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Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

Bridgend County Borough Council



Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

*Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg.
Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich
dewis iaith.*

*We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please
let us know if your language choice is Welsh.*



Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643147 / 643694

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Wednesday, 10 January 2024

Dear Councillor,

COUNCIL

A meeting of the Council will be held Hybrid in the Council Chamber Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB /remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 17 January 2024 at 16:00.**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest from Members/Officers in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008.
3. Approval of Minutes 5 - 24
To receive for approval the minutes of 18/10/2023 and 22/11/2023
4. Presentation To Council By The Chief Fire Officer, South Wales Fire And Rescue Service 25 - 26
5. To receive announcements from:
(i) Mayor (or person presiding)
(ii) Members of the Cabinet
(iii) Chief Executive
6. To receive announcements by the Leader
7. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-25 27 - 34
8. To receive the following Questions from:
Councillor Eugene Caparros to the Cabinet Member – Climate Change and the Environment

Green spaces and places for nature are increasingly important for residents in my ward and across the whole of Bridgend. BCBC has done some fantastic work in promoting and improving access to nature and I commend recent work by BCBC in engaging with Brackla

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community council on continuing such work in our area.

However, I am aware that a large number of trees have been cut down in Brackla due to Ash die back or other safety concerns which residents (particularly around Honeysuckle Way) have found concerning. Please can you advise where residents can access updates on future tree maintenance works and advise on BCBC's ambitions for funding tree planting and green space improvements in the borough?

Councillor Ian Williams to the Cabinet Member - Climate Change and the Environment

Could the Cabinet Member For Climate Change And The Environment please outline what measures this authority has taken to lobby DCWW to mitigate further discharges from the Sewage Treatment Works at Merthyr Mawr which will inevitably increase with the additional 2000 houses and related infrastructure at Island Farm, Craig Y Parcau and the Circus Field at Laleston featuring in the LDP especially when there are already issues with the water quality at Newton Beach and other beaches nearby due to storm water and sewage discharge?

I have previously sent through to you data obtained from DCWW through an EIR to enable you to formulate your response

9. Urgent Items

To consider any item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: This will be a Hybrid meeting and Members and Officers will be attending in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Angel Street Bridgend / Remotely via Microsoft Teams. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / .643696

Yours faithfully

K Watson

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:

S Aspey
H T Bennett
A R Berrow
F D Bletsoe
S J Bletsoe
JPD Blundell
E L P Caparros
N Clarke
RJ Collins
HJ David
C Davies
C L C Davies
P Davies
S Easterbrook
M J Evans
N Farr
P Ford

Councillors

J Gebbie
W R Goode
RM Granville
H Griffiths
S J Griffiths
D T Harrison
M L Hughes
D M Hughes
RM James
P W Jenkins
M R John
M Jones
MJ Kearn
W J Kendall
M Lewis
J Llewellyn-Hopkins
RL Penhale-Thomas

Councillors

J E Pratt
E Richards
R J Smith
JC Spanswick
I M Spiller
T Thomas
JH Tildesley MBE
G Walter
A Wathan
A Williams
AJ Williams
HM Williams
I Williams
MJ Williams
R Williams
E D Winstanley
T Wood

DECISION RECORD OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB /REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2023 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor W J Kendall – Chairperson

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| S Aspey | H T Bennett | A R Berrow | F D Bletsoe |
| S J Bletsoe | JPD Blundell | E L P Caparros | HJ David |
| C Davies | C L C Davies | P Davies | M J Evans |
| N Farr | P Ford | J Gebbie | W R Goode |
| RM Granville | H Griffiths | S J Griffiths | D T Harrison |
| M L Hughes | D M Hughes | RM James | P W Jenkins |
| M R John | M Jones | M Lewis | J Llewellyn-Hopkins |
| RL Penhale-Thomas | J E Pratt | R J Smith | JC Spanswick |
| I M Spiller | T Thomas | G Walter | A Wathan |
| A Williams | AJ Williams | HM Williams | I Williams |
| MJ Williams | R Williams | E D Winstanley | T Wood |

Apologies for Absence

N Clarke, RJ Collins, S Easterbrook, MJ Kearn and JH Tildesley MBE

Officers:

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| Mark Galvin | Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees |
| Lindsay Harvey | Corporate Director Education and Family Support |
| Rachel Keepins | Democratic Services Manager |
| Carys Lord | Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change |

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| Claire Marchant | Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing |
| Janine Nightingale | Corporate Director - Communities |
| Michael Pitman | Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services |
| Alex Rawlin | Corporate Policy & Public Affairs Manager |
| Mark Shephard | Chief Executive |
| Kelly Watson | Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services |

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| Title of Report | Apologies for absence |
| Decision Made | Were received from Councillors S Easterbrook, M Kearn, R Collins and N Clarke. |
| Date Decision Made | 18 October 2023 |

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| Title of Report | Declarations of Interest |
| Decision Made | <p>The following personal declarations of interest were made:-</p> <p>Councillor W Kendall – Agenda item 8, as his grandson attended Brynteg School</p> <p>Councillor P Davies – Agenda item 8, As a member of Maesteg Town Council</p> <p>Councillor J Gebbie – Agenda item 8, as a member of Newcastle Higher Community Council that was in receipt of Community Asset Transfer Funding</p> <p>Councillor P Jenkins – Agenda item 8, due to the land drainage issues at his property arising from the Washery Scheme works.</p> <p>Councillor M Williams – Agenda item 8, as he was a parent of a pupil attending Brynteg School</p> <p>Councillor R Goode – Agenda item 8, as he was a Governor at Nantymoel Primary School</p> <p>Councillor E Winstanley – Agenda item 6, as she was an employee at Awen Cultural Trust</p> |

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| | <p>Councillor JC Spanswick – Agenda item 8, as a grandparent of a child at Brynteg School in receipt of an iPad</p> <p>Councillor Amanda Williams – Agenda item 8, as her daughter attended Brynteg School and was in receipt of an iPad</p> <p>Councillor M Evans – Agenda item 8, in that she was a member of Pencoed Town Council</p> <p>Councillor JP Blundell – Agenda item 8, as a Governor of Bryntirion Comprehensive School</p> <p>Councillor J Pratt – Agenda item 10, as a member of Her Majesty’s Coastguard Search and Rescue Association</p> <p>Councillor I Williams – Agenda item 8, as a Governor at Brynteg School</p> <p>Councillor H Bennett – Agenda item 8, as a member of Newcastle Higher Community Council that was in receipt of Community Asset Transfer Funding</p> <p>Councillor R Williams – Agenda item 8, as a member of Pencoed Town Council</p> <p>Councillor R Smith – Agenda item 8, as his son attends the ASD base at Llangewydd Junior School.</p> |
| Date Decision Made | 18 October 2023 |

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| Title of Report | Approval of Minutes |
| Decision Made | <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That the Minutes of a meeting of Council dated 20 September 2023 be approved as a true and accurate record, subject to Councillor Della Hughes being added to the list of attendees at this meeting.</p> |
| Date Decision Made | 18 October 2023 |

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| Title of Report | To receive announcements from: |
| Decision Made | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor • Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Social Services and Health • Cabinet Member – Communities • Cabinet Member – Climate Change and the Environment • Cabinet Member – Community Safety and Wellbeing • Cabinet Member – Housing, Planning and Regeneration |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member – Finance, Resources and Legal <p>(No decisions were made in relation to the above.)</p> |
| Date Decision Made | 18 October 2023 |

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| Title of Report | To receive announcements by the Leader |
| Decision Made | Announcements were received from the Leader (no decisions required). |
| Date Decision Made | 18 October 2023 |

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| Title of Report | Presentation to Council by the Chief Executive of Awen Cultural Trust |
| Decision Made | <p>The Chief Executive introduced a report, in order to advise Members of a presentation proposed to be delivered by representatives of Awen Cultural Trust.</p> <p>Representatives of Awen Cultural Trust including the Chief Executive Mr Richard Hughes (assisted by Ceri Evans), then gave a power point presentation on the work of the Trust for members information. This covered some key points and milestones, that included the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awen Cultural Trust's aim is to 'Make People's Lives Better' through the cultural facilities and activities within those facilities that they provide; • The partnership with BCBC commenced in 2015 and was for a term of 20 years – and 8 years have past since an agreement to work jointly commenced; • The Shared Contract for continuation of service provision between Awen Cultural Trust and BCBC was for the duration of 20 years (commencing in 2015), with savings of over £800,000 having been made from the operation of the service during this period; • Registered Charity Profits are not distributed externally but are re-invested in the business; • The service contributes to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social inclusion and tackles social isolation; |

2. Early years;
3. Literacy and transferable skills;
4. Digital competency and inclusion;
5. Independent lives;
6. Volunteering and Local Engagement;
7. Enjoyment and activity in the natural environment;
8. Economic impacts.

The Chief Executive of the Trust assured Council that income made from the partnership arrangement supported the re-development/refurbishment of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing establishments as well as Country Parks.

The partnership had also assisted in the support of library services throughout the County Borough, including through mobile facilities.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, the Officers responded to questions from Members.

Some examples of these were as follows:-

- Bryngarw Country Park is an excellent facility. Could we look to expand the likes of B-Leaf and Wood B through Employability work (or through an Invest to Save process), with the view of giving more people the opportunity of being involved in the services they provide. It was extremely important to ensure that people with disabilities and disadvantaged families were able to access cultural facilities within the County Borough, in order that they may lead more fulfilled lives;
- The library in Blaengarw is not entirely fit for purpose, with little in the way of ICT equipment and a poorly lit environment. Improvements are required there. Also, could we look to advertise this facility other than just on-line where some of the older generation do not access;
- Congratulations were extended to Awen for achieving funding from the Arts Council of Wales. This was a significant achievement;
- If there is a situation whereby two major cultural facilities are both closed for improvements to be made to them at the same time, ie Grand Pavilion, Porthcawl and the Maesteg Town Hall, what sort of financial impact would this have on Awen, through for example, loss of income at two major venues

For further details of discussion on this item, please click [here](#).

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| | <u>RESOLVED:</u> That Council noted the presentation and accompanying report. |
| Date Decision Made | 18 October 2023 |

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| Title of Report | Corporate Plan Delivery Plan Targets |
| Decision Made | <p>The Chief Executive submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to present for approval the proposed annual performance targets for 2023-24 for the performance indicators in the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan (CPDP) that supports the Council's new Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Examples of some of the Performance Indicator and Target data was shown in paragraph 4.1 of the report, with more detailed information contained in Appendix 1.</p> <p>Some of the questions asked on the report and comments made, which were responded to be Officers were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with Overview and Scrutiny on the Corporate Plan and its targets were commended as was the contribution of Officers in producing the document. The Chairperson of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee acknowledged that Scrutiny would monitor the performance of the Delivery Plan against the proposed indicators, as well as aligning the Forward Work Programmes of each of the Authorities 4 Overview and Scrutiny Committees with these, in order to ensure that progress against the Council's seven Wellbeing Objectives and five Ways of Working as contained in the Corporate Plan are adequately assessed. • Achievement of the Performance Indicators are in part likely dependent upon these being financially supported through the Council's Budget. • Targets for Performance Indicators should be made as clear as possible, with the date for the achievement of each of these being challenging but at the same time realistic also. <p>Further questions and responses in relation to the report ensued during the course of this item.</p> <p>Following the conclusion of the question and answer debate, it was</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That Council:-</p> |

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| | Considered and approved the targets for the Corporate Plan Performance Indicators shown in Appendix 1 to the report. |
| Date Decision Made | 18 October 2023 |

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| Title of Report | Capital Programme Update Quarter 2 2023-24 |
| Decision Made | <p>The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change presented a report outlining an update on the Capital Programme for the above period.</p> <p>She explained that the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities requires Local Authorities to have in place a Capital Strategy which demonstrates that the Authority takes capital expenditure and investment decisions in line with service objectives and properly takes account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability, and affordability. To demonstrate that the Council has fulfilled these objectives, the Prudential Code sets out a number of Indicators that must be set and monitored each year. The Council’s Capital Strategy 2023-24, incorporating the Prudential Indicators for 2023-24, was approved by Council on 1 March 2023.</p> <p>Members raised a considerable number of questions on the report, examples of which are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of the Waterton upgrade scheme, this has now slipped to 2024/25, with the budget allocation for this being predicated upon land sales that are now deemed to be unviable. What will be the scope of the project when it is revisited and given the financial pressures facing the Authority, where will the £3.5m originally set aside for the project originate from. • I note that £1.9m has been allocated towards play park areas, but to date, only £32k has been spent on these so far this year. Are we confident the remaining allocation will be spent this financial year and did we have a projected spend on the level of funding that would have been committed at this current stage of the financial year. • What proportion of the Capital Programme will generate additional revenue or savings such as, for example, using monies to purchase housing with the view of lowering our spend on homelessness. • In terms of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Grant, will this be put in place next year, so that we can maximise that investment in footpaths improvement/provision etc, throughout the |

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| | <p>2023. As at 30 September 2023 the Council had £99.79 million of long term debt, £13.36 million of other long term liabilities and £85.50 million of short term investments, an overall net debt position of £27.65 million.</p> <p>The average interest rate for debt was 4.69% (excluding Salix borrowing which is interest free) and for investments it was 4.42%.</p> <p>The Council has a manageable maturity structure of borrowing, with its current debt repayable at various points over the next 30 years.</p> <p>The Council had complied with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management Code and Welsh Government Investment Guidance in terms of the provisions of the report and its recommendations.</p> <p>The report was submitted in order to update Members on the present financial situation in relation to BCBC borrowing and lending monies, the Officer advised.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted the treasury management activities for 2023-24 for the half year period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 • Further noted the Treasury Management Indicators for the half year ending 30 September 2023 against those approved in the Treasury Management Strategy 2023-24. |
| Date Decision Made | 18 October 2023 |

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| Title of Report | Making of Porthcawl Harbour Byelaws |
| Decision Made | <p>The Corporate Director – Communities presented a report seeking Council approval to make new Byelaws for Porthcawl Harbour as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.</p> <p>She explained that the revised Byelaws would replace those presently existing, which were no longer deemed fit for purpose and that the new Byelaws would assist in increasing health and safety measures within the harbour sea location.</p> |

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB /REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor H Griffiths – Chairperson

| | | | |
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| S Aspey | H T Bennett | A R Berrow | F D Bletsoe |
| S J Bletsoe | JPD Blundell | RJ Collins | HJ David |
| P Davies | S Easterbrook | J Gebbie | W R Goode |
| RM Granville | D T Harrison | M L Hughes | D M Hughes |
| P W Jenkins | M R John | M Jones | M Lewis |
| RL Penhale-Thomas | J E Pratt | JC Spanswick | I M Spiller |
| JH Tildesley MBE | G Walter | A Wathan | A Williams |
| AJ Williams | HM Williams | MJ Williams | T Wood |

Present Virtually

| | | | |
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| N Clarke | C Davies | C L C Davies | M J Evans |
| N Farr | P Ford | S J Griffiths | RM James |
| MJ Kearns | J Llewellyn-Hopkins | R J Smith | T Thomas |
| I Williams | R Williams | E D Winstanley | |

Apologies for Absence

E L P Caparros, W J Kendall and E Richards

Officers:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Mark Galvin | Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees |
| Lindsay Harvey | Corporate Director Education and Family Support |
| Rachel Keepins | Democratic Services Manager |
| Carys Lord | Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change |
| Claire Marchant | Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing |
| Janine Nightingale | Corporate Director - Communities |

Alex Rawlin
Mark Shephard
Kelly Watson

Corporate Policy & Public Affairs Manager
Chief Executive
Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

Declarations of Interest

None

189. To receive announcements from:

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| Decision Made | Announcements were received from the following Cabinet Members and Chief Executive (No decisions required/made) :- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Social Services and Health• Cabinet Member – Education• Cabinet Member – Climate Change and the Environment• Cabinet Member – Community Safety and Wellbeing• Cabinet Member – Finance, Resources and Legal |
| Date Decision Made | 22 November 2023 |

190. To receive announcements by the Leader

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| Decision Made | Announcements were received from the Leader (No decisions required/made) |
| Date Decision Made | 22 November 2023 |

191. Council Tax Base 2024-25

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| Decision Made | The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to |
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The report reminded Council that In line with the Council’s Financial Procedure Rules, section 3.2, all virements (both revenue and capital) above £500,000 shall require approval of the Council after taking into consideration the recommendations of Cabinet.

Members raised and acknowledged a number of points on the report including:-

- Concern being expressed regarding further monies being committed to the Maesteg Town Hall project from an allocation of capital funding committed to the Waterton Depot scheme, with the caveat regarding a level of understanding of the importance of progressing works to Maesteg Town Hall;
- That the extra virement committed to Maesteg Town Hall should be the subject of scrutiny, to ensure any lessons are learnt when financially committing to future similar Capital programme projects;
- Maesteg Town Hall has over time, been the subject of a number of iterations, however, the extent of the issue regarding dry rot in the structure of the building had only recently been identified. The works to remedy this were therefore extremely important, in order to fully preserve the building;
- Should the application for National Lottery Heritage funding be granted (in the absence of any external funding being available), then the extent of the further funding required would reduce the virement from £1.173m to £857k;
- The reason the request is being made to vire from the capital allocation for the Waterton depot scheme is that at present the project has not been progressed and the financial values for delivery were unknown. An update report on this scheme would therefore be brought to Cabinet and/or Council once the position was fully known.

Members unanimously agreed that a vote should take place on the report’s recommendations, the result of which was as follows:-

| For (the recommendations) | Against | Abstentions |
|---------------------------|---------|-------------|
| 35 | 3 | 9 |

RESOLVED: (1) That Council approved a virement within the Capital Programme of £1,173,530 from the Waterton Depot scheme to the Maesteg Town Hall Scheme. This approval was subject to the recommendations of Cabinet following the report being taken to Cabinet on 21 November 2023.

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| | (2) That Council further noted, that should external capital funding be secured this virement will be amended down to £857,439. |
| Date Decision Made | 22 November 2023 |

193. Corporate Self-Assessment 2022/23

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| Decision Made | <p>The Policy and Public Affairs Manager submitted a report, in order to provide Members with an update on the Council's second corporate self-assessment report and judgements, and to seek approval for the draft report in Appendix 1 (to the covering report).</p> <p>The report outlined the process and findings of the Council's self-assessment for 2022/23. The approach was more embedded in regular quarterly reporting than in the previous year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main differences from last year's final report were :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Challenge sessions took place earlier; o Case studies were included; o More comprehensive coverage of consultation and engagement through the year was further included; o Annual performance data would be published alongside and to support the self-assessment; o Planned consultation is more comprehensive. • The self-assessment judgements were :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Wellbeing Objective One – Good o Wellbeing Objective Two – Adequate o Wellbeing Objective Three – Good o Use of resources – Adequate o Governance – Good <p>The Policy and Public Affairs Manager stated that changes have been made the Corporate Self-Assessment, in order to reflect public responses during the formal consultation period.</p> <p>Members made a number of points on the report, examples of which included:-</p> |
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196. To receive the following Questions from:

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| Decision Made | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Councillor S Bletsoe to the Cabinet Member – Education (response circulated previously to members) Supplementary questions were asked by Councillor S Bletsoe and Councillor Alex Williams2. Councillor T Thomas to the Cabinet Member – Education (response circulated previously to members) Supplementary questions were asked by Councillor T Thomas and Councillor M Hughes3. Councillor M Williams to the Cabinet Member – Climate Change and the Environment No supplementary questions were asked on this question. |
| Date Decision Made | 22 November 2023 |

197. Urgent Items

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| Decision Made | None |
| Date Decision Made | 22 November 2023 |

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#)

Agenda Item 4

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| Meeting of: | COUNCIL |
| Date of Meeting: | 17 JANUARY 2024 |
| Report Title: | PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL BY THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CHIEF EXECUTIVE |
| Responsible Officer: | MARK GALVIN SENIOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER – COMMITTEES |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules. |
| Executive Summary: | The report and accompanying presentation will update Council on the latest work and developments of the above organisation and partner of the Council, as well as to outline to Members similar presentations to be given to future meetings of Council, by other Stakeholders. |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Council of a presentation proposed to be delivered by representatives of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

2. Background

- 2.1 Council will be accustomed to receiving presentations from its key partners and stakeholders periodically in the past.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The presentation will be given to Council at its January meeting by Mr Huw Jakeway and colleagues.
- 3.2 Further presentations will be scheduled periodically for future Council meetings from partner organisations and agencies, with the next tranche scheduled being Valleys to Coast, BAVO, Halo and Welsh Water.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 That Council is recommended to note the presentation as referred to at paragraph 3.1 of the report.

Background documents

None.

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| Meeting of: | COUNCIL |
| Date of Meeting: | 17 JANUARY 2024 |
| Report Title: | COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2024-25 |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE |
| Responsible Officer: | JANICE JENKINS BENEFITS AND FINANCIAL ASSESSMENTS MANAGER |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | The Council Tax Reduction Scheme is set in accordance with the Policy Framework and Budget Procedure Rules. |
| Executive Summary: | <p>The report outlines the requirement for the Council to adopt a Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme for 2024-25 by 31 January 2024. The scheme provides vital assistance for those on low incomes with a liability to pay council tax.</p> <p>Amendment regulations have been laid by Welsh Government uprating the financial figures used in the CTR schemes and making amendments to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disregard a Widowed Parents Allowance (WPA) back payment from the calculation of an applicant’s capital and, for a period of 12 months, disregard a retrospective Bereavement Support Payment (BSP). • disregard any compensation or support payment received from the calculation of an applicant’s capital for Post Office Compensation payments (made in connection with the failings of the Post Office Horizon system), the Vaccine Damage Payment scheme and the Infected Blood Inquiry. • make minor technical amendments to the 2013 CTR Regulations to align provisions in Wales with England and housing benefit provisions. • reflect changes to the legislative landscape as a result of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022. <p>The 2024-25 scheme maintains the maximum level of support at 100% for eligible claimants. The cost of the CTR scheme for 2024-25 is estimated at £16.5m, which includes the cost of disregarding war pensions in full when calculating CTR entitlement (estimated at £4,127).</p> |

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding the proposed 2024-25 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme, and seeks Council approval to adopt this CTR scheme by 31 January 2024.

2. Background

- 2.1 CTR provides assistance for those on low incomes with a liability to pay council tax.
- 2.2 Under Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 (chapter 3, section 33) the UK government abolished Council Tax Benefit (CTB) with the intention of localising support for council tax from 31 March 2013.
- 2.3 From this date the responsibility to provide support for council tax and the funding associated with it, was devolved to local authorities in England, to the Scottish Government and to the Welsh Government, with a commitment from the UK government to also reduce UK government expenditure on the benefit by 10%. The Welsh Government was thereafter responsible for the establishment of localised schemes in Wales.
- 2.4 The Welsh Government decided to develop a single nationally defined scheme set out in regulations for the provision of council tax support in Wales. The scheme also provided for a small number of discretionary elements which individual councils can choose to adopt; any additional associated costs were to be locally funded.
- 2.5 On 18 January 2023, the Council adopted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023-24 in accordance with The Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013. This scheme will end on 31 March 2024.
- 2.6 From the latest data, there are currently 12,435 households receiving CTR; 8,019 of these are of working age and 4,416 are of pensionable age. Out of the 12,435 households receiving CTR, 9,658 are entitled to a full reduction.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-25

- 3.2 The CTR Scheme in Wales is set by regulations made under Schedule 1B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as inserted by the Local Government Finance Act 2012).
- 3.3 On 27 November 2013, the Welsh Assembly laid regulations that implemented the arrangements to support those who will pay council tax. The Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 and Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (Wales) Regulations 2013 prescribe 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.

- 3.4 The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2024 have now been laid before the Senedd for approval. Subject to the approval of the Senedd, these Regulations will uprate the financial figures in the 2013 Regulations to ensure that the scheme in place for the 2024-25 financial year reflects increases in the cost-of-living. These regulations uprate the financial figures used in the CTR schemes and make amendments to:
- disregard a Widowed Parents Allowance (WPA) back payment from the calculation of an applicant's capital, and for a period of 12 months, disregard a retrospective Bereavement Support Payment (BSP).
 - disregard any compensation or support payment received from the calculation of an applicant's capital for Post Office Compensation payments (made in connection with the failings of the Post Office Horizon system), the Vaccine Damage Payment scheme and the Infected Blood Inquiry.
 - make minor technical amendments to the 2013 CTR Regulations to align provisions in Wales with England and housing benefit provisions.
 - reflect changes to the legislative landscape as a result of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022.
- 3.5 The new Regulations do not contain any significant changes, from the claimants' perspective, to the current scheme and the maximum level of support that eligible claimants can receive remains at 100%. The Regulations can be found at: [The Council Tax Reduction Schemes \(Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme\) \(Amendment\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2024](#).
- 3.6 Within the Prescribed Requirements Regulations there is limited discretion given to the Council to apply discretionary elements that are more generous than the national scheme. These are:
- The ability to increase the standard extended reduction period of 4 weeks given to persons after they return to work (where they have previously been receiving CTR that is to end as a result of their return to work);
 - Discretion to increase the amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions which is to be disregarded when calculating income of the claimant; and
 - The ability to backdate the application of CTR with regard to late claims prior to the new standard period of three months before the claim.
- 3.7 The Council must adopt a CTR Scheme regardless of whether it applies any of the discretionary elements. 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 in accordance with the Prescribed Requirements Regulations.
- 3.8 It is proposed that the discretionary elements remain as follows:
- The extended payment period is maintained at the minimum standard of 4 weeks.
 - War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions are fully disregarded when calculating entitlement to CTR. The estimated cost of this proposal within the financial year is £4,127.
 - Backdating is maintained at the minimum standard of 3 months.

3.9 The total estimated cost to the Council for these three proposals is £4,127 for 2024-25.

3.10 **Main Issues**

3.11 The Council must consider whether to replace or revise its CTR scheme and is obliged to make a scheme under the requirements of the Prescribed Requirements Regulations. The obligation is a statutory duty and applies even if the Council chooses not to apply any of the discretions available to it.

3.12 The recommended approach to the available discretions is to apply the recommendations in Table 1 at paragraph 3.20 of this report. It should be noted that there are no additional monies available from the Welsh Government to fund the discretionary elements.

3.13 The scheme must be administered by local authorities within a fixed budget. There are significant difficulties adequately funding a service which is demand led with a fixed cost budget provision. The Welsh Government has confirmed there will be no additional funding to bridge any gap and each authority will be expected to meet any shortfall.

3.14 The Council continues to have powers to support hardship on an individual basis or in respect of a defined group. Such arrangements cannot, however, form part of the CTR Scheme itself.

3.15 **Adoption of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

3.16 The Council is required to adopt a scheme by 31 January 2024 in accordance with The Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, regardless of whether it chooses to apply any of the discretionary elements. If the Council fails to make a scheme, then a default scheme will apply.

3.17 It is recommended that the Council adopts:

- a Scheme under The Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, which includes all the elements that must be included in the scheme, as set out in the Regulations; and with regard to the discretionary elements, includes the recommendations in Table 1 set out at Paragraph 3.20 below; and
- The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 to 2023; and
- The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2024.

3.18 Part 5 of The Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 (Other matters that must be included in an Authority's Scheme) identifies which elements of the prescribed requirements of a scheme are minimum only requirements and in respect of which local authorities have an element of discretion.

3.19 The recommendation in relation to the available discretionary elements is contained in Table 1 below, and takes into account the following:

- The current local scheme in relation to the treatment of War Disablement Pensions, War Widows Pensions and War Widowers Pensions for Housing Benefit and 2023-24 CTR scheme, which disregards these payments in full; and,
- The fixed funding available.

3.20 Table 1 – Discretionary elements

| Part 5 – Other matters that must be included in an authority’s scheme | Prescribed Requirement Regulations (Minimum Requirements) | Recommended Details to be Adopted with regard to discretionary elements |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Ability to increase the standard extended reduction period of 4 weeks given to applicants where they have previously been receiving a council tax reduction that is to end, as they have ceased receiving qualifying benefits as a result of returning to work, increasing their hours of work, or receiving increased earnings. Regulation 32 (3) and Regulation 33 (3), paragraph 33 Schedule 1 and paragraph 35 and paragraph 40 Schedule 6.</p> | <p>4 weeks</p> | <p>Pensioners: The 4 weeks period specified in paragraph 33 Schedule 1 will apply, and</p> <p>Non-pensioners: The 4 weeks period specified in paragraph 35 and 40 Schedule 6 will apply.</p> |
| <p>Ability to backdate applications of CTR for the minimum requirements specified in the Regulations will apply periods longer than the standard period of 3 months before the claim is made. Regulation 34 (4) and paragraph 3 and 4 of Schedule 13.</p> | <p>3 months</p> | <p>Pensioners: The period of 3 months specified in paragraph 3 Schedule 13 will apply, and</p> <p>Non-pensioners: The period of 3 months specified in paragraph 4, Schedule 13 will apply.</p> |
| <p>Ability to disregard more than the statutory weekly £10 of income received in respect of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions and War Widowers Pensions (disregarded when calculating income of the applicant); Regulation 34 (5), paragraphs 1(a) and 1(b) Schedule 4 and paragraphs 20(a) and 20(b) of Schedule 9</p> | <p>£10</p> | <p>Pensioners: The total value of any pension specified in paragraph 1(a) and 1(b) Schedule 4 will be disregarded.</p> <p>Non-pensioners: The total value of any pension specified in paragraph 20(a) and</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| | | 20(b) Schedule 9 will be disregarded. |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.
- 4.2 The Welsh Government has undertaken a detailed regulatory impact assessment, which includes an equality impact assessment; the findings reported were in line with their expectations.
- 4.3 The Council has previously undertaken a consultation exercise and this consultation assists the Council in satisfying the public sector equality duty in the Equality Act 2010.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Act provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how public services should work to deliver for people. The well-being objectives are designed to complement each other and are part of an integrated way of working to improve well-being for the people of Bridgend. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of the well-being goals or objectives as a result of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The 2024-25 Provisional Local Government Settlement shows that the sum provided for CTR across Wales is at the same level as 2023-24, a total of £244 million, a sum that has not changed in recent years. Bridgend Council's 2024-25 provisional settlement from Welsh Government includes £12.512 million to fund the CTR scheme, a reduction of £130,000 from the allocation of £12.642 million in 2023-24. This amount does not take into account any increase in council tax charges but is distributed based on expenditure on council tax reduction schemes in previous years. This amount is unlikely to change in the final settlement.
- 8.2 Any shortfall between the amount provided in the settlement and the amount of CTR awarded, including any discretionary elements, will fall on the Council. The proposed

budget for 2024-25 is currently £16.054 million. Additional funding of £1 million to meet the full cost of the CTR scheme was included in the base budget as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014-15 to 2017-18. In addition, further funding has also been provided through the MTFS since then to meet demographic changes and changes arising as a result of the increase in council tax. Based on the current caseload the estimated total cost of the scheme for 2024-25 is around £16.5 million (including the cost of the discretionary elements), based upon the proposed council tax increase included within the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) report to Cabinet on 16 January 2024, which is £3.988 million higher than the funding provided by Welsh Government and higher than the current CTR budget. Likely spend could change depending upon the final council tax increase for 2024-25, which will be presented to Council for approval on 28 February 2024. However, with the ongoing cost of living climate, and the impact of this on people's financial and economic circumstances, demand may well increase, so this budget will be kept under review during the financial year and the position reported as part of the quarterly monitoring process to Cabinet.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that Council notes the report and adopts the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-2025 as set out in paragraphs 3.15 to 3.20 of this report.

Background documents

None

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