

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2019 AT 15:00

Present

Councillor JR McCarthy – Chairperson

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

Apologies for Absence

RM James, RMI Shaw and JH Tildesley MBE

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Deborah Exton	Group Manager - Finance
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Janice Jenkins	Benefits and Financial Assessments Manager
Mark Shephard	Interim Chief Executive

265. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of prejudicial interest were made, and when these items were considered, the undermentioned Members left the meeting:-

Councillor E Venables – Agenda item 6. – Due to her owning a property subject to Probate

Councillor D White – Agenda item 8. – Due to a close relative being in receipt of Council Tax reduction.

Councillor JC Spanswick – Agenda item 6. – As he owned a property that was currently empty and up for sale on the open market. Agenda item 8. – As a close family member may be in receipt of the Scheme.

Councillor L Walters – Agenda item 6. – Due to her currently in the process of selling a property subject to Probate.

266. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of a meeting of Council dated 19 December 2018 be approved, subject to the following

amendment, being inserted as paragraph immediately before the decision on the item.

‘Finally, in relation to the overall increase in capital budget costs, the Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help, advised that the additional capital funding required for some schemes detailed within the programme (that amounted to a total of £800k), was not considered overall to be unreasonable.’

267. **TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:**

Mayor

The Mayor reminded Members that Friday was the deadline within which to nominate people for the Mayor’s Annual Citizenship Awards. The awards are open to people who live in the county borough, as well as groups and businesses based locally. More information can be found on the BCBC website and a nomination form can be downloaded. The winners will be honoured at an event in March.

Since the last Council meeting, the Mayor and his Consort have carried out 9 official engagements, which had been varied, different and enjoyable. He mentioned especially:-

The 100th Birthday of Lily Kennett. Lily told them about her dressmaking, how she had been a keen gardener and admirably how she sat her O levels at the age of 60.

They were also delighted to join the residents of Bryn-y-Cae care home for their Christmas party. Everyone had a great time and especially enjoyed the entertainment from a local Elvis Presley impersonator.

On a more serious note, the Mayor was honoured to represent the authority and light the candle at the Holocaust Memorial ceremony in Bridgend Sony Theatre, this morning. This was a most moving and thought provoking event. He would be also representing the authority at the Holocaust Commemoration in Cardiff on Friday coming.

The Mayor was saddened to hear of the passing away of former Bridgend County Borough Councillor Terry Hacking over the Christmas period. Terry was previously a very well respected member of the Council and he extended condolences to his family and particularly to his wife Pat, who was also previously a local member. As a mark of respect he asked all those present to observe a minute’s silence.

The Mayor concluded his submission, by advising of the following further events his Consort and he had recently attended:-

Porthcawl School Concert, Pantomime (Mayors) Sleeping Beauty Porthcawl, Rotary Club Breakfast (Speaking), Craft coffee morning (Sarn), Lord Lieutenant awards and Flag raising (LGBT) at the Civic offices.

Deputy Leader

The Deputy Leader announced that a great deal of work has been done recently by the Council and Keep Wales Tidy to encourage more people to act as litter champions.

He was sure that Members would wish to join him in thanking those who have come forward to help look after their local community.

Between October 2015 and September 2018, volunteers invested the equivalent of almost £63,000 and 8,780 hours into working on 126 local habitat and biodiversity projects.

Training was provided to 2,200 volunteers, and 2,100 people were engaged with. Volunteers undertook 450 clean-ups, adopted 99 green spaces, supported 34 community groups and created 28 litter champions.

This was a fantastic effort and he congratulated all those involved.

On a related note, Members may be interested to hear about a new initiative in the Porthcawl area which is bringing all five primary schools together.

Called 'Love it – Don't Trash it', the initiative aims to teach children to take pride in their community as they grow up, and to recycle and dispose of litter responsibly.

It has been organised in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy and Seaquest, and incorporates local litter picks and beach-clean-ups in which the children will analyse the items they collect and learn about where they came from, how they can be re-used, and where they need to be deposited to prevent them from polluting the environment.

A resource pack has been developed for the schools to use, and the results of the initiative will be studied carefully so that we can decide on whether it can be expanded.

This is a very worthwhile initiative, and he would share further news on this with Members, as things developed.

Cabinet Member – Communities

The Cabinet Member – Communities was delighted to inform Members that in addition to a £2.5m bridge strengthening programme which is going to target two bridges at Blackmill, all four of the highways and transportation initiatives which we submitted for consideration under round two of the Local Transport Fund Programme have been successful.

Welsh Government has confirmed that it will provide £60,000 for the Penprysg road bridge at Pencoed, £40,000 for improving the junction of Heol Simonston and Coychurch Road, £25,000 for enhancements along the A4063 between Sarn and Maesteg, and a further £25,000 for assorted bus corridor improvements.

Under the terms of the funding, the money must be used by the end of March, and work will progress very quickly to ensure that this deadline can be met.

Meanwhile, the bridge works at Blackmill are going to ensure that heavy goods vehicles can continue to use this key route. It will support valley traders and residents alike, all while ensuring that an important and popular community route remains safe to use.

We recently submitted our priority projects for the 2019-20 Local Transport Fund, so he hoped to have more good news for Members soon.

South Wales Police are carrying out a widespread consultation to help them understand local concerns as they seek to provide safer communities, and they would like your help.

They are asking people to share their views, experiences and perceptions, and to play a direct role in helping them to develop and shape their services. You can do this by completing a short survey, which is available in English and Welsh.

Full details are available at the South Wales Police website, as well as online links to the survey and details about alternative formats.

On that note, he thought Members might be interested to hear about the Community Safety Partnership's latest efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour in Bridgend town centre.

To ensure an effective response and to re-assure business owners and the wider community, a report-it scheme has been launched which encourages people to make all anti instances of anti-social behaviour known.

We are holding regular awareness sessions at town centre locations, and are undertaking a survey that is intended to provide easier access to education, training and employment opportunities.

Homeless and rough sleepers are being supported through the Zone and the Wallich Rough Sleeper team, and our Cleaner Streets teams are responding to all reports of graffiti and litter.

Licensing Officers are working with local businesses over the sale of alcohol in pubs, shops and clubs, and we are distributing leaflets to remind traders about the risk of proxy or under-age sales as well as carrying out test purchasing.

We are carrying out operations with taxi drivers which include county lines training, and our CCTV unit is providing additional monitoring while a street lighting inspection helps identify areas that may require improvement.

A number of arrests have been made for offences such as shoplifting or the possession and supply of drugs, and five criminal behaviour orders have been issued which prevent specific individuals from entering the town centre or certain retail premises.

The PSPO is being enforced with the confiscation of alcohol wherever appropriate, and there has been an increased visible police presence. Finally, the CF31 BID group has recruited a town centre street marshal, and are promoting the Storennet security scheme.

He hoped to bring those present further details about how these efforts are paying off soon.

Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help

The Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help, had some excellent news to share with Members. Following extensive consultation, we have been able to revise our plans for the Ty Cwm Ogwr care home at Pantyrwel, and have successfully sourced experienced independent provider Ashville Residential Ltd to take over the running of the home.

This of course means that the residents of Ty Cwm Ogwr no longer need to move into alternative accommodation, and that staff jobs have been protected.

In addition, we have been able to retain vital accommodation services in the Ogmor Valley while also developing scope for the introduction of new services as needs and requirements change over time.

Members will be aware that the proposed closure formed part of our remodelling plans. He was delighted that we have been able to revisit the plans, and have successfully developed an alternative solution which will enable us to keep the home open while still achieving our desired outcomes.

He asked more Members to come forward and volunteer to take part in our regular rota visits to social care establishments. These visits contribute towards the safeguarding of vulnerable adults, children and young people, and help ensure that their needs are being met by the quality of care.

Like robust contract monitoring, health and safety checks, independent statutory visits and inspections by the Care Inspectorate Wales, the rota visits form an important part of our quality assurance procedures.

They provide members with an opportunity to meet people and listen to their views about the services they receive. There are forty social care establishments on the current rota, sixteen of which are maintained by the local authority and 24 which are independent. Members visit in teams of two, and we aim to carry out one visit per month.

As the current rota only features five teams, more volunteers are needed. Full guidance and training is provided to all who take part, and an email will be issued to you shortly explaining this in more detail.

With the new rota set to start in April, he hoped that Members will be able to support this very worthwhile request.

Together with Cabinet colleagues, I recently had the pleasure of meeting with some of our local foster carers, and we were able to discuss their experiences on a wide range of issues.

We talked about their experiences as foster carers, and their reasons and motivations for undertaking this important role.

It was a humbling and informative experience, and it gave us an opportunity to gain valuable insight and feedback. We will now seek to use and apply what we have learned as we go about developing and improving the fostering service.

Foster carers do vitally important work in giving disadvantaged children and young people the best start in life possible, and I hope that members will help to promote the service and need for further foster carers to come forward.

Full details are available at the council website the Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help concluded.

Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations

The Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations thought Members may be interested to know that a new strategy has been developed to help prevent homelessness in Bridgend County Borough, and your residents are being asked to have their say on it.

The strategy was co-produced with landlords, service users, the third sector and various council departments all putting forward their thoughts.

The strategy sets out how the Council plans to help prevent homelessness, whether that be hidden homeless or rough sleepers.

It aims to make it easier for people who are threatened with homelessness to access support services - for example the 'early doors' scheme which helps residents struggling with their rent, the family mediation service which specialises in improving the relationships within families, where a young person aged 16-25 is, or is at risk of becoming homeless, and the Bond Board Scheme which assists people on a low income to find and secure private rented accommodation.

Members may also be interested to note that the Housing Solutions team recently recruited a mental health outreach worker to work with residents who are homeless or facing homelessness, and who need specific support.

As you know, there are often complex reasons for why people become or remain homeless. One of the objectives of this strategy is to ensure that the solutions are easily accessible, readily available and designed around the needs of the people who use them.

She also wished to share with Members a new initiative that was launched last week, which they may wish in turn to share with constituents.

The Council has teamed up with Bridgend Carers Centre, the Evergreen Hall and Awen Cultural Trust to establish the County Borough's first Carers Choir.

The choir is intended to be fun and informal. It will give people who care for friends or family members a chance to get out, enjoy themselves and meet others who share similar experiences.

Led by musical director Izzie Thomas, the choir will meet every Monday at the Evergreen Hall between 11am and 1pm.

All carers are welcome to come along to the sessions and she was sure that more news would be spread about the Carers Choir as its membership grows.

Finally, the Bridgend Disability Veterans Random Act of Kindness Group is supporting a 'rock choir' evening on behalf of Bridgend Young Carers.

The Rock Choir will perform alongside the Big Fat Blues Band at Bridgend College on 8 February, and Councillors were welcome to attend and support the event.

Tickets cost £7 and are available through contacting Nicola Bunston in the Council's Equalities Section.

Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration

The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration advised that Members may wish to remind their constituents that online applications are now open for children seeking nursery places across the County Borough.

The nursery places are for children who will be starting school full time in September 2019, and also children who will be part-time from January to April 2020.

Applications can be made easily and conveniently by signing up for the free 'My Account' facility at the council website, then submitting an online form before the deadline of 25th March.

While traditional paper forms are still available, applying online makes the whole school admissions process much easier, and also enables people to use My Account to manage things like council tax and housing benefit.

Further functions are being added to My Account that will make it even easier to access services and do business with the Council, so he hoped that Members are encouraging people within their wards to sign-up.

Every year, Bridgend Business Forum holds an annual St David's Day breakfast event, and it is taking place once again at the Coed-Y-Mwstwr Hotel in Coychurch.

Welsh rugby star Ryan Jones will be joining representatives from local businesses at the event to talk to them about his career and success as a former Wales captain and both a British and Irish Lion.

The Bridgend Business Forum now boasts more than 900 members and offers a collective voice for local companies of all sizes and sectors within the county borough. The breakfast event offers an excellent opportunity for them to network and receive support and advice designed to help them develop and grow.

He concluded by stating that Members may want to let businesses within their wards know about the event and the work of the forum, and can find full details at the Bridgend Business Forum website.

Interim Chief Executive

The Interim Chief Executive advised that one of the things that he wanted to support and promote is the work of the Youth Council.

The Leader together with himself, recently met with our current Youth Mayor, Lewis Pilliner, and he was pleased to join Lindsay Harvey, our Corporate Director for Education and Family Support, at the most recent meeting of the Youth Council, which has Members were aware, are held e in the Council Chamber.

He was very keen that we support the Youth Mayor with his main priorities for the year, and that we also engage more effectively with the Youth Council on matters of mutual interest.

"My experience of working and consulting with young people is that this contributes an important and sensible dimension towards shaping the council's business.

I think it stands to reason that if we can make this ongoing engagement more meaningful, it will be beneficial to all concerned."

This year, the Youth Mayor has identified young people's mental health as a key priority, especially when linked to issues such as exam stress.

He has also prioritised ways of increasing recycling in schools, and holding a 'democracy day' to develop better understanding of the political system, and to promote the importance of having your say and using your vote.

Information from the Welsh Government's Statistics Wales website suggests that there are around 14,000 people aged between 16 to 24, currently residing within the County Borough.

This represents an opportunity for elected Members to get directly involved with supporting and developing this very topical event, and to help foster greater interest in local democracy.

A Youth Mayor's Ball is set to be held in September at the Hi-Tide in Porthcawl which will be in aid of Prostrate Cymru, and the Interim Chief Executive was sure that members would want to show their support for this also.

We have already identified that we would like to see more feedback from the Youth Council on key consultation exercises such as bus subsidies, parks and playing fields charges, and the forthcoming homelessness strategy.

Although the Youth Council is made up of representatives from local primary and secondary schools, he had been particularly impressed at how they have covered topics, ranging from period poverty to Brexit in a mature, insightful manner.

He had no doubt that in years to come, some of those young people will be standing where Members/Officers were now, and making the hard decisions that will lead Bridgend County Borough into the future.

He added that they were a credit to the Council and the County Borough alike, and any help that elected Members can offer to support and assist them will be very much appreciated as well as a valuable investment.

Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer made two announcements as follows:-

A request has been received from the Group Leader of the Llynfi Independents for Councillor Keith Edwards to relinquish his seat on Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 and become a member instead of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3.

To accommodate this, Councillor Tom Beedle will relinquish his seat on Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 and become a member of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1.

This exchange is from Members of the same political group, and therefore the overall political balance of Committees will be unaffected.

It has been necessary to change three dates of up and coming O&S Committees as follows, in order to necessitate the full attendance of Invitees at the meetings:-

Subject O&SC 2 moved from 29 January to 13 February 2019 – 9.30am pre-meeting briefing and 10.00am start.

Subject O&SC 2 moved from 30 April to 15 April 2019 – 9.30am pre-meeting briefing and 10.00am start.

Subject O&SC 3 moved from 26 February to 25 February 2019 – 9.30am pre-meeting briefing and 10.00am start.

Members of both Committees have been given prior notification of the likely changes by email and both Chairpersons of the Committees have agreed to the dates being changed for the reason so given.

Electronic calendars of appropriate Members and Officers have also been provisionally updated with the revised dates for these Committee meetings.

268. **TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE LEADER**

The Leader reported that he was deeply moved to attend Holocaust Memorial Day, which was marked earlier today with a free public event organised in partnership with Bridgend College.

Based around the theme of 'torn from home', this year's event encouraged people to reflect on how the enforced loss of a safe place to call home is part of the trauma faced by anyone experiencing persecution and genocide.

He said he would never forget hearing the guest speaker Jean-Paul Samputu, who survived the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

Jean-Paul lost his parents and three siblings during the genocide, and as a cultural ambassador for Rwanda, he has dedicated himself to preaching a message of hope, forgiveness, reconciliation and love.

He was an inspirational and deeply moving speaker, and the Leader was grateful that he was able to come and share his experiences with us.

The Leader thanked everyone who helped organise this important event, including the Bridgend College students who compered and performed at the ceremony.

He was sure that Members will have seen recent news reports describing how Bridgend Ford, our biggest private sector employer, is meeting with trade unions to discuss potential job losses.

Bridgend County Borough Council is taking action to support the organisation and its employees, and the Leader had contacted senior managers at the plant to offer any help and assistance it could.

We were doing all that we can to support Bridgend Ford and hopefully avoid job losses, but it makes sense to plan ahead a precautionary measure in the meantime.

With this in mind, the Council had also contacted officials at Welsh Government with proposals for assembling a specialist response team. This will be mobilised into service in the event that significant redundancies become unavoidable.

The Council will be working closely with partner organisations such as Business Wales, Careers Wales, the Department of Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus.

While the talks are still at an early stage, the hope is that Welsh Government and the UK Government will do all they can to support Bridgend Ford.

He added that we all needed to work together in order to protect the jobs and livelihoods of the staff, and he would keep Members updated as this situation develops.

Finally, the Leader reported that a report had been published on Social Media that Sony UK is moving its UK headquarters to avoid Brexit disruption. We believe it refers to the Sony headquarters at Weybridge, Surrey.

269. **COUNCIL TAX: COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY DISCOUNT ON EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES**

The Head of Finance and S151 Officer submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to propose that Council amends the level of discount available on Council Tax empty properties (and second homes) with effect from 1 April 2019.

As set out in the background under paragraph 3 of the report, the Local Government Act 2003 gave local authorities the power to reduce or remove the 50% council tax discount on unoccupied and substantially unfurnished council tax chargeable properties, after the initial 6 month full exemption period had ended. These are known as Class C properties.

Up until now, Bridgend County Borough Council has awarded a 50% discount on such properties, but there are only around 10 local authorities who continue to do so.

There were currently around 1,244 council tax payers across the County Borough who are benefitting from this discount. If the discount is removed these council tax payers will then pay the full 100% rate after the 6 month period has ended.

The Group Manager – Financial Planning and Budget Management, explained that with regard to unoccupied, but furnished second homes, the Council had not actually awarded any discount on these since April 2000, and did not propose to do so.

She explained that the Council currently awards a 50% discount to council tax payers with properties that fell into the categories outlined in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

The proposal was to remove this 50% discount and charge 100% of the council tax requirement from April 2019.

Linking in with the Council's Empty Property Strategy, it was hoped that this will discourage council tax payers from leaving properties empty and in a state of disrepair.

In terms of the report's financial implications, the Group Manager – Financial Planning and Budget Management confirmed that paragraph 8.2 of the report, indicated the maximum additional funding that the Council could generate from the change in policy, though she stressed that this is using general assumptions around banding and collection. It assumed 100% collection, which was not realistic, especially around empty properties which are notoriously difficult to collect. She concluded by adding, that this could be exacerbated by the removal of the sanction of imprisonment for failure to pay council tax, from April 2019.

A Member whilst taking into consideration the provisions made in paragraph 4.1 of the report, whereby BCBC awards a 50% discount to Council Tax properties which remain empty due to the reasons contained within this section of the report, felt that consideration should be given for such discount to remain for properties subject to probate, after a 6 month period.

Following discussions that ensued on this issue, Members by way of ascent

RESOLVED: That the report be deferred to the next scheduled meeting of Council, in order to seek technical advice and further clarity on Council Tax Exemption and Discount classifications, in respect of empty properties subject to Probate.

270. **AMENDMENT TO 2019-20 COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR CEFN CRIBWR, GARW VALLEY, LLANGYNWYD LOWER AND ST BRIDES MINOR COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2019

The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer submitted a report, in order to provide Council with amended Council Tax base figures for 2019-20 for four Community Councils for re-approval.

The Group Manager – Financial Planning and Budget Management, advised that Members may recall that a report was brought to Council on 21st November 2018, to set and approve the Council tax base for 2019-20 for the Council as a whole and individual Community Councils.

Since then it has come to light, that whilst the overall Council tax base was correct on a gross basis and on a net basis, when taken individually, the individual Community Council tax bases did not equate to the total figure due to rounding mechanisms. As a result the Council have had to amend the Council tax bases of the four Community Councils outlined in the report.

The amendments are by one decimal point each and it was important to note, that this does not affect the amount of precept they collect.

The table contained within paragraph 4.1 of the report, showed the revised net tax bases for these four Community Councils, whilst Appendix A to the report provided the whole revised picture for all Town and Community Councils.

RESOLVED: That Council approved Appendix A of the covering report, which included the amended Council Tax bases for Cefn Cribwr, Garw Valley, Llangynwyd Lower and St. Brides Minor Community Councils.

271. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2019-20

The Interim Head of Finance submitted a report, in order to provide Council with information regarding the implementation of the 2019-20 Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR), the requirement to adopt a CTR scheme by 31 January 2019 together with the funding implications.

The report outlined certain background information, then confirmed that the CTR Scheme in Wales is set by regulations made under Schedule 1B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as inserted by the Local Government Finance Act 2012).

The Benefits and Financial Assessments Manager advised, that on 27 November 2013, the Assembly laid regulations that implemented the arrangements to support those who will pay council tax. The regulations (Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 and Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (Wales) Regulations 2013) 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.

The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 have now been laid. These regulations uprate the financial figures used in the CTR schemes and makes amendments to:

- Mirror changes made to the benefit system with respect to Employment Support Allowance. The 2013 Regulations will continue to make reference to the Work-Related Activity Component which will continue to be payable to some applicants.
- Make changes to reflect new service provision arrangements following the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016.
- Make changes to address an anomaly within the wording of the amending provisions included within the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Prescribed

Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 with respect to changes of circumstances provisions.

- Make a number of changes with respect to payments which are disregarded for the purposes of calculating 'income' and/or 'capital'. These include the new bereavement support payments amongst others.

The new regulations do not contain any significant changes, from the claimants' perspectives, to the current scheme and the maximum level of support that eligible claimants can receive remains at 100%.

Paragraph 4.6 of the report stated that within the Prescribed Requirements Regulations, there was limited discretion given to the Council to apply discretionary elements that were more generous than the national scheme, and this section of the report gave examples of this.

The Benefits and Financial Assessments Manager added the relevant regulations required that the Council adopts a CTR Scheme by 31 January 2019.

Paragraph 4.14 of the report outlined certain Main Issues for consideration, confirming that the Council must consider whether to replace or revise its CTR Scheme and was obliged to make a scheme under the requirements of the above Regulations. The obligation was a statutory duty and applied even if the Council chose not to apply any of the discretions available to it.

The Benefits and Financial Assessments Manager added that the Council's recommended approach to the available discretions, was to apply the recommendations in Table 4, paragraph 4.23 of the report.

A Member advised that the Council should lobby the Welsh Government for an increased level of financial support for the Scheme, as whilst this was sufficient in previous years, this was now not the case as there was a shortfall between the amount provided in the settlement and the amount of Council Tax Reduction awarded.

The Group Manager – Financial Planning and Budget Management confirmed that the funding from Welsh Government across Wales was actually the same as that which had been provided in previous years. The shortfall had been impacted over the years as a result of increases to Council Tax.

RESOLVED: That Council:-

- (1) Noted the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, and the 2014 to 2019 amendment regulations.
- (2) Adopted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2019 – 2020, as set out in paragraphs 4.18 to 4.23 of the report.

272. **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FROM:**

Question from Councillor MC Voisey to the Cabinet Member - Education and Regeneration

In the last budget round, funds were allocated for a Festival of Learning, and to replace the School uniform grant that was withdrawn by the Labour WAG. I understand the festival of learning was a success and self-funding and that the Assembly did a U turn on the school uniform grant"

Therefore the money taken from Council tax payers in Bridgend was not used as intended. Please confirm what the money was used for, or where it is now?

Response

The total cost to Bridgend County Borough Council of the Festival of Learning 2018 is expected to be in the region of £12k. This is funded from the additional £65k which was approved by Council for the Festival of Learning 2018 on 28 February 2018 as a one-off pressure as part of the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-2019 to 2021-2022.

The £53k underspend was returned to the Corporate Budget in Period 9. For 2018-2019, this will be used to establish any earmarked reserves required at year end for unforeseen one-off pressures in 2019-2020. For 2019-2020, it will supplement the corporate pressures budget to meet any unavoidable pressures in that year.

Regarding the funding allocated to replace the Welsh Government Uniform Grant, it has also been clawed back corporately and will also be used to establish earmarked reserves at year end. For 2019-2020, this has been included in the draft MTFS as a proposed budget reduction."

Supplementary question from Councillor MC Voisey (to the Cabinet Member – Communities)

Would Cabinet consider using the unspent money outlined above, to keep open certain public convenience facilities situate within the County Borough, that either have been closed or are subject to closure.

Response

This is not possible as this allocation of resources has been committed to the Education and Family Support Directorate, in order to negate an over spend within that Directorate during the current financial year. The Interim Chief Executive added that any under spend that may occur in any Directorate in one financial year is normally committed to the Council's Corporate budget for the following financial year, as opposed to being re-allocated to the Directorate where the under spend originated from (that current year).

Question from Councillor T Thomas to the Cabinet Member – Communities

Since a motion calling for the County Borough to go 'plastic free' in July 2018, will the Cabinet Member clarify what progress this authority has made in reducing its non-recyclable plastic use 6 months on from the original motion?"

Response

The plastics free motion referred to was made in April 2018, but was not approved at the time, however the issue was referred to considered further by Subject Overview and Scrutiny 3 O&S Committee in July 2018.

We have since taken positive steps to encourage plastic's and other packaging waste to be minimised, specifically we are rolling out in conjunction with Keep Wales Tidy and Porthcawl Town Council (and to follow hopefully all of the town councils) a funded education campaign with the boroughs schools that amongst other promotions includes a "waste free lunch challenge" for school children and parents to have a lunch that avoids single use plastic packaging with drinks in re-fillable bottles and food in suitable reusable Tupperware. This engagement programme also encourages local business to waste less, where practicable avoid single use plastic and display a sticker in their window to demonstrate their support to the environmental initiative.

It is clear that a significant resource would be required to fully analyse all of the authority's procurement transactions that may involve the purchase of a single use

plastic item, or items with single use plastic components. To determine if suitable environmentally friendly and economically viable alternatives could be sought in replacement. Given current financial pressures this is yet to be pursued further. However simple steps have been taken such as within the Council office environment with the majority of departments, plastic cups, spoons or milk sachets are no longer purchased and loose coffee, milk and sugar is used in meetings where refreshments cannot be avoided. In Elections on count night, where individual milk sachets have been used in the past, now large cartons/bottles of milk are used and the spoons are also now wooden spatulas. Whilst avoiding unnecessary plastic use is to be commended, and re-use encouraged. It is also however important to not vilify plastic as a material, and make the right choices. The use of plastic packaging in keeping food content fresh has significant beneficial environmental effects, as an example the use of individually contained long life milk sachets, in an environment of variable levels of use would potentially be more environmentally friendly than opening larger containers and ending up wasting significant quantities of fresh milk, sensible use of plastic when justifiable along with recycling of the discarded material, ensuring it does not become part of the marine pollution problem is what is vital.

Bridgend Council continues to be at the forefront of plastic's recycling within wales collecting via the weekly recycling service, 2109 tonnes of plastics per year from the kerbside. For plastic materials that cannot be recycled at the doorstep, such as hard plastic (i.e. garden furniture, children's toys), recycling outlets are provided at the Community Recycling Centres (CRC) sites resulting in a further 1197 tonnes per annum of plastics being recycled."

Supplementary question from Councillor T Thomas to the Cabinet Member – Communities

I am pleased to note the above pilot project involving Keep Wales Tidy and Porthcawl Town Council, with the aim of targeting the minimisation of plastic's and other packaging waste, particularly in schools. How can Members be kept up to speed on developments regarding projects such as this, and any future projects with similar aims and objectives.

Response

Through reports being presented to Cabinet (all Members now received an electronic copy of the agenda/reports for this meeting) or through approaching him personally.

The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration added, that any Member was also welcome to visit schools with himself, to see first-hand the excellent work they were undertaking in terms of recycling. Primary Schools were leading the way here, he further added.

Second supplementary question from Councillor K Watts to the Cabinet Member - Communities

I'm very pleased to hear from the Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member – Communities of the good work being carried out by our Litter Champions and Cleaner Street teams. However, I've noted that there is excessive litter being dumped in hedges and on grassed verges and highways throughout the County Borough. What work was being done to alleviate the depositing of such litter on these areas, including those that linked our major towns

Response

I will take this up after the meeting with Officers in our Litter Enforcement team.

Question by Councillor A Hussain to the Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help

Traditionally, local authorities should have a budget to purchase assistive equipment if it supports someone to live independently and fully. We would want to see this continue. In many authorities we are hearing of a kind of informal means-testing where the person assessing tries to ascertain if someone could pay for the equipment themselves. This is fraught with difficulty and I hope BCBC doesn't try it.

Will the Cabinet Member let the Council know as how is the Telecare Service being provided to the residents in the County and how much will be the estimated saving to the Council?

Response

Telecare is about using technology as a way of managing risks to independence, to monitor and respond to emergencies as they happen and to support lifestyle changes over time. The Telecare Service is one that is intended to maintain and increase the independence of individuals at home and reduce their reliance on services. This supports the Council's corporate priority of helping people to be more self-reliant and making smarter use of resources. This service also supports hospital discharge and the prevention agenda.

Telecare employs wireless technology which links Telecare sensors via a community alarm unit in the home to a central monitoring centre. These sensors can send an alert to the monitoring centre, without the need for the user to call for help, by pressing a pendant button. The range of innovative non-intrusive Telecare sensors includes wireless enabled sensors such as the smoke, flood, extreme temperature sensors, falls and bed/chair occupancy. These work within the home to offer a comprehensive way of managing risk to a person's health and home environment, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Telecare equipment has become part of the wide range of community equipment services currently available. Telecare helps to:

- Increase independence and choice for service users
- Give carers effective support, respite and peace of mind
- Increase capacity for maintaining people at home
- Help to manage risk at home
- Prevent admission to hospital and facilitate timely discharge
- Delay admission to residential or nursing care accommodation services
- Support Intermediate Care and Home Care services

The Welsh Assembly Government previously prioritised the development of Telecare services across Wales. The Social Services Direction Paper 'A Strategy for Social Services in Wales over the next decade: Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities' 2006 advocated the development of Telecare services specifically in order to maximise independence and support more domiciliary rather than residential care. In 2008 Bridgend set an informal target of 500 new users by March 2009. In 2019, 10 years later we have 2634 individuals using the Telecare services.

The Service is further enhanced by the addition of a Mobile Response Team, to our knowledge, Bridgend was the first Council in Wales to link such a team to Telecare. This team are registered to deliver personal care and provides rapid assistance to users of the Telecare service. The team provide a 24 hour service, seven days a week, utilising a duty vehicle and a mobile phone, providing rapid assistance by reacting to calls via a community alarm centre.

BCBC are fully committed to increasing and maximising the use of the Telecare Service, which it sees as one of the keys to supporting people to feel more confident and remain

at home for longer, having the Mobile Response Team adds further security for those who require it or have no family to respond to crisis that can happen at home. This has seen the service more than double in the last 5 years, with over 2,400 individuals now receiving the service. We currently have a budget of £380k to fund telecare equipment, installation, maintenance and monitoring, and there are no proposals within the MTFS to cut this budget.

All charges for mobile response are calculated in accordance with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (Charging and Financial Assessment), where currently no one pays more than £80 per week for a non-residential care service. As such, those with the least disposable income will receive services at a lesser-cost, or even free of charge, which is in line with charges for other social services.

In line with individual agreements, charges are being introduced during 2019 for lost or replacement equipment, which is one of the proposals identified in the MTFS 2019/20 to maximise income generation, which are forecast to increase income by £150k during 2019/20.

Supplementary question from Councillor Altaf Hussain to the Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help

Assistive living technology is proven nationally, to improve outcomes and reduce costs to social care. Could the Cabinet Member let the Council know about the evidence of benefits in reduction of escalations of care in our clients and saving for the council generated since its use (2008), and keeping in mind the benefits and the savings - why can't we make this technology free for all deserving residents in our County?

Response

The response to this question will be researched and provided outside the meeting.

The Leader added that approximately 2,500 residents received Telecare from the Council, and this greatly assists them in helping to maintain their independence in a residential environment.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing added, that there were presently more vulnerable people living at home when previously they had been in care, including some of the more complex cases, which had historically always been a huge pressure on the Authority and its partners. Some of these cases were very complex in their nature. She echoed the comments of the Leader, in that Telecare was an invaluable support service that helped prevent individuals going into long term care.

273. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

274. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED:

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

Following the application of the public interest test in consideration of this item, it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above, it be considered in private, with the public being excluded from the meeting as it would involve the disclosure of exempt information of the nature as stated above.

275. APPROVAL OF EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the exempt Minutes of a meeting of Council dated 19 December 2019, be approved as a true and accurate record.

The meeting closed at 16:40