Gill Lewis	Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Manager
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Nigel Smith	Finance Manager
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

491. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following interests were declared:

Councillor PJ White declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22 as a family member is in receipt of support from the scheme. Councillor White withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item. Councillor White declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Appointment to the Standards Committee as he is a colleague and a member of Maesteg Town Council.

Councillor P Davies declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22 as a family member is in receipt of support from the scheme. Councillor Davies withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item. Councillor Davies declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Appointment to the Standards Committee as he is a colleague and a member of Maesteg Town Council.

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Councillor DBF White declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22 as a family member is in receipt of support from the scheme. Councillor White withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor RM James declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22 as a family member is in receipt of support from the scheme. Councillor James withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor T Thomas declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22 as a family member is in receipt of support from the scheme. Councillor Thomas withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor JC Spanswick declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22 as a family member is in receipt of support from the scheme. Councillor Spanswick withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor R Collins declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Appointment to the Standards Committee as he is a colleague and a member of Maesteg Town Council.

### 492. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of Council of 16 December 2020 be approved as a true and accurate record.

### 493. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:

#### The Mayor

The Mayor informed Members that he had no announcements to make as there had been no Mayoral engagements due to the current lockdown, but he hoped everyone was keeping safe and well and had a good Christmas and New Year.

#### Deputy Leader

The Deputy Leader announced that a wide range of grant funding support has been made available to help local businesses since the pandemic began in March last year. To date, 4,931 grant applications have been approved to date, with more than £37 million awarded in financial support. As well as grants for firms, £1.8 million has been provided directly to residents under the Social Care Workforce Payments scheme. £73,500 has been provided to self-isolating residents who have been unable to work, and more than £27,550 thousand supplied using the statutory sick pay enhancement scheme for social care workers. He congratulated staff who continue to work hard to assess applications as quickly as possible, and to also remind businesses and residents of the importance of providing full details and to apply to the correct fund when seeking financial support. More information about the available support is featured at the council's website.

#### Cabinet Member Communities

The Cabinet Member Communities informed Members that the Council was recently faced a problem in which 7,000 streetlights decided to repeatedly switch themselves on and off again. This issue occurred all over the county borough, perhaps most notably on large estate areas such as Brackla, but did not affect all of the county borough's 20,000 street lights. The Streetlighting Team quickly deduced that the problem was a software glitch, and that it only concerned lights which relied on global positioning technology to calculate what time the sun rises and sets. The manufacturers of the street lights were

able to quickly reset them, and have provided assurances that this was a one-off problem which should not reoccur.

The Cabinet Member Communities placed on record an apology to the Mayor for a comment he had made at the previous meeting of Council. He informed Members that he had great respect for the office of Mayor and the current Mayor and asked for his apology to be accepted. The Mayor had accepted the apology and considered the matter closed.

#### Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help

The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help announced that she had previously advised members that social care in Bridgend County Borough was facing some major challenges, and as anticipated, has proven to be the case. There are very real concerns over whether the Council could continue to meet its statutory duties, but was pleased to confirm it had been able to do so.

Local care homes and social care staff are, however, still facing extreme pressures in dealing with Covid-19, and the council is working closely with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to support their efforts in rolling out the vaccine and helping to prevent the spread of the virus. However, significant outbreaks are being seen affecting residents and staff at care homes across the county borough, both those that are council-run and those which are independently operated, and as of last Sunday, 21 homes had staff or residents who had returned positive tests.

A number of care homes have instigated business continuity plans to ensure they have sufficient workforce to care for and support residents. They are working alongside the council, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board and Public Health Wales to ensure that services can continue, and that staff and residents who are self-isolating can be supported. It is absolutely right and essential that care homes have been made the top priority for the vaccination programme, and the Council is doing all it can to support this.

Domiciliary care providers have been more resilient in the face of the coronavirus, and are continuing to provide people with essential care and support within their own homes. However, as this also renders them vulnerable, the next priority must be to get all frontline social care workers vaccinated as a matter of urgency. The ongoing efforts of staff must not go unrecognised in all of this, and she was sure that Members will want to join her in offering thanks, gratitude and admiration to the staff.

#### Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations

The Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations announced that the Shared Regulatory Service is continuing to play a crucial role in keeping people safe and helping to ensure that businesses follow all necessary rules and regulations while the pandemic is in effect. This includes making sure that the tighter requirements for shops and businesses which were announced by Welsh Government last week are being observed. Under the new rules, premises are required to carry out a new risk assessment covering issues such as hygiene, the use of PPE and face coverings, whether adequate ventilation and physical distancing are in place, how employers can maximise the number of staff who can work from home, and more.

The team are also continuing with their inspection work, and have issued a series of enforcement notices, which take the form of premises improvement notices which specify measures that must be taken within a certain time limit, which is usually 48 hours. If the business fails to comply, the enforcement officers can issue a premises closure notice, which can remain in place for up to fourteen days.

The team's most recent enforcement action has resulted in 17 businesses receiving notices. Of these, 11 received notices because staff were not wearing face coverings,

and one because staff were not maintaining social distancing or wearing face coverings. A further five were issued with closure notices. Enforcement officers are continuing to visit premises to carry out appropriate checks that rules are being followed, and more information is available at the Shared Regulatory Services website.

#### Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration

The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration announced that following recent critical news and social media coverage of food parcel schemes in England that Members might appreciate some information on how the scheme works here in Bridgend County Borough, and the high quality of the service that is provided.

Every week, the council provides thousands of children with a food parcel featuring enough nutritious breakfast and lunch items to cover five days. The food parcels take specific dietary requirements into account, and use Welsh suppliers wherever possible. He outlined the content of the typical food parcel, which also feature 'life-skill' recipe cards which encourage children and adults to use the parcels to prepare meals together, learn about nutrition and more. Having evaluated a range of options, the Council believes that the direct delivery of food parcels containing nutritious breakfast and lunch items has been more effective and ultimately better for the children concerned. It has prevented families from making unnecessary journeys during the pandemic, and has avoided potential problems such as food vouchers being refused at stores.

As well as building in an extra level of reassurance that children are receiving the food, the doorstep deliveries are supporting our safeguarding arrangements by enabling additional contact from school staff and the Vulnerable Groups team. One positive aspect of the recent media coverage is that it has highlighted the Council's efforts to ensure that children do not go hungry, which has resulted in scores of positive comments and feedback on the service.

#### Chief Executive

The Chief Executive provided an update about how council services are faring under the pressures of the ongoing pandemic. While the start of the roll-out of the vaccine has offered some much-needed relief, we are continuing to experience high incidence levels of the virus throughout the county borough, and this is of course affecting our own workers as well. It is clear that the authority has a tough few months ahead. Pressure on many of the services that it provides remains considerable, and in response, the delivery of the more critical services is being prioritised. Where necessary, this includes the redeployment of staff, particularly into areas which have been affected by workers having to self-isolate while awaiting the results of a test or because they are ill with coronavirus.

He stated that while he remained confident that an internal resilience to these challenges is retained, it is of course impossible to implement these actions without having some kind of detrimental impact on other services. Some activities have temporarily paused, and it may take a little longer than normal to receive an answer to some referrals, he pointed out that there had been over a thousand more member referrals to deal with during the pandemic period [March 2020 to December 2020] than in the corresponding period the year before.

At this stage, it remained unlikely that the main council buildings would be reopened any time soon, especially while the official Government advice is still to remain at home wherever possible. On the plus side, as an organisation the Council has clearly demonstrated that it can support agile working and working from home, and these will be areas that would be looked at in closer detail to see how they might work to the Council's advantage in the longer term. He will bring further updates through the remaining phases of the coronavirus pandemic.

He also informed Members of sad news of fatality at a road traffic accident this morning which is being investigated by South Wales Police. It was believed that the deceased is a colleague and the Council is offering support to the family.

494. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader announced that new information had been received from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board concerning the roll-out of the coronavirus vaccination programme. As of 17 January, 21,857 people have been vaccinated across the Cwm Taf region. For Bridgend County Borough, this breaks down as 3,693 people, with 1,461 vaccinations administered through GP surgeries, 1,715 through vaccination centres, and 517 through local care homes. While not included in the local authority area figures, hospital vaccination centres across the region have accounted for a further 11,377 people. The council is continuing to work closely with the health board, and is supporting the roll-out of the vaccine in Bridgend County Borough.

The health board has provided further information indicating that they intend to vaccinate a further 22,834 residents across the region this week, 6,913 of which are Bridgend County Borough residents. This will include 593 vaccinations in a total of seven care homes, with 3,980 doses delivered by GP practices and 2,340 provided within a vaccination centre. Vaccinations are targeting the most vulnerable and exposed members of the community in a series of priority groupings which have been determined on a UK-wide basis by the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation. As an immediate priority, the initial roll-out is restricted to staff and residents at care homes, frontline health and social care staff, and people in local communities who are aged over 80.

All local GP surgeries have signed up to take part in the vaccination programme, and people are being contacted directly when it is their turn to receive the vaccination. The Leader requested Members explain this to residents, and encouraging them not to tie up resources by enquiring about it at pharmacies and GP surgeries. The system has been designed to prevent 'queue jumping', so nobody should attempt to attend a vaccination centre without having an appointment in place to do so. When it is our turn, we will be contacted with details of where and when to go.

He informed Members that residents also need to be alert for scammers who have been taking advantage of the situation to try and trick people, especially the elderly, into handing over confidential information, or to even pay for a fake inoculation. These criminals are knocking on doors and are sending professional-looking texts and emails, and he asked Members to remind constituents that the NHS will never ask for payment as the vaccine is free to receive. They will also not turn up at your home unannounced, and will not ask for your bank details or for you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents, such as a passport.

As the effects of the vaccine may not be seen nationally for many months, the advice on keeping Wales safe remains the same, to keep a two-metre distance from others, wash hands regularly, and wear a face covering where required. Mobile testing facilities remain fully available in Bridgend County Borough for anyone who is experiencing symptoms of coronavirus, and further details of these can be found at the council, Cwm Taf and Welsh Government websites.

He was aware that Members have been enquiring about the vaccination roll-out across the county borough, and he hoped that these figures have provided with a greater insight into the progress of the programme. He would bring further details as the situation continues to develop.

495. CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE - QUARTER 3 2020-21

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change presented a report to comply with the requirement of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities 2017; provided an update of the Capital Programme for the period 1 April to 31 December 2020; sought approval for a revised capital programme for 2020-21 to 2029-30 and for Council to note the projected Prudential and Other Indicators for 2020-21.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Wales) Regulations 2003, as amended contain detailed provisions for capital finance and accounting controls, including the rules on the use of capital receipts and what is to be treated as capital expenditure. Additionally, the Council manages its Treasury Management and Capital activities in accordance with associated guidance. The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities requires Local Authorities to have in place a Capital Strategy which demonstrates that the authority takes capital expenditure and investment decisions in line with service objectives and properly takes account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that Council on 26 February 2020, approved a capital programme as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and was last updated on 21 October 2020. She stated that the revised programme for 2020-21 totals £33.888m, of which £17.960m is met from the Council's resources, with the remaining £15.928m met from external resources. She summarised the position per Directorate and the current funding assumptions for the capital programme for 2020-21. She provided detail of the projected spend on individual schemes within the programme compared to the budget available. A number of schemes had been identified as requiring slippage into future years, which shows unprecedented levels of slippage as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. At quarter 3, the total requested slippage is £14.536m in relation to:

- Children's Residential Accommodation Hub (£1.564 million)
- Road Safety Improvements Heol Mostyn Junction (£0.540 million)
- Economic Stimulus Grant (£0.887 million)
- Coastal Risk Management Program – Porthcawl (£0.750 million)
- Maesteg Town Hall Cultural Hub (£3.050 million)
- Caerau Heat Network (£1.939 million)

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that a number of new externally funded schemes and internally funded schemes have been incorporated into the capital programme:

- Trem y Mor (£0.435 million)
- Berwyn Centre and Ogmere Vale Washeries (£0.186 million)
- Covid recovery for town centres (£0.360 million)

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change informed Council of minor additions to the programme as follows:

- Porthcawl Resort Investment Focus - £0.074 million ERDF grant
- ICF capital funding - £0.035 million for the purchase of 2 vehicles for Social Services
- Complex and Medical Needs Work in Schools - £0.025 million revenue contribution for provision of ALN at Cefn Cribwr Primary School

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change also informed Council that the following schemes have had material changes:

- Active Travel Pencoed Technology Park
- Cardiff Capital Region City Deal
- Sustainable Transport Covid

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change also reported on the monitoring of Prudential and other indicators for 2020-21. The Capital Strategy is intended to give an overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future sustainability. A number of prudential indicators were included and approved by Council. In line with the requirements of the Prudential Code, the Chief Finance Officer is required to establish procedures to monitor both performance against all forward-looking prudential indicators and the requirement specified. She 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, which shows that the Council is operating in line with the approved limits.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that the Capital Strategy also requires the monitoring of non-treasury management investments and other long term liabilities. She stated that the Council does have an existing investment portfolio which is 100% based within the County Borough and primarily the office and industrial sectors. Income streams are spread between the single and multi-let office investments on Bridgend Science Park, the multi-let industrial estates and the freehold ground rent investments. The total value of Investment Properties was £4.635 million at 31 March 2020. She informed Council that it has a number of Other Long Term Liabilities included within the Capital Strategy, no new loans have been taken out in Quarter 3.

A member of Council questioned the reason for the slippage of 34 weeks and unforeseen works to the clock tower on the Maesteg Town Hall scheme. A member also questioned when EU funding would end and would the scheme be completed by then. The Corporate Director Communities informed Council that a number of adjustments had been made to the Maesteg Town Hall scheme due to lockdown when the number of workers onsite had to be reduced due to their welfare and health and safety regulations. The unforeseen works to the clock tower had added to the time, however the contract was progressing well and completion was expected by next spring. The clock tower had to be shorn up and maintenance work was carried out to light the clock. The Corporate Director Communities informed Council that the contract has a large contingency sum and spend was within that. Work was also carried out to the Culper's on the top of the roof, which was funded by the Welsh Government in the sum of £250,000. She informed Council that the contractor had uncovered the history and features of the building. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration informed Council that along with the Leader and Corporate Director Communities had had visited the site when allowed and stated that the site is busy, but safe and work is progressing. He stated that the contractors are very dedicated, professional and flexible and have restored many of the original features of the building.

A member of Council questioned whether the options appraisal on the Caerau Heat Network scheme would be funded from slippage on the scheme. The Corporate Director Communities commented that the heat network scheme is an innovative but difficult scheme and that it would not be possible to get the mine water out due to the geology, which had not been unforeseen by the experts. WEFO, the funders of the

scheme are happy that an options appraisal is being looked at, which is scheduled for completion in 2023. She stated that it was correct to stop the mine water project and to move forward with the options appraisal. A member of Council referred to the significant amount of investment on the project, with a great deal of risk taken and the scheme should be the subject to an internal enquiry. The Corporate Director Communities informed Council that the upfront funding was for bore holes, it was found that rock was very hard and it would be expensive to bore. She stated that it is known that the mine water heat is reusable and a smaller scheme with smaller bores is being considered to heat Caerau Primary School and ground water heat would be used to heat the Tudor estate as opposed to mine water. She also informed Council that the Council will be a contributor to decarbonisation and renewable energy. The Cabinet Member Communities informed Council that he believed there would be an element of mine water technology, although geologically, it did not look like the authority would be able to do what it initially intended, but different technologies would be run side by side. A member of Council was surprised that the geology of the area was untried and untested, given the area's mining history and that survey records of mine shafts must exist. The Corporate Director Communities assured Members that the council had worked with the Coal Authority on the project. She stated that the bore holes would cost 3 times the amount of the estimate and that it was prohibitive to proceed with the larger scheme and that a smaller scheme would instead be pursued.

A member of Council questioned the reaction of funders to the slippage in schemes and is there flexibility in the Waterton Active Travel scheme. The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change informed Council that the Welsh Government understands the need for flexibility and slippage. The Corporate Director Communities informed Council there is no flexibility to the Active travel scheme and the Council has been asked to resubmit the scheme. She stated that a number of grant funding offers are being received from the Welsh Government with a short turnaround for the submission of schemes and highlighted an example of a funding offer received on 28 January for an application for electric charging points for vehicles having to be committed by 31 March.

A member of Council questioned whether the fund of £50,000 for community asset transfer needed to be more ambitious and increase year on year to encourage more asset transfers. The Interim Deputy Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change informed Council that there is sufficient amount of funding available for community asset transfers.

The Mayor referred to the Capital Strategy and asked whether the potential for converting vacant office space into flats had been considered. The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change informed Council there exists an opportunity to learn lessons from the pandemic in looking at office accommodation. The Corporate Director Communities that she is to chair a corporate group for the corporate landlord function with responsibility for looking at solutions for a blend of homeworking and working in the office and she informed Council of her previous experience in rationalising office accommodation. The Corporate Director Communities informed Council that she would provide Members with information on the rate of vacancies for office accommodation. She also informed Council of the demand for start-ups for small office space which then creates a community of small businesses and incubation spaces.

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- noted the Council's Capital Programme for 2020-21 for the period to 31 December 2020;
- approved the revised Capital Programme;
- noted the projected Prudential and Other Indicators for 2020-21.



496. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2021-22

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change presented a report, the purpose of which was to provide Council with information regarding the implementation of the 2021-22 Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR) and to set out the requirement for Councils to adopt a CTR scheme by 31 January 2021, together with the funding implications.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that CTR provides assistance for those on low incomes with a liability to pay Council Tax. The Welsh Government has developed a single nationally defined scheme set out in regulations for the provision of Council Tax support in Wales. The Council adopted the CTR for 2020-21 in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, which will end on 31 March 2021. There were currently 13,216 households receiving CTR, 8,454 of these were of working age and 4,762 were of pensionable age. Of the 13,216 households receiving CTR, 10,212 were entitled to a full CTR reduction.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that the CTR scheme in Wales is set by regulations made under Schedule 1B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as inserted by the Local Government Finance Act 2012). The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 had now been laid and made amendments to:

- make provision that compensation payments made under the Windrush Compensation Scheme are disregarded from capital when determining an applicant's eligibility for a reduction, and the amount of that reduction.
- provide how payments of universal credit to claimants who have reached state pension credit qualifying age are to be taken into account when determining eligibility for a reduction and the amount of a reduction.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change stated that the new regulations did not contain any significant changes from the claimants' perspective to the current scheme, and the maximum level of support that eligible claimants could receive remained at 100%. She explained the limited discretion given to the Council, to apply discretionary elements that were more generous than the national scheme as follows:-

- The ability to increase the standard extended reduction period of 4 weeks given to persons after they return to work (where they have previously been receiving CTR that is to end as a result of their return to work);
- Discretion to increase the amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions which is to be disregarded when calculating income of the claimant; and
- The ability to backdate the application of CTR with regard to late claims prior to the new standard period of three months before the claim.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that the Council is required to adopt a CTR Scheme regardless of whether it applies any of the discretionary elements. If the Council fails to make a scheme, then a default scheme shall apply. The Council can only apply discretion if it makes its own scheme under the Prescribed Requirements Regulations.

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The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that consultation on the Prescribed Requirement Regulations was undertaken in 2016 and the results detailed in the Head of Finance's report to Council on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on 11 January 2017. As it was proposed not to change the discretionary elements, a further consultation exercise had not been completed. It was proposed that the discretionary elements remain as follows:

- The extended payment period is maintained at the minimum standard of 4 weeks.
- War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions are fully disregarded when calculating entitlement to CTR. The estimated cost of this proposal within the financial year is £9,100.
- Backdating is maintained at the minimum standard of 3 months.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that the total estimated cost to the Council for these three proposals is £9,100 for 2021-22. The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change informed Council that it must consider whether to replace or revise its CTR scheme and is obliged to make a scheme under the requirements of the Prescribed Requirements Regulations. The obligation is a statutory duty and applies even if the Council chose not to apply any of the discretions available to it. She stated that the Council's recommended approach to the available discretions is to apply the recommendations in Table 1, in paragraph 4.23 of the report. There are no additional monies to available from the Welsh Government to fund the discretionary elements.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that the Council is required to adopt a scheme by 31 January 2021 under the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, regardless of whether it chooses to apply any of the discretionary elements. If the Council fails to make a scheme, then a default scheme will apply under the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change informed Council of the financial implications of the scheme in that the 2021-22 Provisional Local Government Settlement shows that the sum provided for CTR across Wales is at the same level as 2020-21. This Council's 2021-22 provisional settlement from Welsh Government includes £13.088 million to fund the CTR scheme, a reduction of £96,000 from the allocation of £13.184 million in 2020-21; this amount did not take into account any increase in council tax charges but is distributed based on expenditure on council tax reduction schemes in previous years and is unlikely to change in the final settlement. Based on the current caseload the estimated total cost of the scheme for 2021-22 is around £15.8 million (including the cost of the discretionary elements), which is £2.712 million higher than the funding provided by Welsh Government. The proposed budget for 2021-22 is currently £15.654 million, which includes additional funding to meet the proposed council tax increase in the MTFs. This would be kept under review during the financial year.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- a) Noted the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, and the 2014 to 2021 amendment regulations.

- b) Adopted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22 scheme, set out in paragraphs 4.18 to 4.23 of the report.

497. APPOINTMENT TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer reported that a vacancy had arisen on the Standards Committee for a Town and Community Council Member due to the resignation of Town and Community Councillor Graham Walter and in accordance with the previous delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer had overseen a recruitment process and to report to Council any successful appointment. Following formal interviews at a meeting of the Standards Committee on 21 December 2020, the Committee approved the appointment of Cllr Gavin Thomas as a Town and Community Councillor representative of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the appointment of Cllr Gavin Thomas as a Town and Community Councillor representative with immediate effect.

498. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) BILL

The Chief Executive reported on an update regarding the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill and an Action Plan to ensure that the Council is prepared for the various elements of the Bill that will come into force in due course.

He stated that the Bill was passed by the Senedd on 18 November 2020, with Royal Assent received today. He informed Council it is a substantial piece of legislation covering electoral reform, public participation, governance and performance and regional working. It also set out a new framework for local government to be more streamlined, flexible, sector-led approach to performance, good governance and improvement. It also intended for councils to be proactive in considering how internal processes and procedures should change to enable more effective planning, delivery and decision making in order to drive better outcomes.

He reported that an action plan had been prepared to ensure that this Council is prepared for the introduction of the Bill. The Action Plan will be updated accordingly as various provisions of the Bill come into force.

A member of Council stated that the Bill was a long time in the making, however it needs to be fully funded as it would bring budget pressures. The Chief Executive informed Council that the Bill will be accompanied by guidance and that the Bill needs to be fully funded.

A member of Council questioned whether there would be an opportunity to scrutinise the effectiveness of campaigns for extending the voting franchise to 16 and 17 year olds and foreign citizens and also to determine the 'first past the post' or the 'single transferable vote' voting systems. The Chief Executive informed Council that there is a detailed plan for elections and work will take place with schools and colleges. The Monitoring Officer informed Council that the determination of a voting system would be the subject of a report to Council.

A member of Council asked whether the general power of competence could be used for the adoption of unadopted roads and to clear up land where its ownership was unknown. The Monitoring Officer informed Council that officers will examine the regulations and guidance when published and look at case law in England to establish where those powers can be used.

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A member of Council was pleased to see the introduction of a petitions scheme and committee. The Group Manager Legal and Democratic Services stated that a petitions scheme is in the process of being drawn up and clarified that it would not be a petitions committee.

RESOLVED: That Council:

1. Noted the report and Action Plan attached as Appendix 1;
2. Noted that further reports on individual elements of the Bill will be submitted to Cabinet and Council in due course.

### 499. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FROM:

The Mayor had consented to accepting an urgent question in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council Procedure Rules as he was of the opinion by reason of special circumstances it be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Question from Councillor Alex Williams to the Leader

After remarks made by the First Minister on Monday regarding potential delays in the deployment of the vaccination programme, significant concerns have been expressed by residents and frontline healthcare professionals across Bridgend County Borough.

Given that an expeditious rollout of the vaccination programme will have a direct impact on the delivery of Bridgend County Borough Council's core services, will the Leader provide details of how the local authority has engaged with the Welsh Government; Cwf Taf Morgannwg University Health Board; health and social care providers; educational establishments and other stakeholders on the ongoing handling of the Covid-19 pandemic in Bridgend County Borough and how it is having an impact on the provision of the County Borough Council's services?

### **Response of the Leader**

The Leader informed that as of 17 January, 17 care homes had been visited and by the end of January every care home in the county borough vaccines will have been delivered to all care home residents. From the 24 and 25 January, 2 community vaccine centres will be operational from 9am-5pm 7 days a week. He stated that by the end of this week, all GPs will have supplies of the Oxford Astra Zeneca and Pfizer vaccines. A thousand volunteers had been processed by the health board. Residents and staff in care home staff, frontline staff, residents over the age of 70 and vulnerable people are receiving the Pfizer vaccine, while residents over the age of 80 are receiving the Oxford vaccine. The Leader stated that the current risk is the supply of the vaccine, and he commented that the Pfizer was in a greater supply. He informed Council that he along with the Leaders and Chief Executives of the Councils which make up the Cwm Taf Health Board meet weekly with the Health Board and have made it clear that the Council will provide support to them and it had been explained to the Health Board the importance of residents receiving as much information as possible as to when they will receive the vaccine.

Councillor A Williams referred to a GP practice receiving a third of the vaccines due which has resulted in a slower roll out of the vaccine and an increase number of deaths in care homes and asked what pressure is being brought on the health board to avoid deaths as a result of the delays of the vaccine roll out. The Leader informed Council that he had made it clear to the health board that care home residents have to be vaccinated due to their fragility and the risk to them of not being vaccinated and this had also been made clear to the Health Minister. Clarification had been sought in order to

minimise outbreaks within care homes and this was being monitored by the Cabinet Member and Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing on a daily basis. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing commented on the importance of residents in care homes being vaccinated and work is ongoing with the health board to vaccinate residents, with the aim of the vaccination programme starting in all care homes by the end of January. She stated that the health board has to do a risk assessment of care homes to determine whether it is safe to deploy the vaccine.

A member of Council questioned why there was only 1 vaccination centre in Bridgend. The Leader commented that there are 2 vaccination centres with plans to expand to 4 centres. He stated that the Pfizer vaccine will be deployed in Maesteg this weekend and if the pilot is successful it will ensure more residents are immunised.

A member of Council questioned the measures to vaccinate residents who are shielding. The Leader stated that arrangements are being made for residents who are shielding and he will seek clarification from the health board as to the process. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing commented that residents who are housebound will receive the vaccination at home and residents shielding, but not housebound, will be invited to their GP or vaccination centre.

### **Councillor M Voisey to the Cabinet Member Communities**

Only 2 out of 10 speed and red-light cameras are working in the county borough, and how can this level of defects be allowed, and tolerated, and what is the Cabinet Member going to do about it?

### **Response of the Cabinet Member Communities**

We are aware that a number of cameras are not operational within the county borough. Officers are in discussion with Go safe the partnership who operate the cameras, on options to bring them back into beneficial use and will be making bids to Welsh Government for funding to support safety camera deployment later in the month.

One of the defective units has already been returned back to use, with a further unit being investigated to return to service ASAP but this is being hampered somewhat by the current Covid -19 pandemic.

The other units will be discussed with Go safe as how they can be brought back into beneficial use along with consideration of new static camera sites within the borough.

Councillor Voisey in his supplementary question referred to the majority of schemes not working and asked for details of a timetable of when and where the cameras will be brought back into use and the priority should be for the speed camera outside South Wales Police headquarters to be first on the list. The Cabinet Member Communities informed Council that negotiations are ongoing to bring the cameras back into use, many of the cameras are old and he gave an assurance that they will be brought back into use. He stated that the cameras are of deterrent value and he would not divulge which cameras are defective.

The Mayor announced that as the 30 minutes time limit allowed for questions had been reached, the questions submitted by Councillor T Thomas and Councillor A Hussain be deferred to the next meeting of Council.

**COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2021**

The Mayor had consented to accepting an urgent question in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council Procedure Rules as he was of the opinion by reason of special circumstances it be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

501. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as it contained exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 and/or Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Following the application of the public interest test it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above, to consider the following item in private, with the public excluded from the meeting, as it was considered that in all circumstances relating to the item, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

502. APPROVAL OF EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the exempt Minutes of the meeting of Council of 16 ` December 2020 be approved as a true and accurate record.

The meeting closed at 17:21