

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2022

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON WEDNESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2022 AT 15:00**

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

S Aspey	SE Baldwin	TH Beedle	JPD Blundell
MC Clarke	N Clarke	HJ David	C Davies
P Davies	PA Davies	SK Dendy	DK Edwards
J Gebbie	T Giffard	RM Granville	CA Green
DG Howells	M Hughes	RM James	B Jones
M Jones	MJ Kearn	DRW Lewis	JE Lewis
JR McCarthy	D Patel	RL Penhale-Thomas	AA Pucella
KL Rowlands	RMI Shaw	CE Smith	SG Smith
RME Stirman	G Thomas	T Thomas	JH Tildesley MBE
SR Vidal	MC Voisey	LM Walters	KJ Watts
DBF White	A Williams	AJ Williams	HM Williams
RE Young			

Apologies for Absence

NA Burnett, RJ Collins, A Hussain, JC Radcliffe, E Venables, CA Webster and JE Williams

A number of Members expressed their condolences to Councillor Collins, due to his father having sadly passed away recently.

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Interim Democratic Services Manager
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Carys Lord	Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

615. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:-

Councillor JC Spanswick – Prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 8 as a close family member is in receipt of Council Tax Reduction (CTR) under the CTR Scheme. He left the meeting whilst this item was being considered

Councillor Paul Davies - Prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 8 as a close family member is in receipt of Council Tax Reduction (CTR) under the CTR Scheme. Prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 10 as a member of the Standards Committee. He left the meeting whilst these items were being considered

Councillor D White - Prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 8 as a close family member is in receipt of Council Tax Reduction (CTR) under the CTR Scheme. He left the meeting whilst this item was being considered

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Councillor B Jones - Prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 8 as a close family member is in receipt of Council Tax Reduction (CTR) under the CTR Scheme. He left the meeting whilst this item was being considered

Councillor RM James – Personal interest in Agenda Item 8 as a family member is in receipt of Council Tax Reduction (CTR) under the CTR Scheme.

Councillor M Clarke – Prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 10 as a member of the Standards Committee. He left the meeting whilst this item was being considered.

Councillor Alex Williams – Prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 6 as he is mentioned in the report. Councillor Williams left the meeting whilst this item was being considered.

Councillor Amanda Williams - Prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 6 as she is mentioned in the report. Councillor Williams left the meeting whilst this item was being considered.

Councillor RE Young – Prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 6, as he is a member of Coity Higher Community Council. Councillor Young left the meeting whilst this item was being considered.

616. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of Council dated 15 December 2021, be approved as a true and accurate record.

617. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:

Mayor

Firstly, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Councillor Chris Davies as a new representative of the Caerau ward to his first Council meeting.

Since the busy schedule of Christmas the start of the year has been relatively quiet and on that note I would like to wish everybody here today and throughout the County Borough of Bridgend, a happy safe and healthy New Year.

The Mayors Citizenship Awards nominations are now closed and there have been in excess of 30 nominations submitted that are now being assessed, with the format of the presentations to be agreed in due course, depending on the situation with any restrictions due to Covid. However, it is envisaged this will take place in March 2022.

Next week on Thursday 27 January it will be Holocaust Memorial Day. One Day is the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2022 in the hope that there may be One Day in the future where genocide will no longer take place. People are being asked to light their own memorial candle at home this year to remember those lost or permanently scarred by the effects of genocide. Due to there not being any formal gathering taking place, I will be lighting a candle on behalf of the County Borough in the Council chamber which will be recorded on video.

On the Mayor's charity fundraising front there will be a Wales 3 Peaks challenge taking place on 2 April 2022. with an early morning ascent of Pen-y-Fan, then moving on to Cader Idris and finally an afternoon ascent of Snowdon, with it all being completed within 24 hours. If anybody is interested in taking part and helping to raise funds for Lads &

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Dads and Bridgend Carers Centre, then please contact me by the end of this month so that final numbers can be confirmed.

Finally, please note that if you are aware of anybody who may be due to celebrate their 100th. Birthday (or 100 +), or may be celebrating a special wedding anniversary then please get in touch via Mayor@Bridgend.gov.uk where arrangements can be made for a visit from myself and the Mayoress. Even if a home visit cannot be made due to Covid restrictions then arrangements can still take place to send a card and gift.

Deputy Leader

Members may be interested to know that together with our waste partners Kier, we are trialling an all-electric refuse collection vehicle this week.

Known as an 'eCollect', the new lorry started its rounds on Monday and is being used to record vital information that will support future decisions on the increased use of ultra-low emission vehicles.

The eCollect is being put through its paces to explore its ability and range.

In particular, we are monitoring how it performs while collecting waste from our valley communities, and in transporting it to the Materials Recovery and Energy Centre at Jersey Marine.

The vehicle, which is manufactured by the company Dennis Eagle, has already been assessed for its durability and performance on different road surfaces and under various conditions.

This trial offers a great opportunity as part of our commitment under the 2030 Zero Carbon agenda and joins other recent efforts such as our moves to install more charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, the use of electric taxis for fleet operators and more.

I hope to be able to bring Members more news on this innovation very soon.

Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help

Members will already be aware of the extreme pressures that we are continuing to operate under, it was already exceptionally difficult even prior to the pandemic, and the impact that this is having throughout the region on recruitment to the social care sector as a whole.

As part of our ongoing response to this, the next phase of our recruitment drive is about to be launched.

With a focus set firmly on why choosing a career in social care is a strong and rewarding choice, the campaign will incorporate a mix of videos, news releases, features, social media posts and graphics to reach as many potential candidates as possible. I've been fortunate to have a preview of some of these videos. It was inspiring to note that this is considered a career by them and not just a job.

The campaign will enable existing staff to talk about how they started out as social care workers and were supported by the council to progress and develop their careers further.

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Wales Online will be interviewing some of our staff as part of this, and the campaign will offer a realistic insight into what it really means to work within social care and the dedication required to make a difference to our vulnerable residents.

There will also be a recruitment event held within Bridgend town centre as this proved to be especially useful in previous phases of the recruitment campaign.

The campaign will build off the success and popularity of similar recruitment drives launched by Welsh Government and Adult Social Care and will include a heavy emphasis on why staff find working in social care to be both professionally and personally rewarding and satisfying.

The campaign is due to be launched later this week, and I hope that members will do all that they can to support it, and to help publicise it across all of our local communities.

Cabinet Member – Future Generations and Wellbeing

Member may not be aware various activities are taking place between now and the end of March as part of the Winter of Wellbeing programme.

Designed to build upon the previous Summer of Fun, the programme is supported by Welsh Government and seeks to provide young people with opportunities to remain active, safe, healthy and well.

With a huge range of events taking place at local leisure centres, swimming pools, libraries and more, the initiative is being delivered through numerous local organisations such as Halo, BAVO, Bad Bikes, KPC and Boys and Girls Club in Bettws, Nantymoel and the Wyndham

In addition, the Urdd are developing creative arts workshops, rock band taster sessions and a weekend residential stay

The pandemic has been a real challenge for many young people and their families, and the Winter of Wellbeing seeks to provide them with support, guidance and opportunities for lots of fun.

Details are available at local venues as well as the council website, and I hope that Members will support the initiative by encouraging their constituents to find out more.

Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration

I'd like to briefly draw attention towards some recent innovations at Penybont Primary School which have been benefitting pupils.

Year Two learners were recently visited by Rylie, a border collie therapy dog who joined their reading groups as part of an exercise designed to help their literacy skills develop and progress, ease anxiety and help children who have special needs.

Rylie provided a calming influence and supported the children's confidence and enthusiasm as they were encouraged to read aloud. Needless to say, Rylie was hugely popular and the visit was a big success, so plans are being explored to extend the scheme to other schools across the region.

Penybont Primary has also installed a unique vending machine that is offering pupils not snacks or drinks, but books.

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Each week, one lucky winner from each class receives a token to reward their reading efforts, attitude and progress. The winning pupil can use the token to select a new book from the special vending machine.

I'm sure Members will agree that both of these innovations offer an excellent incentive for children to read more and to improve local levels of literacy.

The school deserves to be commended for these efforts, so well done to all involved.

Chief Executive

I'd like to advise Members that we have received official notification that the Bridgend Youth Justice Service will be inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation next month.

The inspection will be carried out between 14 and 18 February 2022.

The inspection team will review the work of the Youth Justice Service before delivering a report on the effectiveness of the service, and on our efforts to prevent young people from offending and re-offending.

The HMIP inspections are designed to promote excellence within youth offending services across Wales, and to ensure that we are meeting our responsibilities as effectively as possible.

We will share further information with Members in due course.

618. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER

Firstly, I would like to congratulate and welcome Councillor Christopher Davies to his first meeting of full Council.

Also, our best wishes to Councillor Giffard who has been in the Princess of Wales hospital having his gall bladder removed. I know he has been very complimentary about the doctors, nurses and all the NHS staff that have treated him there.

My group are presently carrying vacancies on CO&SC, SO&SC 1 and SO&SC 2, due to Councillor Gebbie formerly sitting on each of these bodies but now no longer being able to, as a newly appointed Cabinet Member.

Therefore, the Labour replacement members on each of these Committees are as follows:-

CO&SC – Councillor N Burnett
SO&SC 1 – Councillor S Smith
SO&SC 2 – Councillor N Burnett

Members will have noted the success of the pandemic arrangements that have been in place since Boxing Day and been pleased to see that infection rates have continued to fall.

Welsh Government has now confirmed that restrictions are to gradually ease further as Wales moves back towards alert level zero.

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The move follows latest public health evidence which show that positive coronavirus cases have decreased while more than two-thirds of people aged 12 and over have received either a booster or a third dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.

This does of course have a number of implications for Bridgend County Borough.

While the full move to alert level zero will be dependent on the public health situation continuing to improve, the number of people who can gather at outdoor events has now risen from 50 to 500.

From 21 January, there will be no limits on the number of people who can take part in outdoor activities.

Crowds will be able to return to outdoor sporting events, and outdoor hospitality will be able to operate without needing to introduce additional reasonable measures.

However, it should be noted that the Covid Pass will still be required for entry to larger outdoor events.

If the downward trend continues, all indoor activities will move to alert level zero from 28 January.

This will mean that nightclubs will be able to re-open, and that while working from home wherever possible will remain important, it will no longer constitute a legal requirement.

Businesses, employers and other organisations will still need to undertake a specific coronavirus risk assessment and put reasonable measures in place to minimise the spread of coronavirus, and the Covid Pass will still be required for entry to nightclubs, events, cinemas, concert halls and theatres.

Table service, the 'rule of six' and two-metre physical distancing will no longer be required, but self-isolation rules for people who test positive for Covid-19 and rules on face coverings within most public indoor places will remain in force after 28 January.

You may have also seen that Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board is to offer walk-in vaccinations against winter flu, for two and three year old children.

This follows concerns that children who have been off school may have missed their regular school vaccination programme and will be at risk during the final few months of winter when influenza is more prevalent.

Administered by way of a nasal spray, the walk-in clinics will be available locally at the Ravens Court vaccination centre between 9am and 4pm this Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 January.

In other developments, an all-new lateral flow test is being piloted in Wales which people can use at home.

Branded as Flowflex and described on the packaging as being 'a SARS-Cov-2-Antigen Rapid Test,' the new tests dispense with the throat swab, and require you to only undertake a nasal swab.

Mobile testing also remains available for anyone experiencing symptoms of coronavirus. Drive-through testing is available at the former Revlon site in Maesteg and at Coity and Litchard Community Centre between 9am and 5pm.

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You can also access the walk-through testing centre at the Bowls Hall car park in Angel Street, Bridgend between 8am-8pm.

Please note that booking remains essential across all three sites, and that this can be arranged by visiting the Welsh Government website, calling 119, or, if you have hearing or speech difficulties, 1800 1119.

While the measures taken just before Christmas have limited the spread of coronavirus and have enabled us to start back towards alert level zero conditions, we must do so in a sensible, phased way, and should not let our guard down.

Covid-19 remains a very real threat, and our best defence continues to lie in ensuring as many people as possible receive a full round of vaccinations.

I hope that members will continue to promote this within their local wards, and I would like to thank you for your ongoing support in helping to promote these very important measures.

Finally, in related news, retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses in Bridgend County Borough can now register for Welsh Government funding to ease the impact of the Omicron variant during the period 13 December 2021 to 14 February 2022.

A total of £120 million is being made available, and eligible businesses who pay non-domestic rates will be able to claim a payment of either £2,000, £4,000 or £6,000.

To benefit, businesses will need to re-register their details in order to receive the payment, but can do so quickly and easily online at the Council website.

Since the start of the pandemic, Welsh Government has provided over £2.2 billion of support to businesses throughout Wales to help them manage their way through difficult circumstances.

The fund will go some way towards strengthening resilience, expanding business opportunities, and safeguarding jobs.

I am sure that Members will want to help ensure local businesses are aware of this support, and more information, including frequently asked questions, support guidance and an eligibility checker, is available at the Business Wales website.

Finally, there was an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting this morning, I understand there was questions about the attendance of the Deputy Leader and myself at the meeting. I can confirm that I sent my apologies because I was paying my respects at a funeral. The Deputy Leader was late because his daughter had been involved in a serious car accident. I am pleased to confirm that his daughter is safe and luckily was not seriously injured. Thanks to Members for their concerns.

619. ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS IN COITY HIGHER COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Chief Executive presented a report, in order to advise Members of the conclusion of the consultation exercise in relation to the review of electoral arrangements in the Coity Higher Community Council (CHCC) following a formal request during the recent Boundary Review, to seek approval of the final proposals and to authorise the Chief Executive to submit final proposals to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales.

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The background to the report, confirmed that on the 24 November 2021, the council published its draft proposals in respect of the electoral arrangements of CHCC and wrote to all interested parties as set out in the Terms of Reference to consider the current arrangements and submit any comments by letter or email by 5 January 2022.

The Chief Executive advised, that following the closure of the consultation period, the submissions have now been reviewed and guidance sought from the Boundary Commission for Wales in drawing up the final proposal.

The draft proposal has been amended, taken into account the responses received and guidance from the Boundary Commission for Wales, to provide for better levels of electoral parity, which is one of the Boundary Commission's key principals. The Final Proposal report, attached at Appendix 1 was summarised in the table shown in paragraph 4.2 of the covering report.

The Chief Executive concluded the item by stating that following approval, the report will be submitted to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales for scrutiny. The Commission will then review the proposals and, if minded, will approve an Order to be made to implement the final proposed electoral arrangement alteration. The Order must be made prior to the Notice of Election on the 21 March 2022, in order for it to be implemented for the Local Elections in May 2022.

RESOLVED:

That Council both noted and approved the final proposals arising from the Coity Higher Community Council electoral arrangements review and authorised the Chief Executive to submit the final proposals (as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report) to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales.

620. CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE - QUARTER 3 REPORT 2021-22

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change presented a report in respect of the above, 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 position for 2021-22 as at 31 December 2021 (Appendix A of the report)
- seek approval for a revised capital programme for 2021-22 to 2030-31 (at Appendix B)
- note the projected Prudential and Other Indicators for 2021-22 (Appendix C).

The report outlined certain background information, following which it detailed the current position that provided Members with an update on the Council's capital programme for 2021-22 since it was last approved by Council and incorporated any new schemes and grant approvals. The revised programme for 2021-22 currently totalled £49.603 million, of which £28.495 million is met from Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) resources, including capital receipts and revenue contributions from earmarked reserves, with the remaining £21.108 million coming from external resources, including Welsh Government General Capital Grant.

Table 1 in the report showed the capital programme for each Directorate from the October 2021 (quarter 2) approved Council position to quarter 3. This reflected a slippage to future years, of just over £30m.

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Table 2 in paragraph 4.2 of the report, summarised the current funding assumptions for the capital programme for 2021-22. This may include the realignment of funding to maximise government grants, confirmed the Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change.

Appendix A to the report, provided details of the individual schemes within the capital programme, showing any new approvals, virements and the slippage so referred to in respect of the revised budget for 2021-22.

Paragraph 4.4 of the report, showed the individual schemes that were subject to slippage to future years and the Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change gave a resume of these for the benefit of Council.

Since the last capital report approved by Council in October 2021, there have been a number of new externally funded schemes approved and internally funded schemes, which have been incorporated into the capital programme. Details of each of these were shown in paragraph 4.5 of the report. There were a number of other schemes within the capital programme awaiting confirmation of external funding over the winter period. Some of these schemes may also require re-profiling, she added. The revised Capital Programme was attached at Appendix B to the report.

The next part of the report, gave details regarding Prudential and Other Indicators for 2021-22 and the monitoring of these.

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change explained that in terms of the borrowing of any monies, the Council would not be pursuing this in the short term, but rather use its short-term reserves for this purpose. However, the borrowing of money going forward would continue to be evaluated and monitored.

Appendix C to the report, gave details of the actual indicators for 2020-21, the estimated indicators for 2021-22 set out in the Council's Capital Strategy and the projected indicators for 2021-22, based on the revised Capital Programme. These reflected that the Council was operating in line with approved limits.

With regard to Capital Strategy Monitoring, the Council had a number of other long-term liabilities which were included within the Capital Strategy, such as the Maesteg School Private Finance Initiative (PFI), as well as lease arrangements for the Innovation Centre, the Authority's Waste Contract and a Welsh Government energy efficiency loan.

The Deputy leader confirmed that he welcomed the report and in particular, the works proposed at Bryncethin Depot to support the use going forward of electronic vehicles.

A Member made the point that in relation to the new School at Maesteg being built through the allocation of PFI monies, this was an expensive way by which to construct the school. With there being low interest rates presently, he asked of there was any way the Council could withdraw from the Agreement, that may then benefit the Authority financially speaking.

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change was not aware of the full history of this scheme, however, she was aware that the provision of the school had been negotiated and agreed through a long term agreement and should we seek to withdraw from this agreement now, then this would change the contractual arrangements of the agreement that would inevitably result in some significant penalty costs being awarded against the Council.

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The Leader advised that this had been explored previously in the last 18 months and it had been established that there would be no financial benefit to the Authority if it withdrew from the PFI Agreement. The Deputy Leader concurred with this, adding that the Council had still secured a cost-effective way of purchasing the new school.

A Member stated that he was pleased to see some of the new schemes that were proposed as part of the Capital Programme, in particular, the new Pencoed Road Bridge/Rail Crossing Scheme as part of the Metro Plus Local Transport Fund, presently out for public consultation. He asked what the funding had been committed to so far, as he was aware that funding of £150k had been initially invested, with £47k of this being spent to date.

The Corporate Director – Communities, advised that the scheme at Pencoed had been estimated to cost around £17m and this would be sought from the Levelling-Up Fund. Presently the Council were working on the design of the bridge with key stakeholders, with a bid being made by June of this year. She stressed however, that the works required would then take approximately three years to complete, as these affected the main railway line to London. The initial funding had been committed through the Cardiff City Deal Regional Fund, with then the major part of the funding coming from Central Government, ie the Levelling-Up Fund.

The Cabinet Member – Communities added, that £17m was an estimate cost at present, that could in reality end up being a conservative estimate of costs.

A Member noted that there was a slippage in the sum of just over £30m going into the next financial year, as a result of the pandemic etc, which he conceded was to a degree understandable, given the pressures that local authorities had faced in the last two years. He asked how this slippage compared with previous years. He also welcomed the news that Welsh Government were committing £2.65m of funding to support previous work undertaken in homes of residents in the Caerau Ward and he asked if the Council should also be adding to this funding through its Capital Programme allocation.

In terms of the slippage comparisons for this year into next and comparisons with previous years, the Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change advised that she would look into this comparison outside of the meeting and in turn feed this back to the Member accordingly. Any changes to the Capital Programme, would be proposed by Cabinet in the usual way then presented to full Council following this, for determination.

RESOLVED: That Council:-

- 1) Noted the Council's Capital Programme 2021-22 Quarter 3 update to 31 December 2021 (at Appendix A to the report)
- 2) Approved the revised Capital Programme (at Appendix B)
- 3) Noted the projected Prudential and Other Indicators for 2021-22 (Appendix C)

621. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2022-23

The Deputy Mayor took the Chair for the item, in view of the prejudicial declaration of interest the Mayor had declared in this report earlier in the meeting.

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change presented a report, purpose of which, was to provide Council with information regarding the implementation of the 2022-23 Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR), and to set out the requirement for the

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Council to adopt a CTR scheme by 31 January 2022, together with the funding implications.

She advised by way of background, that CTR provides assistance for those on low incomes with a liability to pay Council Tax.

The UK Government previously devolved to Welsh Government, the establishment of localised schemes in Wales and stated the intention to reduce expenditure on CTB by the equivalent of 10%.

On 20 January 2021, the Council adopted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021-22 in accordance with The Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013. This scheme will end on 31 March 2022.

From the latest data, there are currently 12,717 households receiving CTR; 8,114 of these are of working age and 4,603 are of pensionable age. Out of the 12,717 households receiving CTR, 9,801 are entitled to a full CTR reduction.

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, continued by stating that on 27 November 2013, the Assembly laid regulations that implemented the arrangements to support those who will pay council tax. The regulations (Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 and Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (Wales) Regulations 2013), prescribed the main features of the scheme to be adopted by all councils in Wales. Minor amendments to these regulations have since been made each financial year.

The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 have now been laid before the Senedd for approval. These regulations update the financial figures used in the CTR schemes and make amendments to that outlined in paragraph 4.4 of the report.

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 can receive remained at 100%.

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, stated that it is required that the Council adopts a CTR Scheme regardless of whether it applies any of the discretionary elements, shown in paragraph 4.6 of the report. If the Council fails to approve 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.

The next section of the report, outlined details regarding consultation undertaken on the CTR Scheme.

The report proposed that the discretionary elements remain as was outlined in paragraph 4.11 of the report.

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change advised that the Council needed to 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 chooses not to apply any of the discretions available to it.

The recommended approach to the available discretions is to apply the recommendations in Table 1 at paragraph 4.23 of the report. It should be noted that there are no additional monies available from the Welsh Government to fund the

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discretionary elements, she added. The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, further added that Welsh Government have confirmed there will be no additional funding to bridge any gap and each authority will be expected to meet any shortfall.

The recommendation in relation to the available discretionary elements, took into account the following:

- The consultation responses received in 2016, in particular those relating to the discretionary elements;
- The current local scheme in relation to the treatment of War Disablement Pensions, War Widows Pensions and War Widowers Pensions for Housing Benefit and 2020-21 CTR scheme, which disregards these payments in full; and,
- The fixed funding available.

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, concluded her report by advising Members of its financial implications.

A Member noted that there were over 8,000 households of working age claiming this allowance, but he asked, if there was a further breakdown available whether these people were working (on low income) and claiming or were they economically inactive.

The Benefits and Financial Assessments Manager advised that the information could be broken down to a degree, but that it may be difficult with regards to those also receiving further benefits such as, for example, Income Support and Universal Credit.

The Deputy Leader added that this allowance would assist those who have financial difficulty with regards to paying their Council Tax and that the Council would ensure that there is a Communications Plan put in place, so that those that were eligible for the Scheme, are aware of it and knew how to claim from it.

The Leader added that the benefit was also available for retired people including War widows/widowers.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- Noted the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, and the 2014 to 2022 amendment regulations;
- Adopted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022-2023 as set out in paragraphs 4.18 to 4.23 of the report.

622. REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE - CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to:

- advise Council of the outcome of the adjusted political balance of the Authority resulting from Councillor Chris Davies being elected at the recent bi-election in the Caerau Ward;
- seek approval of the revised political balance;
- approve the allocation of seats to political groups in accordance with political balance rules, as set out in the Appendix to the report and approve the changes to the membership of the Committees as outlined in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

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She explained that there had been a recent change to the membership of political groups, whereby Councillor Chris Davies (Independent) was elected in the recent bi-election at Caerau. This had therefore slightly affected the political balance on Committees as, since his election, Councillor Davies had joined the Llynfi Independent Group, as opposed to being a stand-alone Independent.

In view of this, the following changes to Committee memberships was required, in accordance with a provision of the Local Government Act 1972:-

1. Town and Community Council Forum – Labour Group to lose a seat, Llynfi Independents to gain a seat.
2. Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 – Llynfi Independents to gain a seat.

The updated political balance figures accounting for the above changes, were shown at the Appendix to the report.

RESOLVED: That Council:-

- (1) Noted the outcome of the revised political balance of the Authority resulting from changes to the membership of political groups following the recent election of Councillor Chris Davies at the bi-election in the Caerau Ward;
- (2) Approved the revised political balance (of the Council);
- (3) Approved the allocation of seats to political groups in accordance with political balance rules, as set out in the Appendix to the report and the resulting changes to the membership of the Committees, as outlined in paragraph 4.1 of the report.
- (4) That Councillor C Davies be nominated from Llynfi Independent Group to sit on Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 and the Town and Community Council Forum.
- (5) That the nomination of a Labour Member to relinquish their seat on the Town and Community Council Forum, be awaited.

623. REAPPOINTMENTS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer presented a report, the purpose of which, was to seek the approval of Council to the extension of the term of office of two Independent Members of the Standards Committee.

She explained that the term of office for two Independent Members expires in February and May 2022. The Members in question are eligible to be reappointed for a further term. Thereafter, they must stand down and cannot serve more than two terms of office under the relevant Regulations. In addition, the Regulations specify that the second term of office can be a maximum of four years.

The Members, Mr Jeff Baker and Mr Philip Clarke, have made a beneficial contribution to the governance of the Council and are in agreement to standing for a further term.

RESOLVED: That Council agreed to re-appoint Mr Jeff Baker and Mr Philip Clarke to the Standards Committee for a further term of office.

624. **INFORMATION REPORTS FOR NOTING**

The Chief Officer Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy (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.

625. **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION FROM THE COUNCILLOR T THOMAS TO THE CABINET MEMBER FUTURE GENERATIONS AND WELLBEING:**

Question

Will the Cabinet Member outline the number of County Borough resident's enquiries for pest and rodent control over the last individual five years?

Response

The number of pest control requests have increased year on year and for the past five years, these are shown below:

Pest	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Rats	3352	3569	4045	4205	5119
Mice	126	149	155	119	101
Cockroaches	1	5	1	1	2
Wasps	77	68	108	104	118
Bedbugs	26	21	41	34	31
Fleas	51	32	34	57	27
Total	3633	3844	4384	4520	5398

Aside from the above domestic pest control requests, SRS have dealt with the following number of complaints:

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Pest Control Enforcement	Figures not available	552	652	518	706
Nuisance Accumulations	Figures not available	19	8	16	24
Filthy and Verminous Premises	Figures not available	5	11	2	6
Total	Figures not available	574	671	536	736

Supplementary question by Councillor T Thomas

I deal with a lot of Member Referrals relating to problems with rats and I note from the data given, that since 2017/17 pest control requests associated specifically with rats have increased by 53%. I'm wondering if there is a known reason for this?

Response

Data reflects a year on year increase in calls for pest control issues, however, since the Council have had a new Contractor, such calls have significantly reduced when compared with the previous Contractor from 23 to 14 calls a day (on average).

The new Contractor also has a better Operating Module, whereby they provide a 'call before they visit service,' to ensure residents are at home before they visit to attend to the problem. The previous Contractor asked residents to ensure they were home for a period of 3 or 4 days, within which time they would visit un-announced between the hours of 9am to 5pm. Though the service was free, residents rather than staying in could opt to have another private provider to resolve the issue, though they would then have to pay for this. The new provider also had better response rates than the previous provider, ie 48 hours compared to 72 hours, respectively.

Second supplementary question by Councillor G Thomas

Are the services provided by the new Contractor free, as they were with the previous one?

Response

Yes, they are, even though pre-pandemic due to savings required under the MTFs, there was a proposal to introduce charging for Pest Control services. However, BCBC did find savings elsewhere, that resulted in maintaining the service free of charge and as it's a public health issue then this is a reasonable decision. This was not the case with neighbouring authorities though, as the Vale of Glamorgan service comes with a cost, ie around £100 and similarly, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Neath Port Talbot also charge for Pest Control services.

Third supplementary question by Councillor Ross Penhale-Thomas

Has the Cabinet Member had any insight where Pest Control problems may be worse in some areas as opposed to others. For example are they worse in private rented accommodation than in the social housing sector and, if so, what further support can be put in place in any identified more problematic 'hot spot' locations.

Response

Not everyone actually reports problems they experience in terms of rodent and pest issues/problems, so the data obviously only reflects those householders that do or have. I think some people still think it's a bit of a stigma, ie for neighbours and others to see Pest Control vehicles outside their property. Looking at some case work, it does confirm that more calls do emanate from residents of Social Housing and it could be because they are sometimes on lower income than in private accommodation and, therefore, look to obtain a service that is free which the Council provides, as opposed to paying a private Contractor to visit their home to resolve the problem. If the Member wishes to know if there are any areas of the County Borough geographically speaking, that are worse than others, then I'd be pleased to research this for him if he contacts me outside of the meeting.

626. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 16:21