

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH 2022

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH 2022 AT 15:00

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

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

Apologies for Absence

PA Davies, JH Tildesley MBE and CA Webster

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Interim Democratic Services Manager
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Michael Pitman	Democratic Services Officer – Committees

645. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Officers other than the report Presenting Officer and Democratic Services Officers supporting the meeting, declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7. and left the meeting whilst this item was being considered.

646. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of Council dated 9 February 2022, be approved as a true and accurate record.

647. PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SOUTH WALES
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Chief Executive presented a report, which introduced representatives Huw Jakeway and Chris Barton from the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service to Council, for them to give an update on the work of the Service, etc.

Mr Jakeway firstly gave a brief introduction of the South Wales Fire Service, following which he passed over to Mr. Barton to give some financial context in terms of their submission.

He advised that the South Wales Fire Service covered the following County Borough's with it detailed in brackets, how many Fire Stations/establishments that existed in each of these areas:-

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- Bridgend (8)
- Rhondda Cynon Taf (9)
- Vale of Glamorgan (4)
- Caerphilly (5)
- Merthyr Tydfil (2)
- Blaenau Gwent (4)
- Torfaen (4)
- Monmouth (5)
- Cardiff (4)
- Newport (3)

He confirmed that each of the constituent Authorities committed a budget towards the operation of the South Wales Fire Service that was in proportion of the population of each of the areas, and in terms of Bridgend, this equated to £7.5m (9.5%) of the overall £79m budget. The Service also was supported financially by a nominal amount of grant funding allocation. 80% of this budget he explained, went to employers and included resource for the likes of Transport, Supplies, Training, Premises, Pensions and Capital Finance.

The revenue budget of the Service had increased over the last 10 years, though this was still well below inflation. South Wales Fire Service was one of 3 Fire Authorities in Wales, together with the Services in Mid and West and North Wales, both of which received larger budgets than the South Wales region.

In terms of budget pressures this year, a 1.5% pay award had been awarded, however, this came with some risks given the current RPI. All other inflation costs were absorbed within the Services existing Budgets including its Reserves. Though there was presently a projected underspend in the Service, this would be allocated to offset any risks associated with pay inflation. Grant funding from Welsh Government it was assumed would continue.

Mr. Jakeway then referred to the operational issues of the South Wales Fire Service, where he advised that all the investment that was made went towards making communities safe.

Prevention was considered extremely important, where a considerable financial commitment was made towards educating the public about areas of fire safety.

20,000 checks of homes were carried out annually, with assistance from other Utility companies, with homes of those deemed the most vulnerable being risk assessed in order to ensure they were safe. Checks in relation to fire safety were made, as were other checks at homes to prevent problems such as human trafficking and sexual or domestic abuse situations. Homes were also checked in terms of the most vulnerable, so that there was nothing in the areas that could exacerbate any accidents, ie trips and falls.

With support from Public Health Wales, smoke detectors were also fitted at homes where residents were also given anti-crime advice.

The South Wales Fire Service also integrated with Schools in terms of learning and development to educate young people, as part of the curricula Schools Programme(s). There advice was given on the likes of fire safety and how to be a responsible road user. The Police and other key stakeholders assisted in the support of these initiatives.

There were also a number of Fire Cadet branches situated across the South Wales Fire Authority regions, he added.

He paid tribute to the Operational side of the service, which was often unseen when compared to Fire Fighters.

The Control Room was where incidents were first reported, where the base there was connected to other emergency services such as the Police and the Mid and West Fire Authority.

He wished to make it known, that 80% of fires that the Authority extinguished were deliberately set. Therefore, educating the public and advising that this was illegal and a criminal offence, was extremely important.

The South Wales Fire Authority also supported incidents of flooding and inland water and animal rescues. The Service also concentrated on high rise building and the safety of residents there (mainly in Cardiff and Newport) where some of these buildings had deficiencies such as failed cladding which was an ongoing fire risk concern.

When comparing data and statistics from 2003 and 2021, the Service had improved in all key areas of performance, other than attending Special Service Calls and 'other' classed Special Service Calls, which had increased by 9% and 37%, respectively. These were instances whereby the South Wales Fire Service assisted other agencies with rescues, such as the Ambulance Service and other medical assistance calls.

Rather than cover all the presentation slides that had been shared with Members, in order to receive any questions, he culminated the presentation by commending the efforts and work of employees of the Service throughout the pandemic, who had remained on the front-line taking risks by supporting others in what had been a very uncertain environment over what was almost a 2 year period. During this time, all the Fire Stations in each of the ten regions had been operational throughout the Covid-19 era. Staff had also supported other emergency services and key agencies within this time Mr. Jakeway added, not to mention also helping to support the Covid-19 vaccine programme.

RESOLVED: That the report and the presentation by the South Wales Fire Service, be noted.

648. **TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:**

Mayor

Over the past few weeks I have been visiting a number of individuals and groups to present them with their Mayors Citizenship Awards and it has been a pleasure meeting them all. There are still a number to be presented and will all be completed in the next week or so.

Next Monday I will be officially opening the Miners Memorial in Nantymoel adjacent to the site of the now demolished Berwyn Centre and I am sure this will be one of the highlights of my year as Mayor. Having grown up in Nantymoel it will be an honour to return to mark this special event and pay tribute to the many miners (my father being one of them) who spent many hours each day in the darkness underground but were the real building blocks of the valley.

It has been an experience and a pleasure the Chair these Council meetings over the past year, even if a little disappointing that we have not managed to get back into the

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Council chamber on a hybrid basis, but hopefully this will change soon. I would like to thank you all for not giving me too hard a time at these meetings, but I suppose we have not got through today as yet so who knows what may be in store.

As this will be the last Council meeting before the election I thought it worth just asking you all once more to make a donation to the two groups I am raising funds for this year - Lads & Dads and Bridgend Carers Centre. I will be participating in the Welsh 3 Peaks challenge on Saturday 2 April along with 21 other people who have signed up and we are all looking to try and raise funds for these two groups. The event will start around 4.00am on the Saturday and its likely we will be completing the event at Snowdon in the dark but all within 24 hours. Please make a donation via the BCBC Website on the Mayors page if you are able to and many thanks in anticipation of your support.

Finally, as Members may be aware, the following Committee meetings have been cancelled due to the pre-election period commencing on 21 March 2022:-

Democratic Services Committee – 24 March
Standards Committee – 29 March
Governance and Audit Committee – 31 March

The Governance and Audit Committee has been brought forward to the 15 March at 2pm with the agreement of the Chairperson. Regulatory Committees are permitted to be held within the pre-election period.

Democratic Services staff will remove the above appointments from Members and Officers calendars accordingly. The revised date for the Governance and Audit Committee has already been placed in Members/Officers calendars

Deputy Leader

Members may wish to warn their constituents that we are once again receiving calls from worried householders who have been targeted by scammers.

These criminals are issuing emails and are making direct phone calls to wrongly tell people that they are entitled to big pay-outs and rebates on their council tax.

The scammers then offer to arrange for the money to be paid back to residents in exchange for a fee of around £140.

This is a scam, and householders are being advised to remain alert for it.

You can find out more about how the council handles council tax payments and refunds at the corporate website or via My Account.

Cabinet Member – Communities

There is a project underway in South Cornelly which I am sure will be of interest to members as it is set upon creating the first low-carbon village in Wales.

Launched by Bridgend County Borough Council in association with Challoch Energy, NuVision Energy Wales Ltd, Passive UK and Welsh Government, the project comprises of a pioneering initiative that aims to share green energy between local homes.

This is achieved by fitting houses with a combination of solar panels, solar ventilation and energy batteries, all linked together so that the energy can be distributed throughout the community.

The scheme is one of many projects that the council is working on as part of our overall Bridgend 2030 decarbonisation strategy.

If the trial continues to deliver positive results, we could soon start rolling the technology out to other communities within the county borough.

Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help

As this will be the last meeting of full Council until after the May elections, I want to make members aware that we will shortly be opening a new centre where our East Hub early help and children's social services teams will be based.

The creation of our hubs date back to 2015 when we established three multi-disciplinary teams capable of sharing skills and resources to provide more effective support for local children and their families.

Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen provided a suitable home for the North Hub team, and the West Hub team were set up within Pyle Life Centre.

The Civic Offices has served as a temporary base for the East Hub team while we have searched for appropriate accommodation.

Thanks to the efforts of our partners and especially the head teacher, staff, pupils and governing body of Brynteg Comprehensive, an all-new detached single-storey building has now been designed and constructed within the grounds of the school and stands ready to welcome not only the early help team members, but also our locality team for children's social services, too.

Both teams do sterling work for the community, and the new building will bring together experts in family, parenting and engagement support, educational welfare, psychology and counselling, police community support and liaison, safeguarding, health and more.

By co-locating them together, this creates excellent opportunities for enhanced joint working between our statutory safeguarding teams.

The East Hub is going to be a fantastic new facility which will have a positive impact upon the lives of local people, so well done to everyone who has made it possible.

Cabinet Member – Future Generations and Wellbeing

Young people aged 16-18 who live in the Ogmore, Garw and Llynfi valleys can take advantage of 8 weeks of free gym membership as part of the Winter of Wellbeing initiative.

Funded by Welsh Government and provided by Halo Leisure and Bridgend County Borough Council, the programme is designed to encourage young people to live active and healthier lives.

To find out more information, you can visit the Halo website or call or visit one of the participating venues before the deadline of 31 March 2022.

Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration

I'm sure that members will be pleased to note that Bridgend College has now formally submitted a pre-application planning proposal for establishing a new, multi-million pound campus at the heart of Bridgend town centre.

As you know, the proposal is part of the council's Regeneration Masterplan which identifies a series of ambitious and deliverable projects over the next 10 years that will support future economic growth and secure greater benefits and opportunities.

The college wants to develop an all-new learning and skills campus at Cheapside using land currently occupied by the town centre police station, which has already been purchased by the council for this purpose, and the nearby former multi-storey car park which had to close in April 2021 due to serious structural faults.

With police activities at the site moving to alternative town centre premises and their main offices on Cowbridge Road, we are working closely with the college as this new learning and skills campus promises to act as an anchor project within the regeneration plans, and to make Bridgend town a unique destination for state-of-the-art learning and training opportunities.

Taking advantage of parallel plans for developing enhanced public transport links within the town centre which will make it easier for people to access its facilities, the new campus is intended to support local businesses and generate fresh investment by significantly increasing footfall.

Ultimately, this proposal seeks to bring higher and further education into the town centre where it will be closer to retail, leisure and transport hubs, and represents a cornerstone of our regeneration strategy which promises to deliver longstanding positive change.

The masterplan ambition and vision is that Bridgend is a true County Town. This aspect of the masterplan confirms Bridgend as a place for technical education, a place for skills and lifelong learning and, in effect, a university town.

Chief Executive

I am sure that members will be very aware that this is the last meeting of full Council before the local government elections take place in May.

As Chief Executive, I have always valued the constructive working relationships that we have in place here at Bridgend County Borough Council, and of the mutual respect that is in place between officers and members.

I know that some of you have already made the decision not to stand at the forthcoming elections, and politics being what it is, we may also see other new faces the next time we meet in this chamber.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of all officers for your efforts, your commitment and your dedication towards the communities which you represent.

I would also like to wish Members all the very best of luck and good wishes in the future.

649. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER

I know that all members are saddened and appalled by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, causing a devastating humanitarian crisis that is unfolding, daily, live on our television screens.

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The people of Bridgend County Borough and this Council continues to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine as they bravely resist Putin's armed forces.

As an area which already provides a home for both Russian and Ukrainian nationals, we stand together with our Ukrainian neighbours, and cannot imagine how they are feeling and coping, not knowing if their loved ones in Ukraine are safe and will survive the bombs and shells.

We also value and support our Russian residents who, like us, have condemned the illegal un-provoked aggression instigated by President Putin and continue to stand with Ukraine.

Just as Wales is a nation of sanctuary, so is Bridgend County Borough a place of sanctuary, and it has been heartening to see our local communities coming together to offer their support to the people of Ukraine with their messages, prayers and donations of money, medicine and other essential items.

An emotional public vigil took place at Dunraven Place in Bridgend town centre last Friday and was very well supported with very moving contributions from Ukrainians living in Wales, A second vigil is set to take place at Maesteg market square this Saturday 12 March at 10.00am.

Numerous local communities are organising their own collections for food, medicines and other essential items, and the Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations has been accepting drop-off donations of toiletries, personal hygiene and medical items at its community hub.

Alternatively, and this is the most effective way to help, people can donate funds to the Disasters Emergency Committee so that items can be purchased for Ukraine without the need to transport them from the UK. Our people have shown their generosity, kindness and willingness to act even offering their own homes for the refugees fleeing the terror of war. We need the UK government to match the people's commitment.

Last week all Council Leaders in Wales through the Welsh Local Government Association met with Welsh Government Ministers to discuss our joint response to the humanitarian crisis in the country that grows by the day. Leaders confirmed that all local councils in Wales are ready to do whatever we can to help those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine and are making preparations, however our preparations are limited, as we have not received the information we urgently need from UK Government.

Over the weekend our WLGA Leader, Andrew Morgan wrote to the Prime Minister about the conflict, and this week as Presiding Officer together with all Group Leaders in a unanimous cross-party response reiterated the call for the UK Government to provide much more clarity and act with far greater urgency in responding to the refugee crisis. We have called for the current restrictive and bureaucratic visa scheme to be scrapped and scrapped now to enable those people trying to escape the war in Ukraine to come to Wales and find a safe place as easily and as quickly as possible.

Our European neighbours have moved at great speed, streamlining processes and rules and have opened their doors, opened their borders, open their homes to Ukrainian refugees. The UK Government should do the same and do it now. We will be ready when it does.

As we approach the second anniversary of the coronavirus pandemic in Wales, First Minister Mark Drakeford has announced that major changes to coronavirus restrictions will be made later this month.

Introduced as a result of high vaccination rates and low infection levels, the changes will mean that from 28 March, local residents will no longer need to wear face coverings in most places or practice self-isolation.

While businesses and employers will remain subject to health and safety laws, they will no longer be legally required to carry out specific covid risk assessments, or to take reasonable prevention measures.

Schools will continue to operate using the national framework and will be able to determine their own procedures for the use of face coverings in indoor communal areas.

The routine use of PCR tests for the general public will end, and mobile testing sites will be gradually shut down in the run-up to this.

Testing will remain in place for people admitted to hospital, care home residents, prisoners with symptoms and health and social care staff.

Lateral flow tests will also continue to be available for anyone with symptoms and will be free to obtain.

These changes represent the efforts that people have made in coming together as a single community and doing all that we can to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

While this does not mean that the pandemic is over, it is a welcome return to normality.

Finally, we have received some positive news which I would like to share with members.

Bridgend County Borough Council has now been officially recognised as a Real Living Wage accredited employer by the Living Wage Foundation, an organisation which uses wider cost of living factors to calculate more realistic hourly rates of pay for people aged 23 and over.

Intended to provide employers with a voluntary benchmark so that staff can earn a wage they can live on, the Living Wage Foundation estimates that almost a fifth of all workers in Wales currently earn less than they need to get by, and that around 223,000 jobs pay less than the real Living Wage.

Employers who sign up to the Real Living Wage agree to pay their staff a minimum of £9.90 an hour instead of the £8.91 national rate.

While this council first made a commitment towards paying the Real Living Wage more than two years ago, gaining official accreditation sends a signal to prospective employees that we are a responsible employer.

The accreditation follows a great deal of hard work carried out alongside Cynnal Cymru.

It reflects our desire to improve terms and conditions, and to ensure that staff are treated properly for delivering important public services, often to the most vulnerable members of the community.

By leading by example, we are encouraging our contractors and suppliers to also pay the Real Living Wage in line with our commitments under the Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Code of Practice.

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I am sure that Members will want to join me in congratulating everyone who has helped the council to gain this accreditation.

The Group Leader – Independent Alliance advised that he would like to associate the Group with the words of the Leader in providing our unified support in solidarity with the people of Ukraine as they suffer this brutal and unprovoked Russian incursion into their independent democratic nation.

We must condemn the actions of President Putin in the strongest of terms but also support the bravery of those Russian people who have had the moral decency to call him out on his inhumanity.

I would also like to congratulate all of the community leaders including Cllr. David White and others for their work in arranging the vigil which took place last week in Bridgend and say thank you to all of those residents who have shown such kindness in generously donating essential supplies through the Disasters Emergency Committee and other charities such as the British Red Cross.

The scenes from Ukraine have been heart-breaking which makes the UK Government's dithering and bureaucracy in Calais all the more shameful as we witness the effective closure of our borders to Ukrainian people in their hour of need while innocent people die in their homeland.

I would urge us as "One Council" to compel the UK Government to make every effort to relax immigration conditions immediately and lead the world (rather than follow) when it comes to receiving Ukrainian refugees fleeing persecution, as well as providing more humanitarian support to the courageous and defiant people who remain in Ukraine, demonstrating incredible resolve.

If the UK Government does eventually step up to the plate, we could see many thousands of refugees landing in Cardiff so it would be useful if an accurate assessment could be made of how many Ukrainian refugees we can take and ensure that we in Bridgend County Borough are in a position to lead Wales in this effort. Foreign Office Civil servants and officers have learned a lot by developing skills and networks in supporting Afghans who have come to Bridgend which could be put to good use in supporting Ukrainians seeking safety from persecution. I also support the Leader in his assurances that we will do all we can to support the existing but limited Ukrainian diaspora here in the County Borough.

We are all standing with Ukraine now and to paraphrase the Ukrainian National Anthem: "Ukraine has not yet died, nor her glory, nor her freedom. Fate shall smile on her once more. Her enemies will vanish, like the dew in the sun, and she too shall rule, in a free land of her own."

The Group Leader – Llynfi Independents stated that he wished to associate himself and members of his group with the comments and sentiments of the Leader.

In doing so, we recognised a deep unity of purpose not just here in Bridgend, or Wales, or the UK, but globally. That purpose being support for and solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

I was heartened to attend the vigil in Bridgend town centre on Friday evening where at least a couple of hundred people packed the pavements to stand side by side with our Ukrainian neighbours. I'm confident of a similar level of support in Maesteg this coming Saturday morning.

From war emerges both the worst of humanity, but the best of it too, and I've received phone calls and messages from residents in my ward over the last few days keen to host Ukrainian refugees in their own homes. That speaks volumes as to the welcoming communities that make up our County Borough.

That sentiment unfortunately meets barriers when you consider the woefully inadequate and seemingly indifferent response of the UK Government, we are the embarrassment of Western Europe where sanctuary is being offered to refugees with open arms.

But let us not forget the many millions of Russians for whom this war is the antithesis of their beliefs and, for whom, the economic consequences in particular will be dire.

History looks perilously close to repeating itself in Eastern Europe, but as we hope and pray for further diplomatic efforts and a de-escalation of the war, I am proud to be a member of a Council that stands ready to act in the interests of humanity and compassion as we have done with Afghan and Syrian refugees in the not too distant past.

Slava Ukraini.

The above sentiments were echoed by both the Leaders of the Conservative and Plaid Cymru groups.

650. **PAY POLICY STATEMENT - 2022/2023**

The Chief Executive presented a report, the purpose of which, was to seek Council approval for the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/2023 (Appendix 1 to the report). This is in response to legislative requirements and to provide openness and accountability in relation to how the Council rewards its staff.

The Human Resource Service Centre Manager, advised that the Council has a statutory requirement under the Localism Act to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for the new financial year, which needs to be approved and published by 31 March 2022.

The timing of the report ensures that the information is as up to date as is possible. This includes the NJC Pay Agreement effective from 1st April 2021, which has been agreed as recently as 28th February 2022.

The Pay Policy Statement provides the framework for decision making on pay and, in particular, decision making on senior pay.

He confirmed therefore, that whilst the Localism Act requires all authorities to develop and make public their policy on all Chief Officer remuneration, to achieve that transparency, pay details for all relevant groups are included.

In terms of Appendix 1 of the report, ie the Pay Policy Statement, the Human Resource Service Centre Manager statements, drew Members attention to Paragraph 6.6, that outlined the introduction of the Market Supplement Policy which as Members were aware, was approved at Council since the last Pay Policy Statement.

Paragraph 8 of the report then gave information upon Pay Relativities which the Authority are obliged to publish as part of the report. These have been updated from the previous year in line with salaries revised following the 2021 pay award, he added. A Member noted that a Town Councillor had recently said publicly, that BCBC paid male and females doing the same job different rates of pay. He asked the Human Resource

Service Centre Manager if this statement was correct and also to expand upon or explain the difference between unequal pay and the gender pay gap

The Human Resource Service Centre Manager, advised that the Council are required to report their gender pay gap on an annual basis. The gender pay gap is the difference between the average (mean or median) earnings of men and women across a workforce.

At the last report submitted 31 March 2022, showed 13% pay gap which comparing median pay.

The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference in average pay of men and women, irrespective of their work, across the organisation. It is different from equal pay, which compares how men and women are paid for carrying out the same or comparable roles.

The Council seeks to maintain the equal pay requirements within the Pay and Grading Structure by evaluating any new or changed roles through its Job Evaluation Scheme. This will ensure that all pay differentials can be objectively justified.

The Council does have a pay gap which is influenced by a number of factors including the composition and distribution of the workforce, as opposed to pay inequality.

To clarify therefore, employees in the same roles get the same pay, ie for the same job, so the statement made by the Town Councillor as expanded upon in the Members question, was inaccurate.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the Pay Policy Statement 2022/2023 attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

651. **OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES AND NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**

The Corporate Director – Communities submitted a report, in order to seek Members approval to adopt SPG5 - Outdoor Recreation Facilities and New Housing Developments as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to the Bridgend Local Development Plan (LDP).

As part of some background information, the Strategic Planning Team Leader advised that recreational areas are vital for our health, well-being and amenity and contribute to an area's green infrastructure. They provide a place for play, sport, healthy physical activity and relaxation often in the presence of nature.

The development of new housing in the County Borough, and the resulting population increase, creates a demand for the improvement of existing and provision of new recreational facilities, he confirmed.

The Strategic Planning Team Leader confirmed that SPG5 will act as a key tool in meeting that demand, by providing advice and guidance to developers on how the standards required by the Local Development Plan policy can be met.

In summary the SPG sets out:

- The national and local Planning Policy context to outdoor recreational provision;
- The Council's policy and practice relating to recreational spaces;

652. **THE PLACEMAKING CHARTER WALES**

The Corporate Director – Communities submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to seek Council's approval that Bridgend County Borough Council endorses and becomes a signatory to the Placemaking Charter Wales.

By way of background information, the Group Manager, Planning and Development Services, advised that Placemaking is a proactive and collaborative process of creating and managing places. Although the Local Planning Authority may be considered as the main proponent, the placemaking agenda goes effectively beyond the Planning and related functions of the Council which has cross-disciplinary connections to multiple service areas across local government and its related partners in order to contribute to the effective creation and management of places.

The Placemaking Wales Charter, launched in September 2020, has been developed by Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales in collaboration with the Placemaking Wales Partnership. This consists of stakeholders representing a wide range of interests and organisations working within the built and natural environment. The Charter is intended to reflect the collective and individual commitment of these organisations to support the development of high-quality places across Wales for the benefit of communities.

He continued by confirming that, signatories to the Placemaking Wales Charter agree to promote the following principles in the planning, design and management of new and existing places:-

- People and community;
- Location;
- Movement;
- Mix of uses;
- Public Realm, and;
- Identity

A descriptor in terms of expanding upon each of these, was detailed in the Officer's report.

The Group Manager, Planning and Development Services continued by stating, that in terms of its function, as a signatory to the Placemaking Charter the Council would pledge to:

- Involve the local community in the development of proposals;
- Choose sustainable locations for new development;
- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport;
- Create inclusive, well defined, safe and welcoming streets and public spaces;
- Promote a sustainable mix of uses to make places vibrant;
- Value and respect the positive distinctive qualities and identity of existing places.

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He added that the Welsh Government's 'Future Wales 2040' document provides the National Development Plan and contains a specific policy requiring the public sector to show leadership and apply placemaking principles to support growth and regeneration for the benefit of communities. It states under Policy 2: "The public sector must lead by example and apply placemaking principles to create exemplar developments. In particular, (it) must prioritise design quality, innovation and sustainability."

The Group Manager, Planning and Development Services, stated that Placemaking is now recognised as a function of the Planning and Development Services Group in the Communities Directorate Business Plan 2021/22. Both the Development Control Committee and the Planning Service are best placed to act as the Council's placemaking champions to ensure new development complies with the principles set out in the Charter. There is aspiration to set up a 'Placemaking Unit' within the team drawing from existing expertise as well as taking on additional resource and suitable training in order to provide the necessary placemaking input into new schemes. This would include the Council's own projects as well as any future public sector partner and private sector development.

In practical terms this could involve, amongst other things, the requirement for developers to have a Placemaking expert on board at pre-application stage and developing a suite of up to date Supplementary Planning Guidance documents. This will enable Bridgend to become an exemplar Authority in terms of placemaking.

He concluded the report, by advising that becoming a signatory to the Placemaking Charter therefore provides an opportunity for the Council to confirm its commitment to delivering quality places and recognising the key role that this plays in enhancing the health and wellbeing of its communities and residents for the long-term future. This will require a 'one Council' approach and agreement which has already been endorsed in principle by the Development Control Committee.

The Cabinet Member – Communities confirmed that the Placemaking Charter would fit in appropriately with a number of the Council's plans and strategies, particularly such as those that relate to economy and in particular, the Local Development Plan with which it had a direct correlation. The Charter would also support positive initiatives such as Active Travel and healthier lifestyles.

A Member supported the Charter and hoped that it would resolve issues such as when new developments are being constructed and completed without essential requirements being included, for example footpaths linking other areas of the overall community, local shops and children's play areas etc. She emphasised that these should be part of new developments in the initial constructions works.

The Group Manager, Planning and Development Services confirmed that the Charter's principles would help ensure that examples such as the above would apply in future for new developments, together with the fact that the Charter would be supported by Master Plans and legal agreements, etc, to reinforce this.

A Member stated that she hoped that the Placemaking Charter would also apply to Town and Community Councils.

The Group Manager, Planning and Development Services confirmed that Town and Community Councils could sign up to the Charter, together with other public sector organisations and residents from the Development industry.

RESOLVED: That Council approved that Bridgend County Borough Council endorses and becomes a signatory to the Placemaking Charter Wales.

653. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS 2021-22 & STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change presented a report, in order to inform Council of the requirement for Members to formally declare any related party transactions for the financial year 2021-22 by completing the declaration attached at Appendix A, even if it is a nil return. This must also be completed no earlier than 31 March 2022 and returned by Friday 8 April 2022.

She explained that the preparation of the Statement of Accounts is a requirement of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2014 (as amended) and its content is defined by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom' 2021-22 (the Code).

The Code 2021-22 states that "Authorities shall identify related party relationships and transactions, identify outstanding balances between the authority and its related parties, and identify the circumstances in which disclosures are required". Any related party transactions must then be disclosed within the Statement of Accounts.

The requirement to declare related party transactions is not new within the Statement of Accounts, the Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change announced.

This report was therefore to inform Members of the requirement to complete the declaration attached at Appendix A with reference to the guidance attached at Appendix B by Friday 8 April 2022. It is essential that this form is completed as at 31 March 2022 and covers the full financial year or period for which the individual was a Member of the Council. Members should note that a copy of this declaration will be emailed separately to their Bridgend County Borough Council email address for completion and return.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the requirement for Members to:

- Formally declare any related party transactions for the financial year 2021-22;
- Complete and date the return no earlier than 31 March 2022;
- Submit the return by Friday 8 April 2022

654. PETITION SCHEME

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report, seeking Council approval and adoption of the Petition Scheme attached thereto at Appendix 1.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 20 January 2021 and places specific duties on local authorities including, under Section 42, the duty to make a Petition Scheme including provision of a facility for electronic petitions (e-petitions). This provision comes into force in May 2022.

Under the 2021 Act, she explained that the Council must publish a Scheme setting out how it intends to handle and respond to petitions.

The Monitoring Officer explained, that petitioning is one way that individuals, community groups and organisations can participate in the democratic process, by raising issues of public concern with the Council and allowing Elected Members to consider the need for

change within the County Borough. It is acknowledged that petitions can have positive outcomes that lead to change or inform debate.

The Scheme attached at Appendix 1 (to the report), demonstrated this by setting out that petitions received from those who are resident, working or studying in the Borough, regardless of the number of signatures, will receive a response providing they follow the guidelines set out in the Scheme. The purpose of this Scheme is to establish a clear process for petitions submitted to the Council to be handled in accordance with the relevant legislation.

The Scheme provides that if a petition has received more than 750 signatures the petition will be considered at a meeting of the full Council. The petition organiser will be informed in writing about when the debate will be held and with sufficient notice to enable their attendance.

The Council will host an e-petition facility on its website, provided by Mod.gov, which is the most widely used local authority committee management system. The Scheme stipulates that e-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. An e-petition organiser must provide their name, address, a valid postcode and email address. The same information is required for any person supporting the petition, the Monitoring Officer added.

To conclude her report, the Monitoring Officer advised that in accordance with the 2021 Act, the Council must review the Scheme from time to time and, if it considers it appropriate, revise the Scheme. If the Council revises or replaces a Scheme, the revised or new Scheme will be published on the Council's website.

A Member referred to page 145 of the report and asked why a petitioners address was required on future e:petitions.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that some of the contents of e:petitions were subject to legislative requirements, however, the e:petition content could be reviewed in future and modified accordingly if Members felt there may be a future requirement to do this.

A Member was aware that e:petitions could be submitted through a system known as Change.Org and he asked if the Council could accept this through this method as well as through the Council's own database system of Modern.Gov.

The Monitoring Officer did not believe that these two systems could be integrated, but she advised that she would check with the Council's ICT and Democratic Services sections, to establish if this was achievable and come back to the Member accordingly, outside of the meeting.

A Member asked if a there was both a paper and electronic version of the same petition, could these be submitted jointly as one.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this would be accommodated.

A Member asked if for privacy reasons, a petitioner did not provide their address, would they be able to sign an e:petition.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Policy did have some discretion here, but the main reason for a signatory providing their address, was to ensure they were a valid signatory as opposed to a fake 'added one.'

RESOLVED:

That Council approved and adopted the Petition Scheme attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

655. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Monitoring Officer presented a report, that advised Council of the Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (“the Panel”) in respect of the level and range of remuneration the Authority must make available to its elected members for the 2022/23 municipal year.

As part of some background information, she confirmed that the Local Authorities (Allowances for Members) (Wales) Regulations 2007 provided for the establishment of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

This was the fourteenth Annual Report of the Panel, and the eleventh published under the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (attached as Appendix 1 to the report). The Measure extended the responsibilities of the Panel and its powers under Section 142 to decide (prescribe) payments to members of relevant authorities.

The Panel’s Determinations for 2022/23 were shown at Annex 1 of the Annual Report (page 61 onwards). Section 153 of the Measure empowers the Panel to require a relevant authority to comply with the requirements imposed on it by the Annual Report.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Panel’s Annual Report 2022/23, proposed some changes to the current remuneration prescribed for elected members at Principal (County Borough) and Town and Community Council levels.

The paragraphs in the report from 4.2 to 4.17, summarised the key elements of the overall Report and the Monitoring Officer expanded upon some of this information, for the benefit of Members.

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Panel’s Annual Report to take effect from 1 April. In most years, this is in line with financial and administrative arrangements of all authorities. However, when new councils are elected some of the Panel’s determinations are to be effective for the new municipal term. On 9 May 2022, new municipal arrangements will come into effect following local government elections. This Annual Report therefore has two different effective dates as set out below:

- For the period 1 April 2022 to 8 May 2022, all of the Determinations contained in the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales’ Annual Report 2021/22 will continue to apply in respect of principal councils and Community and Town Councils;
- With effect from 9 May 2022, (the new municipal year) the Determinations set out in this Annual Report 2022/23 in the sections on principal councils and community and town councils will apply.

A Member asked when the opportunity would arise, to discuss what senior salaries would possibly apply to the various political positions in the Authority following the forthcoming Local Government elections.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this would take place at the Annual meeting of Council in May.

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH 2022

RESOLVED: That Council noted the Annual Report for 2022/23 and approved:

1. The adoption of the relevant Determinations of the Panel contained within the Annual Report (attached as Appendix 1);
2. Those posts (shown in the revised Members' Schedule of Remuneration at Schedule 1 of Appendix 2) who will receive a senior / civic salary;
3. The revised Members' Schedule of Remuneration (Appendix 2) and for it to become effective from 9 May 2022;
4. That the Members' Schedule of Remuneration be updated with any changes to senior / civic salary positions subsequently made by Council during the 2022/23 municipal year.

656. **INFORMATION REPORTS FOR NOTING**

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

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

657. **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ALTAF HUSSAIN TO THE DEPUTY LEADER/CABINET MEMBER - COMMUNITIES:**

Question

Councils are the first line of support for building self-employed businesses back up after the pandemic. For many self-employed people, the pandemic has been not only a health crisis but also an income crisis. Many freelancers in Wales did not get financial support from government and IPSE research found one in four burned through all their savings.

How is the Bridgend Local Authority investing in our areas' smallest businesses and what help is there for freelancers?

Response

Bridgend County Borough Council offers a range of business support and is committed to supporting business growth. Officers have the knowledge and experience to help those who are planning to set up or expand a business in Bridgend County from all sizes of organisations such as small start-up projects to large multi-national companies. Officers convert as many enquiries as possible into business success and continue to help the business grow and develop.

The Enterprise team can provide ongoing business advice and support including:

- New premises support
- Networking opportunities via the Bridgend Business Forum
- Recruitment
- Skills
- Training

Employability Bridgend work with both employed and unemployed people across Bridgend County Borough and can provide free training and mentoring support. Including for people in employment wanting to improve their employment situation they can provide support to increase working hours, move into a different job, progress into a better job, and achieve a higher income. Once a business is trading then the project can help with recruitment and also with skills for the owner and staff.

The Rebel Business Schools (Pop-Up Business School) consist of 5 full-day sessions supporting people into self-employment and teaching them how to set up a business for free, usually this is run annually. Rebel Business Schools are also developing a 1-day course to run a few times a year. The approach is very engaging and gives wary people confidence to make the first steps.

The Council's Economic Futures Fund supports start-ups and adaptations to business properties which help support the economy both during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

They include:

Bridgend Business Start Up funding providing grants of between £250 and £4,000 to new start-ups and businesses within the first 3 years of trading. Initially £150,000 will be available in 2021/2022.

Covid-19 Outdoor Improvement Recovery Fund providing grants of up to £10,000 for business premises adaptations that respond to restrictions arising from the coronavirus pandemic and develop future resilience. Initially £350,000 will be available for this Fund in 2021/2022.

The Council also offers a flexible grant scheme delivered through a partnership with UK Steel Enterprise and Bridgend County Borough Council. It provides financial assistance to new or existing micro-businesses that are located, or are planning to locate, in Bridgend County Borough. The grant can provide up to 50% of eligible projects costs. The minimum grant is £250 and the maximum grant available is £4,000 so the maximum project cost is £8000.

Supplementary question from Councillor Altaf Hussain

How many freelancers in Bridgend have applied for financial grant so far? How many have received £250 grant and what business they started with this sum and is the grant now closed to new applicants?

Response

It was agreed that a response to this question would be provided outside of the meeting.

658. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 18:00