

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2017

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2017 AT 3.00 PM

Present

Councillor RD Jenkins – Mayor and Chairperson

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|-------------|------------|-------------------|------------------|
| S Aspey | HJ David | G Davies | GW Davies MBE |
| PA Davies | E Dodd | DK Edwards | N Farr |
| EP Foley | CA Green | EM Hughes | CJ James |
| P James | RM James | PN John | B Jones |
| CL Jones | RC Jones | DRW Lewis | JE Lewis |
| JR McCarthy | HE Morgan | LC Morgan | MEJ Nott OBE |
| AD Owen | D Patel | RL Penhale-Thomas | G Phillips |
| CE Smith | G Thomas | M Thomas | JH Tildesley MBE |
| HJ Townsend | E Venables | KJ Watts | C Westwood |
| DBF White | PJ White | HM Williams | R Williams |
| M Winter | | | |

Apologies for Absence

M Butcher, N Clarke, M Gregory, M Jones, DG Owen, DR Pugh, CL Reeves, M Reeves, D Sage, JC Spanswick and RE Young

Officers:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Susan Cooper | Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing |
| Mark Galvin | Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees |
| Randal Hemingway | Head of Finance & Section 151 Officer |
| Andrew Jolley | Corporate Director Operational & Partnership Services |
| Darren Mepham | Chief Executive |
| Jonathan Parsons | Group Manager Development |
| Mark Shephard | Corporate Director - Communities |

702. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor B Jones – Personal interest in Agenda item 11, as his brother owns a property in the County Borough which has been empty for a number of years.

D Mepham – Prejudicial interest in Agenda item 9, in view of his role of Returning Officer within the Authority. The Chief Executive left the meeting whilst this report was being considered.

703. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of Council dated 11 January 2017, be approved as a true and accurate record.

704. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:

Mayor

The Mayor was delighted to inform those present, that the response to the Mayor's citizenship awards this year had been outstanding with over 60 nominations being

received. Judging will be taking place next week and the winners and nominators will be notified thereafter.

To start the year the Mayor and his Consort had a lovely visit to the Contact Zone in Bridgend. This not for profit organisation provides children of separated families a safe, friendly environment to meet with their non-resident parent, grandparent or siblings. The Mayor stated that it was interesting to talk with the staff, volunteers and families and see what a positive effect this centre is having on so many people.

A couple of weeks ago the Mayor was delighted to be asked to present prizes at Litchard Primary School. The pupils had entered a competition to design a poster in order to raise awareness of hate crime. The response to this competition was amazing with many pupils eager to take part. The two winners had their posters made into banners which will be displayed around the school and the Mayor felt that from what he saw, this was an extremely worthwhile and timely campaign.

This led the Mayor onto the annual Holocaust Memorial, which this year he had the honour of attending as Mayor. It was humbling to listen to the stories and experiences of people who have lived through such terrible events, but also to hear how they have gone on to rise above these experiences and bring good where there was once evil. Along with his Consort, the Mayor was privileged to light the Memorial Day candle and show support for this essential reminder of what a free, tolerant and democratic society we live in and how we must fight for it to remain so.

Deputy Leader

The Deputy leader confirmed that he was really pleased to see that the local library service has scored a 97 per cent satisfaction rating in the latest Welsh Public Library Standards performance report.

Nearly 6,000 new library members registered during 2015 - 16, so it has proven to be a very successful opening chapter in our partnership with the Awen Cultural Trust.

The service now has more than 74,700 registered members and recorded over 449,000 visits for the year. A total of 450,230 books, DVDs and other items were borrowed in that time.

It was interesting to note he added, that almost a quarter of all book reservations are now made online, and the number of e-books, e-audio and e-zines loaned out every year has risen to 25,000.

He was sure Members would agree that our partnership with the Awen Cultural Trust has enabled us to not only keep libraries open at a time when public services are facing huge funding challenges, but it has also allowed us to develop and improve the service, and make it more relevant to how people lives their lives.

Libraries continue to play a vital role within our communities, especially as 43 per cent of people using ICT facilities have reported their reason for doing so as being a lack of access at home.

He was looking forward to see the service deliver further improvements over the next twelve months.

Members may also have seen stories in the media about the Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon Power project.

As we are such close neighbours and this is a huge initiative with the potential for drawing large numbers of visitors into the region, the Deputy Leader had asked if Members can receive a pre-Council presentation on the project.

Cabinet Member - Social Services and Early Help

The Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help asked Members if they would encourage more of their constituents to become foster carers in 2017.

We currently had 385 children and young people in care, including short-term, out of county and residential care placements.

Bridgend Foster Care is keen to hear from more people that are willing to foster a child in need or interested in finding out more.

The start of the year is a good time to encourage people to consider becoming a foster carer.

Almost anyone can do it he added, and the Council encouraged people from a variety of different backgrounds and life experiences to meet the needs of the children.

Foster carers receive an allowance, training and extensive support, including access to experienced foster carers and support groups.

Many carers say that fostering is one of the best things they have ever done the Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help added.

He asked those present, if they knew of anyone who was interested in finding out more about becoming a foster carer, then to direct them to Bridgend foster care.com, or ask them to telephone 642674.

He concluded his submission, by stating that as part of their planned national programme of inspection, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales have commenced an inspection into Children's Social Services in Bridgend. Bridgend is the fourth Local Authority to be inspected this year following Cardiff, Anglesey and Carmarthen. The inspection will look at access to services including information, advice and assistance, early interventions and care & support services. The focus will be on the quality of outcomes achieved for children in need of help, care & support and/or protection, including children who have recently become looked after by the local authority. The inspection will also evaluate the quality of leadership, management and governance arrangements in place to develop and support service delivery.

Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations

The Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations was pleased to confirm that Bridgend County Borough Council's efforts in championing inclusive sport opportunities have been recognised by Disability Sport Wales.

Having achieved their InSport Bronze level accreditation back in 2014, the Council's ongoing work in supporting local sports clubs and organisations to become more inclusive has seen this rise to Silver status.

This has been achieved through a number of ways. The local authority has a dedicated Disability Sport Wales Officer who operates the National Disability Sport programme, working with schools and local organisations to identify opportunities for people with disabilities.

A range of targeted services and programmes are in place to support all groups of people to be more active including those with disabilities, older people, women and girls and people living in disadvantaged areas.

The legacy of Team GB's Paralympic success, along with support from local authorities and organisations such as Disability Sport Wales, is seeing more people with disabilities across Wales taking part in physical activities.

The Authority were now working with Disability Sport Wales on achieving Gold status, and she looked forward to bringing Members more news on this in the immediate future.

Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration

The Cabinet Member – Education and regeneration advised that improvement work had been completed along Porthcawl seafront which is making it easier to cycle between two of the resort's most popular beaches.

Footways along the esplanade and the coastline have been widened and new tactile paving has been installed, while there has also been some resurfacing, new signage, and drainage improvements.

New ornamental railings are in place next to Cosy Corner, and four sets of bike racks have been added along the seafront.

The improvements mean that a shared cycle and pedestrian route now runs all the way from Rest Bay to Sandy Bay.

Bridgend County Borough Council was awarded £300,000 from the Coastal Communities Fund to carry out the improvements.

The improvements make it more enjoyable to ride along the coastline for leisure purposes, and also encourage 'active travel' by making it more practical for people to walk or cycle on their everyday journeys to and from school or work.

It has enhanced links to local attractions, facilities and businesses, and forms part of the National Cycle Network Route 88.

But more than that, it is the latest step towards our long-term aspiration of improving the local cycle network so that Porthcawl town centre is connected with all of the surrounding residential areas.

He hoped Members will pay a visit and see for themselves how Porthcawl is benefitting from the work.

He also congratulated Pencoed Comprehensive School following their recent Estyn report.

The school's current performance and prospects for improvement were both rated as being 'Good'.

So congratulations were due to the head teacher, staff, pupils, parents and governors of Pencoed Comprehensive School

Inspectors highlighted factors such as improved performance at key stage four, strong progress for pupils with additional learning needs, the development of knowledge,

understanding and skills, good behaviour, enthusiasm for lessons, lesson-planning, a wide range of extra-curricular activities and a fully inclusive school community with a very caring ethos.

The inspectors also found a culture of aspiration and achievement at the school, and effective support for the head teacher from the senior leadership team.

Following Bryntirion's recent double 'Excellent' from Estyn, this is another great achievement for Bridgend as a Local Education Authority.

The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration was sure that Members would join him in offering encouragement and best wishes to everyone who has played a part in helping BCBC schools achieve such positive results.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to a recent proposal by the Department for Work and Pensions.

They had announced that they want to relocate the job centre that is currently near the Asda store at Pyle and move it to Dock Street in Porthcawl.

The proposal is part of a restructure that the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) says is designed to improve its services and offer better value for taxpayers.

There are no job losses associated with the proposal, and the DWP say they are planning to increase staff at the centre.

They also want to establish a Work Coach at a local community venue near the current Pyle location, for example, at the life centre.

They estimate that the new location of the job centre would be a little over four miles away from its current location, or approximately 15 minutes by car or 35 minutes on public transport.

Because of this, they were carrying out public consultation, and this will be available until 28 February.

The Chief Executive was sure that Members would have views on the proposal, and would want to represent local residents in this matter.

He concluded by advising that Members may also want to let their constituents know that the consultation is live at the DWP website, and can be found at the Department for Work And Pensions website.

705. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE LEADER

The Leader advised that he was really pleased to see that the local library service has scored a 97 per cent satisfaction rating in the latest Welsh Public Library Standards performance report.

Nearly 6,000 new library members registered during 2015 - 16, so it had proven to be a very successful opening chapter in our partnership with the Awen Cultural Trust.

The service now has more than 74,700 registered members and recorded over 449,000 visits for the year. A total of 450,230 books, DVDs and other items were borrowed in that time.

It was interesting to note he added, that almost a quarter of all book reservations are now made online, and the number of e-books, e-audio and e-zines loaned out every year has risen to 25,000.

The Council's partnership with the Awen Cultural Trust has enabled it to not only keep libraries open at a time when public services face are facing huge funding challenges, but it had also allowed us to develop and improve the service, and make it more relevant to how people lives their lives.

Libraries continue to play a vital role within our communities, especially as 43 per cent of people using ICT facilities have reported their reason for doing so as being a lack of access at home, and he was looking forward to seeing the service deliver further improvements over the next twelve months.

The Leader added that Members may have also seen stories in the media, about the Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon Power project. As close neighbours, this was a national initiative with the potential for securing jobs across South Wales due to the securing of a 120 year power supply. He had asked if Members could receive in the immediate future, a pre-Council presentation on the project.

Finally, the Leader announced that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government Mr Mark Drakeford AM, had unveiled a White Paper yesterday on Local government reform. These had been broadly welcomed by the WLGA and a report would be submitted to Council in relation to this, in due course.

706. CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION - CITY DEAL

The Chief Executive presented a report which advised Members of the next steps for the above City Deal and sought approval for the formal establishment of the Cardiff Capital Region Joint Committee, which will oversee the region's economic growth agenda and delivery of the 20 year project. The report also sought approval of the Joint Working Agreement (JWA), Assurance Framework, Implementation Plan and Cardiff's role as the 'Accountable Body' that will enable the establishment of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

By way of background information, the Chief Executive reminded Council that on 15 March 2016 each of the ten local authority Leaders, the First Minister of Wales, the Welsh Government Minister for Finance, the Secretary of State for Wales and the Chief Secretary to HM Treasury signed the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal Heads of Terms Agreement (Appendix A to the report). This would unlock £1.2b and over its lifetime of 20 years, partners envisaged that the City Deal would deliver up to 25,000 new jobs and leverage an additional £4b of private sector investment.

The Chief Executive added that £734m would be allocated to Metro, with £495m covering an Investment Fund to support additional economic development activities. The latter provided the focus of the local government capital contribution of £120m borne by the 10 local authorities, with the remaining £375m provided by the UK government over a 20 year period. He added that the Heads of Terms made clear that further work was needed to conclude the City Deal, particularly in relation to the development of governance arrangements, in order to administer the £1.2b fund.

Paragraph 3.9 of the report then advised of the bodies that had been introduced to adequately cover essential governance issues attached to the City Deal. The Chief Executive further added that in addition to these, and in order to discharge the Cardiff Capital Region's City Deal commitments and implement an ambitious economic strategy in the longer term, the 10 local authorities requested that greater financial autonomy and flexibility should be granted by government, in order to accelerate the delivery of critical infrastructure across the region, at a time of local authority funding restraints.

The next section of the report advised that a Programme Management Office has been established, and in addition to this, external legal support was appointed to develop a Joint Working Agreement (Appendix C to the report refers). This will provide the legal framework for the establishment of a Joint Committee for the Cardiff Capital Region.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the next step was to formally establish the Regional Cabinet and agree the terms and conditions of the City Deal Investment Fund. There were 3 specific requirements to be met, set by UK and Welsh Governments, namely:-

- The transition of the Regional Cabinet out of the "Shadow" arrangements
- Formal approval of the Assurance Framework for the Investment Fund; and
- Formal approval of the Implementation Plan

Further details in respect of these were contained in the report and explained at the meeting by the Chief Executive.

A Member asked if the cost for support of the Programme Management Office (PMO) came from the recurrent budget pressure of £94k, required to fund BCBC's share of Joint Committee costs.

The Chief Executive advised that the support for the PMO was borne proportionately by each of the 10 participating local authorities.

A Member stated that he had welcomed the attendance of the Leader of Monmouthshire County Council as well as Vice-Chair of the proposed City Region Cabinet to the last meeting of the Partnerships and Governance Overview & Scrutiny Committee to participate in discussion on the City Deal.

At that meeting he expressed concerns over the joint working of ten very different authorities in terms of the communities they make up, and how they would reach agreement on the portion of the funding that isn't allocated which amounted to near half a billion pounds. At the above meeting, the Leader of Monmouthshire stated that he is only too well aware of the disadvantages facing particularly the valley council areas, and therefore, he for one would be happy to see a project be developed in an area that would have the greatest benefit from it i.e. such as in the valleys, and the Member hoped that that would be the case.

The lasting or continuing legacy of a project of this kind would in part, be determined by the impact it has on the most disadvantaged people and communities in South Wales, many of which were in Bridgend. He hoped that the already well-connected and well-positioned authorities, such as Cardiff, Newport and the Vale of Glamorgan would not have an advantage over authorities such as Bridgend, though he did note that six of the ten authorities were considered as 'Valley Councils'. Those common challenges that will be faced he felt must be tackled by the common opportunities we share, and he hoped that this was part of the mindset of those sitting on the joint committee.

In his capacity as the joint lead on Regional Transport for the City Deal, he asked the Leader to try and ensure that well-connected transport, and in particular, the

development of the metro scheme be introduced as soon as possible. The whole city region concept was built on competitiveness, and nothing could hamper that more than schemes that take months and years to come to fruition whilst ensuring that private sector growth is driven in any region other than ours.

He referred to paragraphs 7.7 and 7.8 on page 27 of the report and the joint working agreement business plan which will require debate amongst the ten local authorities. He asked that the business plan when agreed, be the subject of a further report to both Cabinet and Council for debate and discussion to ensure that elected Members are happy with the vision of how the currently unallocated £495m will be spent going forward, and that it is of maximum benefit to the BCB.

He also hoped that the City Deal will be the subject of scrutiny across the ten authorities, but more importantly by Members of this Authority, to ensure that it continues to be of benefit and delivers for the people and the communities that we represent. He asked whether or not the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be given the opportunity to view the authority's proposals going forward.

He felt that it was incumbent upon the Joint Committee and on BCBC to ensure that its constituents were as well-informed on the City Deal as possible, whilst being mindful and managing of expectations.

He was aware of the risk involved in taking this project forward, however, he also believed that the greatest risk was in not taking the risk at all and instead opting out of the deal which he supported.

A Member referred to paragraph 7.12 of the report and the number of technical and accounting matters, including the finalisation of grant Terms and Conditions. It added that matters such as these needed to be resolved with the Wales Audit Office, and until such time written agreement regarding this was received, the likes of the above would remain as key project risks and any changes that result in an increase to the Affordability Envelope is a matter reserved back to each Council. He asked if it was prudent to sign the Agreement until such time these issues were resolved. He also asked if Brexit would in any way jeopardise the European funding and funding allocated for the metro.

The Chief Executive advised that he was reasonably confident that the financial envelope as detailed in the report would be as is and audited effectively. He added however, that if this was to change in any way, then this would be the subject of a further report to Council. He conceded that the Project was as 'big as they come', and that due to this there were inevitably risks attached to it. However, he was confident that these would be mitigated by Reserved Matters and the Assurance Framework. With regard to Brexit and European funding, the Chief Executive advised that there was no element of European funding other than for the Metro which would be passed through the UK and then Welsh Government. This funding has to be progressed within a specified timescale, or it would not be able to be accessed.

The Leader advised that the report before Members was an important part of the City Deal process.

The City Deal could bring about an economic and social step-change in the Cardiff Capital Region, through improved transport, supporting innovation, an improved digital network, developing skills, supporting enterprise and business growth, and through housing development and regeneration.

£1.2 billion of investment to increase the performance of the city-region economy. Over its lifetime of 20 years, City Deal will deliver up to 25,000 new jobs and leverage an additional £4 billion of private sector investment.

Although not a panacea, he felt that this was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Wales has seen nothing on this scale before he stated. The critical mass needed to compete internationally can only be achieved through the collective power of 1.5m people working together in a joined up system and sharing in the benefits that brings. We are committed to the City Deal and we are committed to unlocking the benefits it can bring to our city and our region.

Members have asked lots of questions, we have had all member briefings and the opportunity to read all the public Cabinet reports and received regular updates from the Chief Executive.

The Leader added, that he was very encouraged that the Partnerships and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee dedicated a long and full meeting to an in-depth review of the City Deal and made no recommendations. He believed this represented cross party support for a cross party initiative to secure investment and a step-change.

The scale of the opportunity and the strength of the case for the City Deal is reflected in the scale and diversity of the support for the vision across the region, in the Cardiff Capital Region.

The Vice Chancellors of each university in South East Wales, Cardiff University, the University of South Wales and the Cardiff Metropolitan University have given their "wholehearted" support to the project. Professors *Aitchison, Riordan Lydon* described it as *the* "most exciting and significant economic investment opportunity for the region in recent history".

Key organisations, representing businesses across the region, CBI Wales, the Federation of Small Business Wales, IOD Wales and South and Mid Wales Chamber of Commerce have all given their support, describing "the critical importance of the deal to the economic future of the region".

The Valley authorities of Torfaen, Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent, Rhondda Cynon Taf Councils unanimously voted to back the City Deal last week. The rural authority of Monmouthshire has unanimously backed the City Deal also he confirmed.

The City of Newport had overwhelmingly backed the deal. Even the City of Cardiff authority (an authority not renowned for its cross party consensus) has voted unanimously to back the deal.

Labour, Independent, Plaid Cymru, Conservative, Liberal Democrat Councillors have all supported the City Deal, the Leader also added.

He was therefore, very proud and very excited that Members had agreed unanimously today for Bridgend to take the next step in the City Deal initiative.

The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration added that the first 40 pages of the report's Appendix reflected the excellent themes of the City Deal, which ranged from transport improvements, increased housing, and the gaining of education and skills in order for individuals to secure employment. It also contained an example of an excellent International role model such as a similar Deal that took place in Bilbao.

The Chief Executive in response to a previous question, advised that further reports would be presented to Cabinet and Council on any financial elements of the Deal. In terms of the Scrutiny process regarding the monitoring of the City Deal, this could be the subject of scrutinising on a regional basis, though this had not yet been fully resolved.

The Deputy Leader concluded debate on this item, by advising that the City Deal would be significant whereby common problems would be solved regionally through the ten participating authorities where there would be equal status of one vote per Authority on various projects and schemes, irrespective of the size of the Authority. It was a huge scheme that would make a huge difference to the region involved, and he was sure the authorities involved would ensure that the benefits of the scheme would be optimised.

RESOLVED: That Council agreed the following in so far as it applies to each of their functions:-

1. Approved the Joint Working Agreement (appendix C) as the legal document that formally establishes the Cardiff Capital Region Joint Committee (the 'Regional Cabinet') as a Joint Committee, with delegated functions, with a Commencement Date of the 1st March 2017. The elected member representative to the Regional Cabinet shall be the Leader of the Council, or his/her nominated Deputy;
2. Approved the financial contributions from each constituent council towards the collective £120m total, (together with such associated costs e.g. carry costs), as detailed in the body of this report;
3. Approved the carry forward of any remaining revenue funds from 2016/2017, contributed by each constituent council, into 2017/2018 in order that the support structure for the Regional Cabinet continues;
4. Approved the collective revenue contributions of up to £1m (inclusive of Recommendation 2.3 above, on a proportional basis as set out in the JWA) to the 2017/2018 budget, in order that the support structure for the Regional Cabinet continues;
5. Approved that the City of Cardiff Council acts as the Accountable Body with the responsibilities as set out in the JWA;
6. Approved the Assurance Framework as the open and transparent, robust decision making process for considering all proposals requiring support from the CCR City Deal Wider Investment Fund;
7. Approved the Implementation Plan in the form attached to the JWA, subject to each constituent council approving the JWA Business Plan;
8. Approved the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services and s151 Officer be granted delegated authority to agree such amendments as are necessary to the JWA, Assurance Framework and Implementation Plan (as are appropriate) from the date of acceptance of these recommendations to the Commencement Date of the 1st March 2017;
9. Approved the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services and s151 Officer be granted delegated authority to agree whether the Council should continue to explore the opportunity to continue to participate in the CCR City Deal in the

event that one or more of the ten constituent councils fail to agree any of recommendations 8.1 - 8.8 above; and

10. Approved the Leader of the Council or his nominated Deputy be granted delegated authority to sign the JWA on behalf of the Council.

707. DEPARTURE FROM DEVELOPMENT PLAN - PLANNING APPLICATION P/16/939/FUL - CONSTRUCT A SINGLE STOREY CAFE BUILDING WITH ANCILLARY SPACES FOR USE BY SOUTH WALES POLICE

The Group Manager – Development outlined the above report, which was a proposal for a single storey cafeteria building to be centrally located within the Police Headquarters site, to replace an existing cafeteria building.

He confirmed that on 19 January 2017, the Development Control Committee considered the planning application which represented a departure from the Local Development Plan, and was therefore referred to Council for determination.

The application site forms part of a wider residential allocation in the Bridgend Strategic Regeneration Growth Area for approximately 138 units under Policy COM1 (5) of the Local Development Plan (LDP) (2013).

South Wales Police (SWP) were currently undertaking a large-scale rationalisation programme of their existing facilities and assets and, up until recently, their original rationalisation proposals involved the release of the entire northern part of their existing HQ facilities for alternative development. However, SWP had confirmed that they have reassessed their assets as part of their ongoing rationalisation programme. They now propose to pursue an alternative strategy which entails carrying on with their programme of refurbishment and improvement works and retaining the whole of their existing HQ site at Cowbridge Road.

On the basis that the SWP rationalisation strategy has evolved since the adoption of the LDP in 2013, the fact that they have invested in the HQ site and, that their asset plan going forward is now to consolidate their activities and facilities at their existing site at Cowbridge Road, there is now no realistic prospect of the delivery of housing under Policy COM1(5) on this site.

Notwithstanding the loss of the housing allocation, the investment in the site and its comprehensive redevelopment is welcomed as the applicant has made a firm commitment to consolidate and retain its operations within the County Borough. The strategy will ensure that a highly prestigious HQ facility will be retained within Bridgend, thereby retaining and creating highly skilled employment opportunities as well as providing a valuable social and community service to the residents and communities of Bridgend.

Furthermore, added the Group Manager - Development, the new facilities at the Cowbridge Road site (including the cafeteria) will facilitate an earlier than previously anticipated release of SWP's land holding assets at Waterton Cross, which also forms part of the larger mixed use allocation under LDP Policy PLA3(4) Parc Afon Ewenni, including the delivery of an estimated 650 new dwellings. The concentration of the facilities at SWP's HQ at Cowbridge Road will now allow the entire Waterton Cross site to be released in a timely manner and within the LDP plan period (2013-2021). The development is, therefore, broadly in line with the LDP's Regeneration-Led Spatial Strategy and Strategic Policy SP1 of the LDP which aims to maximise regeneration benefits and particularly focus development within Strategic Regeneration Growth Areas. The current and wider proposals for the HQ site and the Waterton Cross site are

inextricably linked and both are located within the Bridgend Strategic Regeneration Growth Area. The current proposal, as part of a wider strategy by SWP, is therefore maximising the regeneration benefits of both sites.

In view of the foregoing, the Development Control Committee resolved not to refuse planning permission and as such the application is referred to Council which is requested to approve the application subject to conditions he concluded.

In response to a Members question, the Group Manager – Development advised that the 130 units referred to as part of the original proposal, would be re-considered for placing elsewhere in the County Borough, as part of the review of the Council's Local Development Plan later this year.

RESOLVED: That Council is minded not to refuse the development then the Corporate Director -Communities be given delegated powers to issue a decision notice in respect of this proposal to include the standard 5 year time limit for implementation and the following conditions:-

1. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

0812/91 Rev A
0812/100 Rev H
0812/120 Rev G

Reason: To avoid doubt and confusion as to the nature and extent of the approved development.

2. No development shall commence on site until a scheme for the comprehensive and integrated drainage of the site, showing how foul, road and roof/yard water will be dealt with, including future maintenance requirements, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the approved scheme must be implemented prior to beneficial use.

Reason: To ensure the effective drainage facilities are provided for the proposed development and that flood risk is not increased.

3. The approved use shall not commence until an adequate grease trap has been fitted in accordance with details that have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Thereafter the grease trap shall be maintained so as to prevent grease entering the public sewerage system.

Reason: To protect the integrity of the public sewerage system and ensure the free flow of sewerage.

4. Prior to the development being brought into beneficial use details of the extraction system to be installed, including odour abatement and noise levels generated by the external unit (sound power/pressure levels), a vertical section plan indicating the position and height of final openings of the exhaust ducts and details of an odour management plan shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details as agreed shall be implemented within 1 month of agreement and

thereafter the equipment shall be maintained in accordance with the agreed programme and retained for the duration of the use.

Reason: To ensure that the amenities of adjoining and nearby occupiers are not prejudiced.

708. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - VACATION OF OFFICE

The Monitoring Officer presented a report, to advise Council that Councillor David Sage has not attended meetings of the Authority for a period approaching six consecutive months, and seek Council's approval of the reason for his absence in accordance with a provision of the Local Government Act 1972.

The report confirmed that Councillor Sage was suffering with continued ill-health, and this was the reason why he had been absent from meetings. His absence was likely to continue beyond a period of six months also, which would lapse on 13 March 2017.

RESOLVED: That Council approved Councillor Sage's absence from attending meetings for the remainder of the municipal year due to his continuing ill-health.

709. REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE - CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report, which:

- Advised Council of the outcome of a review of the political balance of the Authority
- Seek approval of the revised political balance
- Receive nominations and appoint the necessary members to Committees to reflect the changes in the political balance, and
- Receive nominations and appoint Chairpersons to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members, that changes to the political balance of the Authority were made at the meeting of Council on 11 January 2017, but that since that meeting, a further review of the political balance was required. This was due to the fact that Councillor Cleone Westwood had become an Independent Member rather than a member of the Labour Group.

Due to the above, under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 it was also in turn necessary for Labour to relinquish one of the five Chairpersons of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. This position was to be taken by a Member of the Independent/Alliance group, based on the revised political balance calculations.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Council noted the change to the political composition of the Council.
- (2) Approved the allocation of seats to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- (3) Sought nominations as shown in paragraph 4.3 of the report for Committees, Panels and other bodies, and make changes in certain appointments to these as follows:

- Appeals Panel – Labour to relinquish 1 seat to be replaced by Cllr C Westwood
- Audit Committee – Labour to replace Cllr C Westwood with Cllr A Owen and Cllr RE Young with Cllr RC Jones
- Development Control Committee – Labour to relinquish 1 seat to be replaced by Cllr C Westwood
- Children & Young People O&SC – Labour to replace Cllr C Westwood with Cllr CL Jones
- Partnerships & Governance O&SC – Labour to relinquish 1 seat to be replaced by Cllr C Westwood

- (4) Appointed Cllr N Clarke as Chairperson of the Adult Social Care O&SC, under the provisions of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

710. **LOCAL ELECTION FEES - 2017 TO 2022 COUNTY BOROUGH AND TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

The Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services presented a report, that sought Council’s approval of the election fees proposed to be applied for the County Borough and the Town and Community Councils election in May 2017, and for the by-elections up to the next local elections in 2022.

He referred Members to paragraph 4.1 of the report, which detailed in tabular format, the level of fees proposed to be applied, and these included fees for Polling Stations, Verification and Count, and Postal Vote opening, and reflected what has been paid at the combined Welsh Assembly and Police and Crime Commissioner elections, Parliamentary by-election and the EU Referendum in 2016.

Paragraph 4.2 of the report confirmed that there would be Election administration costs in addition to the above, but these were difficult to accurately estimate at this time.

The Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services, confirmed that the fees detailed in the report were both compliant and similar to those set by other neighbouring welsh local authorities.

RESOLVED:

That Council:

- (1) Approved the schedule of fees set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report.
- (2) Delegated authority to the Returning Officer to determine the level of pay for additional administrative work required as outlined in the report, in consultation with the S151 Officer.

711. **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION FOR THE LEADER/MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR RC JONES TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR WELLBEING AND FUTURE GENERATIONS:

“Many Members here will have an empty property in their ward and so will be aware of the frustration and distress endured by their constituents who find themselves living near an empty home. In this borough there are around 2,080 homes, many of them having been empty for over 5 years. It must be heart breaking to find yourself living near and empty property and to watch it deteriorate year after year – along with the value of your own property. What schemes do BCBC have in place to bring long term empty properties back into domestic use and end this nightmare for local residents?”

Response from the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations:

Where a property has been identified as being empty on the Authority’s empty property register, twice a year the Housing Service formally requests the owner to contact the Authority to discuss the assistance it can provide to bring the property back into use. Currently the Authority has three types of grant or loan assistance to bring empty properties back into use through its Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy (latest version November 2016) - an Empty Homes Grant, an Empty Homes Loan and a Homes in Town Grant.

The principle method the Authority uses is a discretionary empty property grant to incentivise owners to return their properties into residential use. As such, the majority of the terms and conditions are those that the Council seek to implement on the scheme. It is particularly relevant as to who the property is allocated to on completion of the empty property grant. The conditions imposed on owners of property in order to receive this grant are that:

The property must

- *be over 10 years old and identified as being empty on the Authority’s empty property register (except for the conversion of non-residential units into residential units);*
- *be considered, in the Authority’s opinion, to be suitable for social letting at time of application;*
- *be free from Category 1 hazards on completion of works;*
- *be rented on completion of works, at the rate of the local housing allowance, and be available for nomination by the Authority or their appointed agent for a period of 3 years;*
- *not be the subject of a demolition order under the Housing Acts; and*
- *not have received assistance for the same works during the previous 10 year period.*

The level of assistance available to applicants is;

- Up to £10,000 per unit for a like for like conversion;
- Up to £15,000 per unit for a conversion into more units; or
- Up to £9,000 per unit for a conversion into shared units.

In addition, BCBC also operate a Welsh Government empty property loan scheme (Houses into Homes), this does not have the same restrictions on allocation. Each applicant can receive up to £25,000 per unit (up to a maximum of £150,000). This loan is interest free and aimed at bringing empty properties into use for the applicant to either sell on or to rent on the open market. As such the loan is repayable within 2 years or on actual sale of the property (whichever is shorter), or within 3 years if the property is to be rented. This loan money is then recycled into bringing more properties back into use.

The third incentive is the Homes in Town Grant. This grant shares many similarities to the Empty Property Grant but is specifically targeted at Bridgend Town centre and immediate surroundings, to bring empty units/empty space above commercial and retail units into residential use. To reflect that the work to these properties can be more complex and have more restriction (such as the need for specialist reports and works – such as acoustic surveys), a maximum grant of £30,000 per unit is allowable to undertake the works.

Fuller details of each of these incentives can be found on the Council website on the following link <http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/325220/private-sector-housing-renewal-policy-november-2016.pdf>

These measures are incentives to empty property owners and whilst every encouragement is given, all are voluntary schemes.

This non engagement can be for a number of reasons and unless the property is a public nuisance (as indicated in the Planning and Housing Acts) the powers of the Authority are extremely limited. At time of public safety the Authority is able to undertake works and seek re-imburement from the owner. When not paid, a debt action can be commenced through the courts. Ultimately this may result in an order of sale however; the owner is able to pay the debt at any point in the proceedings to stop the sale.

The council's regeneration service works with property owners in town centres, to encourage the conversion and re-use of empty commercial properties. Through the Townscape Heritage Initiative, buildings in Maesteg, Bridgend and Porthcawl have been brought back into use, for commercial and housing purposes. This work is largely resourced through external funding, and Bridgend CBC has now benefitted from more THI schemes than any other local authority in the UK except Glasgow, with whom we are on a par.

The service also plays a brokerage role, bringing empty properties to the attention of potential developers, and proactively assisting in overcoming developing constraints.

Supplementary question from Councillor RC Jones:

Whilst I applaud BCBC for these generous financial incentives, empty homes continue to exist. Currently over half of the 2080 empty properties in the borough are eligible to pay council tax. So, if these schemes are not fully resolving the problem, will BCBC consider taking action under the new powers introduced by the Welsh Government almost a year ago? Other Welsh Councils have already used these powers to impose council tax premiums on long term empty properties, will BCBC consider doing the same?

Response from the Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer:

As of December, there were a little over 2000 empty homes, with around 1,100 of these not in receipt of an empty home exemption. There has been a reduction of about 5% over the course of the last year.

Of those not in receipt of a valid exemption, only around 1/3 are what we would classify as long term empty – two years or more.

While I am aware of the new legislation and that we would of course welcome new powers, I do have some concerns over the practical implementations.

The first is over whether it would have the desired policy impact – properties deemed not fit for habitation are exempt, and therefore a surcharge might not deal with the “eyesore” properties

The second is over the difficulty in policing and enforcement. Long term empties can often be the ones where the council, despite our enforcement powers, has difficulties in recovering the debt, so adding a surcharge might just increase the level of that debt. My other concern would be in relation to fraud – so the risk that owners would claim the property was occupied when it wasn't, and it could be relatively onerous and costly for the council to police this.

I am aware that there have been articles in the press about other councils implementation, though equally I am also aware that some of those councils have chosen not to implement the policy when they have worked through some of the detail I have described.

The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations added that Cabinet would look into the new legislation and its powers further, and introduce any necessary policy to impose council tax premiums on long term empty properties should this be feasible as well as practicably workable.

Second supplementary question from Councillor D Patel

Can we have a further update to Council in respect of the outcome of the above supplementary question/response.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations

Yes, and also to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help added that there was nothing more demoralising to see empty properties falling into a state of disrepair, particularly for residents living within that vicinity. He further added that the Authority made a loss of approximately £1.2m annually in respect of empty properties and non-payment of Council Tax.

712. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 4.59 pm