

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2020 AT 15:00

Present

Councillor SE Baldwin – Chairperson

S Aspey	TH Beedle	JPD Blundell	NA Burnett
MC Clarke	N Clarke	RJ Collins	HJ David
P Davies	PA Davies	SK Dendy	DK Edwards
T Giffard	RM Granville	CA Green	DG Howells
A Hussain	RM James	B Jones	MJ Kearns
DRW Lewis	JE Lewis	JR McCarthy	D Patel
RL Penhale-Thomas	AA Pucella	KL Rowlands	B Sedgebeer
RMI Shaw	CE Smith	SG Smith	JC Spanswick
G Thomas	T Thomas	JH Tildesley MBE	E Venables
SR Vidal	CA Webster	DBF White	PJ White
A Williams	AJ Williams	HM Williams	JE Williams
RE Young			

Apologies for Absence

J Gebbie, JC Radcliffe, MC Voisey, LM Walters and KJ Watts

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Gill Lewis	Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Richard Matthams	Development Planning - Team Leader
Adam Provoost	Senior Development Planning Officer
Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Manager
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Kevin Stephens	Democratic Services Assistant
Kelly Watson	Head of Legal & Regulatory Services

387. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following interests were declared:

Councillor R Shaw declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 – Polling Districts, Polling Places & Station Review 2019-20 as he has an association with a local charity which runs the William Trigg Community Centre.

Councillor JC Spanswick declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Council Reduction Scheme 2020-21 as a family member is in receipt of the benefit.

Councillor DBF White declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Council Reduction Scheme 2020-21 as a close relative is in receipt of the benefit.

Councillor HM Williams declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Council Reduction Scheme 2020-21 as a close relative is in receipt of the benefit.

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Councillor JE Lewis declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 – Polling Districts, Polling Places & Station Review 2019-20 as she is a member of Sarn Community Centre.

Councillor DRW Lewis declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 – Polling Districts, Polling Places & Station Review 2019-20 as he is a member of Sarn Community Centre.

Councillor RM James declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Council Reduction Scheme 2020-21 as a family member is in receipt of the benefit and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the item.

Councillor HJ David declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 – Polling Districts, Polling Places & Station Review 2019-20 as he is the Chair of the Cefn Cribwr Community Centre which is used as a polling station and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the item.

Councillor P Davies declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 8 – Council Reduction Scheme 2020-21 as a family member is in receipt of the benefit. Councillor P Davies declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 10 – Polling Districts, Polling Places & Station Review 2019-20 as he is a Director at the Caerau Development Trust where a polling station is located. Councillor Davies withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the items.

Councillor CE Smith declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Council Reduction Scheme 2020-21 as a family member runs a business.

Councillor MJ Kearn declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 – Polling Districts, Polling Places & Station Review 2019-20 as he is the Chair of the Talbot Community Centre which is used as a polling station.

388. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of Council of 18 December 2019 be approved as a true and accurate record.

389. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:

The Mayor

The Mayor announced that he had received a letter of grateful thanks from the Bridgend Foodbank for the financial contribution that was made to them by Bridgend County Borough Council and the generous food donations made by staff and members over the last year. In the 10 years since Bridgend Foodbank was formed, they have provided food for approximately 50,000 people. The money and donations will be put to good use feeding the people of the county borough who are in crisis.

The Mayor also thanked the 100 plus volunteers of the Bridgend Foodbank who all work incredibly hard to fight food poverty within the county borough. He had the pleasure of attending their Annual Meeting this evening and look forward to passing on the Council's thanks and gratitude in person.

The Mayor also announced that nominations for the Mayor's Annual Citizenship Awards close on Friday of this week. All nominations are welcome and an application form can be downloaded from the Council's website or requested via the Mayor's Office. He urged Members not to miss this opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the people and organisations within their communities.

Deputy Leader

The Deputy Leader announced that the Council had teamed up with Porthcawl Town Council to trial an ingenious new solution to the sticky problem of discarded chewing gum. Special 'Gum Drop' bins are being attached to lampposts along John Street, and people are being encouraged to use them for the disposal of chewing gum instead of dropping it on the street and creating an unsightly and difficult-to-remove stain. As the bins are made from recycled chewing gum, they can be removed and recycled along with their contents to create a range of products, including new bins and Wellington boots. He stated this is the latest move to tackle litter that the ongoing partnership with Porthcawl Town Council has produced, and it will make Porthcawl one of the first Welsh towns to feature the innovative bins.

Discussions have taken place with local takeaways, and three new dedicated bins are being added in the Western Promenade, John Street and Griffin Park areas to support the recycling of fast-food packaging. Funding had been from the Welsh Government, and shortly, two water fountains will be installed along the seafront to encourage people to fill up reusable bottles for free instead of buying single-use plastic bottles. He hoped that these innovations will support efforts to change behaviours and attitudes to waste, and will encourage more people to recycle.

Cabinet Member Communities

The Cabinet Member Communities informed Council that the Council has made a number of commitments to the Armed Forces Community Covenant, which had been recognised with an award from the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme run by the Ministry of Defence. Work to support former and serving members of the armed forces is continuing, as demonstrated by the recent establishment of a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans at the Council. This has now resulted in the development of an all-new initiative designed to provide people who are leaving the armed forces with practical experience of working within a civilian environment. It is intended to help local veterans to overcome barriers in finding civilian employment, support them in developing transferable skills, acclimatise to working in a non-military setting, and reduce the risk of health and welfare problems among members of the armed forces community. The work placement scheme will deliver further benefits as it will also help the Council to identify and develop a wider selection of high-quality candidates for council roles from people who may otherwise not have considered a career in local government. He stated that the Council remains committed towards supporting members of the military community, and he hoped Members will welcome this latest development.

Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help

The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help announced that the Ty Cwm Ogwr care home in Pantyrawel will return to the management of the Council on 31 January. The home was transferred to an independent care provider in January 2018 as part of remodelling plans for adult social care. He stated that it had become apparent that the provider would not be able to meet specific contractual requirements and the home will now transfer back to the Council. He informed Members that none of the contractual requirements relate to standards of care at the home, which continue to be very high, and the transition will have no impact on either staff or residents. Residents and their families fully informed throughout this process to minimise inconvenience and maintain the high standards that they have come to expect. He stated that Ty Cwm Ogwr has also been supporting pressures faced by the Princess of Wales Hospital, and the Council has helped to free valuable bed space by enabling the timely discharge of patients who have been welcomed into the residential care home. He announced that

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the Council remains committed towards expanding this initiative, and to ensuring that every opportunity is taken to maximise the number of available beds and reducing the amount of time people have to remain within hospital. Work was already taking place to consider further options for Ty Cwm Ogwr, and he would bring Members further news as soon as possible.

Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations

The Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations announced that a multi-agency 'Crisis Café' has been established at The Zone in Bridgend town centre, to support the most vulnerable members of the community, whose issues and extremely disorganised lifestyles often mean they are homeless. The Crisis Café is held on Friday mornings and enables vulnerable individuals to access a wide range of services designed to help them change and improve their lives, within an environment vulnerable residents will find friendly and non-threatening, and is based on models that have been recommended by organisations such as Shelter and models that have been successfully trialed in areas such as Wrexham. She stated that one of the main benefits of having a range of services available in one place is that it ensures an extremely vulnerable person can engage with all the services available at a single location.

Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration

The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration announced that plans for the next phase of the Council's efforts to protect Porthcawl from flooding and coastal erosion have been submitted to Welsh Government. If approved, Welsh Government will provide 75% of the funding, and it will mean that more than £6m will be invested in the area to protect 531 homes and 174 businesses. This follows the £3m project to replace sea defences at Town Beach, which has helped to transform the seafront area and protect 260 homes, businesses and historic buildings such as the Grand Pavilion. He hoped to bring Members more news soon.

He also announced that a new 'market square' will be revealed in the central area Bridgend Indoor Market next Monday. As part of an ongoing project to give the market a new lease of life, the central market area is being made available for specialist events, family entertainment, children's play facilities and other activities designed to encourage footfall and support trade. Over the last year, a series of illustrative panels providing information about the market's rich history have been set up to welcome shoppers, and the market bell which dates back to 1837 has been relocated to the main entrance. Preparatory work is progressing on the development of new toilets available to the public at the market. It was anticipated these will be made available by the traders later in the spring and will be wheelchair-accessible as well as including baby-changing facilities. He hoped to bring Members further details of this work, and the indoor market will be promoted as the situation develops.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive announced that a new internal staff survey had been launched this week, which is intended to gauge how staff feel about their roles within the council, help improve internal processes and practices, and support the authority as it seeks to become leaner and more efficient. The survey will run until 1 March and asks staff to give their opinions on issues which include opportunities for learning and development, workplace well-being, management, communications and more. The previous staff survey undertaken in 2018 provided a valuable insight into how the Council views itself as an organisation, and has enabled the introduction of a number of changes and improvements. The Chief Executive highlighted the headlines from the 2018 staff survey, which had been completed by more than 900 staff. The feedback from the

survey was used to inform a number of actions, such as a move to weekly staff emails and the launch of a staff suggestion scheme which has resulted in various ideas being explored and implemented, while a focus on staff well-being has seen hugely popular health-check clinics and workshops introduced which cover a wide range of issues. Many of these have had a particular focus upon the mental-well-being of staff, with sessions held on mindfulness, stress management, combating depression and more. The Chief Executive informed Members that once the new survey is complete and the results analysed, he would bring you more news about what fresh insights have been revealed.

The Chief Executive officially welcomed Elizabeth Bradfield to Bridgend County Borough Council. He stated that Members will have already seen Liz covering many committee meetings as a local democracy reporter, but was delighted to inform that she started work this week as the authority's new communications officer. He was sure that Members will want to congratulate her on her new role.

390. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader announced that one of the Borough's newest landmark buildings has been selected as the venue for the launch of a national strategy outlining Welsh Government's vision for the future of tourism across Wales. The First Minister and Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, will be visiting the new Watersports Centre at Rest Bay tomorrow to unveil 'Welcome to Wales: Priorities For The Visitor Economy 2020-2025' at the EU-funded £1.5m centre.

The Leader also announced that he was deeply moved to attend this year's Holocaust Memorial Day event yesterday at the Sony Theatre in Bridgend College. The theme for 2020 was 'Stand Together', and the event reminded all how genocidal regimes throughout history have deliberately fractured societies by marginalising certain groups. The event encouraged attendees to stand together with their friends, colleagues and neighbours, and to speak out against oppression. It included a moving and unforgettable address from Dieu-Donne Ganza Gahizi, a survivor of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, who spoke about his personal experiences as a 9 year old boy fleeing for his life and losing 50 members of his family before delivering a message of peace, hope and forgiveness. He was grateful Ganza had travelled to the County Borough to share his story and message with all who had attended and he thanked everyone who worked on making the event.

391. CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE - QUARTER 3 2019-20

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented a report to comply with the requirement of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance 2018; provided an update of the Capital Programme for 2019-20 at 31 December 2019; sought approval for a revised capital programme for 2019-20 to 2028-29 and for Council to note the projected Prudential and Other Indicators for 2019-20.

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer reported that the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Wales) Regulations 2003, as amended contain detailed provisions for capital finance and accounting controls, including the rules on the use of capital receipts and what is to be treated as capital expenditure. Additionally, the Council manages its Treasury Management and Capital activities in accordance with associated guidance. The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities requires Local Authorities to have in place a Capital Strategy which demonstrates that the authority takes capital expenditure and investment decisions in line with service

objectives and properly takes account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability.

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer reported that Council on 20 February 2019, approved a capital programme, and was last updated on 23 October 2019. She stated that the revised programme for 2019-20 totals £33.700m, of which £15.057m is met from the Council's resources, with the remaining £18.643m met from external resources. She summarised the position per Directorate and the current funding assumptions for the capital programme for 2019-20. She provided detail of the projected spend on individual schemes within the programme compared to the budget available. A number of schemes had been identified as requiring slippage to future years, at quarter 3, the total requested slippage is £5.158m in relation to:

- Maesteg Town Hall (£1.6m)
- Community Hub – Brynteg Comprehensive School (£0.768m)
- Additional Learning Needs provision at Cefn Cribwr Primary School (£0.387m)
- Ravens Court (£0.442m)
- Parks / Pavilions Community Centres CAT (£0.66m)
- Non Operational Assets (£0.48m)

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer reported that a number of new externally funded schemes and additional income approved, which have been incorporated into the capital programme:

- Community Hub – Brynteg Comprehensive (£0.284m)
- Capital support for the implementation and expansion of separate household collections of absorbent hygiene product (AHP) waste (£0.238m)
- Urban Centre Property Enhancement Fund (£0.1m) and Urban Centre Living Grant (£0.5m)
- Coastal Risk Management Scheme – Porthcawl (£6.032m)
- 21st Century Schools Band B Programme
- Welsh Medium Childcare Provision
- School Maintenance Grant
- Complex and Medical Needs Works in Schools
- Llynfi Valley Loan

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer also reported on the monitoring of Prudential and other indicators for 2019-20. The Capital Strategy approved in February 2019 is intended to give an overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future sustainability. A number of prudential indicators were included, and approved by Council. In line with the requirements of the Prudential Code, the Chief Finance Officer is required to establish procedures to monitor both performance against all forward-looking prudential indicators and the requirement specified. She detailed the actual indicators for 2018-19, the estimated indicators for 2019-20 set out in the Council's Capital Strategy and the projected indicators for 2019-20 based on the revised Capital Programme, which shows that the Council is operating in line with the approved limits.

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer reported that the Capital Strategy also requires the monitoring of non-treasury management investments and other long term liabilities. She stated that the Council does have an existing investment portfolio which is 100% based within the County Borough and primarily the office and industrial sectors. Income streams are spread between the single and multi-let office investments

on Bridgend Science Park, the multi-let industrial estates and the freehold ground rent investments. The total value of Investment Properties was £4.635 million at 31 March 2019. She informed Council that it has a number of Other Long Term Liabilities included within the Capital Strategy, no new loans have been taken out in Quarter 3.

A member of Council was pleased to note the funding of works to complete the ALN provision at Pencoed Comprehensive School. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support informed Council that changes would be made to the environment of the school to enable learners with mobility issues to access all the facilities in the school.

A member of Council expressed concern that additional survey work and asbestos removal work had increased the cost of the Maesteg Town Hall scheme and that the Council would have to fund an additional £1.9m increasing the project cost from £6.3m to £8.2m. The member questioned whether the Council should have a report on the scheme due to the increase in costs. The Leader informed Council that Cabinet on the previous day had received a report on the revised project budget. He stated that the decision to proceed with the replacement roof would ensure that the Town Hall is carried out properly and that the building would be the landmark building the Council want it to be as opposed to patching the roof. He stated that it was important to manage the flood risk to the building and that the Council did not want to return in the future to fix the roof. He stressed the importance of making the investment in the Town Hall as predecessor authorities had not made that investment. A member of Council whilst welcoming the investment in the Town Hall which would benefit the groups who use the facility shared concerns at the additional cost to the project. The Chief Executive informed Council that at the time the project was placed in the capital programme it was based on conceptual drawings and until such time as tenders are received. He stated that a range of feasibility studies and surveys had been undertaken with the project nearing Royal Institute of British Architects stage 4 technical design and cost completion. There is a contingency sum of £500k and the project is subject to a value engineering exercise to seek reductions in the total scheme cost where possible, without detriment to the overall redevelopment. He believed the project cost to be realistic and there was always a consideration as to whether to incur spend up front or to manage the project as a design and build. The Chief Executive explained that it was a better investment to protect the iconic building by replacing the roof as opposed to patching the roof.

A member of Council believed that Council should have been presented with information on the costs of the project and results of the surveys and that a 30% uplift of costs was excessive and that the Audit Committee should review this project and other capital schemes. A member of Council also believed that there was a need to ensure value for money on construction projects.

The Leader informed Council that the roof could have been repaired, however the project had been re-specified to replace the roof so that future generations would benefit from the building and for the project to be of the highest quality. The Chief Executive informed Council that the approach to funding capital projects had been considered in that a line could be created in the budget whereby feasibility is done upfront or proceed by way of a design and build contract. If expenditure was incurred upfront, money could be spent on a project which did not come to fruition. The Leader stated that the Audit Committee could look at the process for funding capital projects. The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help informed Council that the local members had been briefed on the expenditure on the project.

A member of Council referred to the Ewenny Road site being undevelopable due to the presence of mine workings and asked whether officers could work with the Welsh Government to fund remediation works to develop the site. The Chief Executive stated that discussions are progressing with the Welsh Government on the site, which remains

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a priority which could have development potential for a park and ride facility, an enterprise hub and housing.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- noted the Council's Capital Programme for 2019-20 for the period to 31 December 2019;
- approved the revised Capital Programme;
- noted the projected Prudential and Other Indicators for 2019-20.

392. TREASURY MANAGEMENT - QUARTER 3 REPORT 2019-20

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented a report, the purpose of which was to comply with the requirement of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the Code), to produce interim Treasury Management Reports; report on the projected Treasury Management Indicators for 2019-20 and sought approval of Treasury Management activities for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019.

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer reported that Treasury management is the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Council is exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. Treasury risk management at the Council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) before the start of each financial year. Advice to the Council on treasury management is provided by Arlingclose.

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer reported that the interest rate views incorporated in the Council's TMS 2019-20 were based upon officers' views supported by a forecast from Arlingclose. When the TMS 2019-20 was prepared in January 2019, due to the anticipated short time for a Brexit withdrawal deal to be agreed and the possibility of an extended period of uncertainty over the possible outcome, Arlingclose's central case scenario was forecasting a 0.25% rise in the Bank Rate during 2019-20 to take official UK interest rates to 1.00% by December 2019. The Bank Rate started the financial year at 0.75% and the current forecast is that the Bank Rate will remain at this level beyond the end of the financial year-end.

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer summarised the external debt and investment position as at 31 December 2019, whereby the Council held £96.87m of external long term borrowing and £38.945m of investments. She highlighted the borrowing strategy and outturn in that it was forecast the Council would need to borrow £16m in 2019-20. It was forecast there would be no long term borrowing requirement in 2019-20 due to additional grants being received in the last quarter of 2018-19 and a change in the capital programme for 2019-20. The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer summarised the investment strategy and outturn in that the main objectives during 2019-20 were to maintain capital security; maintain liquidity so funds are available when expenditure is needed and to achieve the yield on investments commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity. The balance on investments at 31 December 2019 was £38.945m. She summarised the investments profile from 1 April to 31 December 2019; the Treasury Management indicator for Principal Sums invested for periods longer than a year and the position in relation to interest rate exposures on borrowing and investments.

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A member of Council questioned whether consideration had been given to alternative models of investment as favoured by other local authorities. The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer confirmed there a number of investment initiatives, the Council's first consideration will always be security before yield, however the Council is exploring different initiatives and models.

A member of Council questioned the strategy of lending to other local authorities. The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer stated that inter-lending amongst local authorities is a recognised and secure form of investment.

RESOLVED: That Council:-

1. Approved the treasury management activities for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019;
2. Noted the projected Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators for 2019-20 against the ones approved in the Treasury Management Strategy 2019-20.

393. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2020-21

The Interim Head of Finance presented a report, the purpose of which was to provide Council with information regarding the implementation of the 2020-21 Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR) and to set out the requirement for Councils to adopt a CTR scheme by 31 January 2020, together with the funding implications.

The Interim Head of Finance reported that CTR provides assistance for those on low incomes with a liability to pay Council Tax. The Welsh Government has developed a single nationally defined scheme set out in regulations for the provision of Council Tax support in Wales. The Council adopted the CTR for 2019-20 in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, which will end on 31 March 2020. There were currently 13,423 households receiving CTR, 8,445 of these were of working age and 4,978 were of pensionable age. Of the 13,423 households receiving CTR, 10,017 were entitled to a full CTR reduction.

The Interim Head of Finance reported 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 Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 had now been laid and made amendments to:

- Ensure that opposite sex civil partnerships are treated on an equitable basis with opposite sex and same sex marriages, and same sex civil partnerships, in consequence of the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc.) Act 2019;
- Provide for the introduction of a specific, statutory entitlement to parental bereavement leave in consequence of The Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018.
- Update references to the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2006 with references to the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2016.
- Provide that a number of rights to reside (established for nationals of European Economic Area states in connection with the UK's withdrawal from the EU) are not relevant rights to reside for the purposes of establishing habitual residence.

The Interim Head of Finance stated that the new regulations did not contain any significant changes from the claimants' perspective to the current scheme, and the

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maximum level of support that eligible claimants could receive remained at 100%. She explained the limited discretion given to the Council, to apply discretionary elements that were more generous than the national scheme as follows:-

- The ability to increase the standard extended reduction period of 4 weeks given to persons after they return to work (where they have previously been receiving CTR that is to end as a result of their return to work);
- Discretion to increase the amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions which is to be disregarded when calculating income of the claimant; and
- The ability to backdate the application of CTR with regard to late claims prior to the new standard period of three months before the claim.

The Interim Head of Finance reported that the Council is required to adopt a CTR Scheme regardless of whether it applies any of the discretionary elements. If the Council fails to make a scheme, then a default scheme shall apply. The Council can only apply discretion if it makes its own scheme under the Prescribed Requirements Regulations.

The Interim Head of Finance reported that consultation on the Prescribed Requirement Regulations was undertaken in 2016 and the results detailed in the Head of Finance's report to Council on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on 11 January 2017. As it was proposed not to change the discretionary elements, a further consultation exercise had not been completed. It was proposed that the discretionary elements remain as follows:

- The extended payment period is maintained at the minimum standard of 4 weeks.
- War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions are fully disregarded when calculating entitlement to CTR. The estimated cost of this proposal within the financial year is £11,100.
- Backdating is maintained at the minimum standard of 3 months.

The Interim Head of Finance reported that the total estimated cost to the Council for these three proposals is £11,100 for 2020-21. The Interim Head of Finance informed Council that it must consider whether to replace or revise its CTR scheme and is obliged to make a scheme under the requirements of the Prescribed Requirements Regulations. The obligation is a statutory duty and applies even if the Council chose not to apply any of the discretions available to it. She stated that the Council's recommended approach to the available discretions is to apply the recommendations in Table 1, in paragraph 4.23 of the report. There is no additional funding to bridge any gap and each authority will be expected to meet any shortfall.

The Interim Head of Finance reported that the Council is required to adopt a scheme by 31 January 2020 under the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, regardless of whether it chooses to apply any of the discretionary elements. If the Council fails to make a scheme, then a default scheme will apply under the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. The Interim Head of Finance informed Council of the financial implications of the scheme in that the 2020-21 Provisional Local Government Settlement shows that the sum provided for CTR across Wales is at the same level as 2019-20. This Council's 2020-21 provisional settlement from Welsh Government includes £13.184 million to fund the CTR scheme, an increase of £104,000 from £13.080 million in 2019-20; this amount does not take into account any

increase in council tax charges but is distributed based on expenditure on council tax reduction schemes in previous years and is unlikely to change in the final settlement. Based on the current caseload the estimated total cost of the scheme for 2020-21 is around £15.3 million (including the cost of the discretionary elements), which is £2.116 million higher than the funding provided by Welsh Government. The proposed budget for 2020-21 is currently £15.254 million, which includes additional funding to meet the proposed council tax increase in the MTFS. Whilst this was currently considered to be sufficient to meet demand, it will be kept under review throughout the MTFS period.

RESOLVED: That Council:

1. Noted the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, and the 2014 to 2020 amendment regulations
2. Adopted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020-21 scheme, set out in paragraphs 4.18 to 4.23 of the report.

394. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PREFERRED STRATEGY CONSULTATION REPORT

The Development Planning Manager reported on the Consultation Report on the Local Development Plan (LDP) Preferred Strategy for Council to consider and endorse.

He reported that Regulation 15 of the LDP Regulations requires the Council to publish its pre-deposit proposals (Preferred Strategy) for public inspection and consultation before determining the content of its LDP for Deposit. He stated that the statutory consultation period on the Preferred Strategy was held from 30 September 2019 to 8 November 2019 and a total of 70 formal representations were received. In preparation for the Deposit Stage of the LDP, the Council must draft an initial Consultation Report for publishing as soon as reasonably practicable after pre-deposit consultation under LDP Regulation 16A. He informed Council that a Consultation Report has been prepared, outlining how the Council has undertaken public participation and consultation on the Preferred Strategy itself. He stated that the Report identified the steps taken to publicise plan preparation, in accordance with the Community Involvement Scheme (CIS), before outlining the specific bodies engaged, summarising the main issues raised and identifying how the responses have been or will be addressed. The Report provided significant detail on how this key period of consultation will influence development of the Deposit LDP.

The Development Planning Manager reported that a number of consultation methods were utilised to ensure efficient and effective consultation and participation, in accordance with the CIS. He stated that the Consultation Report was not intended to be a comprehensive report on each comment received, rather a summary of the key issues raised in response to the specific questions on the consultation form. A significant number of representations were also site specific in focus, although the Report did not attempt to evaluate the comprehensive merits of candidate sites. He stated that all candidate sites would be evaluated as part of the Candidate Site Assessment Methodology, which is separate to the Preferred Strategy Consultation. He informed Council that the Consultation Report was structured around each consultation question, sets out the main corresponding points received and details the Council's subsequent responses. The Consultation Report provides a detailed thematic overview of the main comments submitted by representors.

The Senior Planning Officer informed Council that pressure had been brought on the Planning Department by the development industry for the release of greenfield sites for development, however this had been rebutted by the Department, supported by Inspectors' reports. A member of Council commended the approach taken by the

Planning Department in rebutting the development of greenfield sites and that there was a need to have decent quality development in the County Borough.

A member of Council questioned whether the Planning Department ensured future development was accessible to people with disabilities. The Development Planning Manager informed Council that the Department works with Public Health Wales to ensure development is accessible to all and this would be included in the LDP.

A member of Council sought reassurance that a solution is found with the level crossing to enable development to the east of Pencoed. The Development Planning Manager informed Council that the moratorium on development will remain, however once the findings of the assessment were known they would be the subject of a report to Members.

RESOLVED: That Council endorsed the contents of the report and approval will be sought from Council prior to publishing the Deposit Plan for formal public consultation.

395. **POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES & STATION REVIEW 2019-2020**

The Chief Executive reported on the findings of the Polling Station review and of any proposed changes arising from the review. He stated that under section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, the authority has a duty to undertake a review every fifth year of polling districts, polling places and polling stations within its area. Notice of the review was published on 7 October 2019 and representations by 8 November 2019. All comments and suggestions received by this date were then posted online, displayed on the Electoral Notice Board, Civic Offices and sent to all Town & Community Council Clerks to allow for any further comments on the suggested proposals to be received by 22 November 2019.

The Chief Executive reported that the objective of the review is to have polling district boundaries which take into account the changes in population in certain areas (following new developments) and to ensure polling stations are both in the best location and in suitable premises with good access. The review requires the Council to seek to ensure that all the electors in each Parliamentary constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and so far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible to all electors and regard has been given to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

He reported that most comments received were in support of existing arrangements and the premises used with responses from Elected Members and a number of Town & Community councilors. Although concerns were raised on the future arrangements for Brackla when new wards are introduced for 2022, this related to the Boundary Commission's review and are outside the remit of the internal electoral review.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the outcome of the review and in particular the comments identified in the appendix to the report.

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

Question from Councillor N Burnett to the Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations

Can the Cabinet Member please provide us with an update on our Empty Property Strategy and what it has achieved to date?

Response of the Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations

Following a public consultation, the Empty Properties Strategy 2019-2023 was endorsed and approved by Cabinet in December 2019, so with it only being 4 weeks ago, it hasn't had enough time to embed itself. The strategy does confirm our commitment to reducing the blight of empty properties throughout the borough and I set out below some examples of the work that has been carried out:

1. A robust suite of engagement/enforcement letters has been produced which enable a targeted and escalating approach to deal with empty properties.
2. An empty property guide has been produced which gives owners of empty properties information and advice to assist them in bringing their properties back into use.
3. A risk assessment system has been developed which allows us to target both properties that have detrimental effect on the area and those which are in areas of high housing need allowing us to achieve a blended approach in tackling the problem.
4. A dedicated email address has been created which is accessible via our website providing a single point of contact for enquiries/complaints in relation to empty properties.
5. A data has been created where details of all enforcement action/complaints and progress in bringing properties back into use can be logged, allowing us to more accurately report on the situation.
6. The discount for council tax in relation to empty properties has been removed.
7. Links have been established with auctioneers to assist owner in the sale of their properties.
8. An Enforcement Procedure in relation to Enforced Sale has been produced.

However, before the strategy was officially endorsed, the administration has been working to the strategy with and committed to the appointment of the Empty Property officer in October 2018. Considerable progress has been made in tackling the issue of Empty Properties and since their appointment of the officer a total of 219 properties have been investigated. Of the 20 priority properties identified by the risk assessment process, 12 properties have been brought back into use, and in relation to the remaining 8 properties, 5 are subject to Section 215 Notices under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, 2 have completed expression of interest forms in relation to grants/loans, and the remaining property was in the process of being sold but unfortunately this has fallen through so we will need undertake further engagement with the owner of this property.

The Strategy is about collaboration with the empty property owner, before we do go down the legislative route. As a result of this work the performance of the Council when compared to the others councils in Wales has improved from 18th in 2016-17 to 5th 2018-2019 and in relation to the we have seen this figure more than double from 3.48% in 2018 to 8.41% 2019.

Councillor Burnett was pleased to see the Council's performance when compared to the other councils in Wales had increased from 5th to 18th in relation to the percentage of properties brought back into use and asked a supplementary question as to how such properties are identified. The Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations informed Council that properties are scored according to two main determinants, namely location and need, consideration is also taken account of nuisance, complaints and the state of repair.

A member of Council questioned action being taken to tackle empty properties in valley communities which had been empty for a number of years. The Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations informed Council of an example of a property in a valley community which had been a blight for 10 years and that the Empty Properties

Officer had worked with the Environmental Health Department and the owner in order to bring the property to auction and that the new owner had been able to access grants.

A member of Council questioned whether the Council was using enforcement powers to tackle empty properties. The Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations informed Council that the Council has a number of powers at its disposal and that Section 215 Notices had been used for the removal of rubbish and to clear paths.

Question from Councillor A Hussain to the Cabinet Member Communities

Could the Cabinet Member please let us know if we are changing our old Planning Laws to help the environment in reducing the waste and is our Council committed to environmentally friendly housing and planning policy?

Response of the Cabinet Member Communities

The statutory planning system is a devolved function of the Welsh Government but is largely implemented through local government and as such the Council is also the Local Planning Authority (LPA). A large raft of legislative documents form the basis of planning law and this provides the national statutory legal framework around which the land use planning system is implemented whilst planning policy, updated on a regular basis provides the guidance and direction necessary to make land use planning decisions on both a Wales wide and local level. Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 (PPW10), published in 2018 together with the associated Technical Advice Notes (TANs), sets out the over-arching main national planning policy context and Local Development Plans (LDPs) and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) are produced by LPAs for their respective areas. In planning law the development plan has primacy in planning decisions unless specifically overridden by national policy. The LDP translates the Council's wellbeing objectives and corporate priorities into clear land use planning policies and strategies.

PPW10 has aligned national planning policy with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and has specific aims in relation to waste, both in the provision of facilities and in the reduction of waste in future development. It also requires new development to more sustainable with a focus on energy efficiency and smarter use of resources. The replacement Bridgend LDP must be in conformity with PPW10 and this provides further opportunity to craft policies and SPG to reflect national policy and to deliver sustainable development outcomes. Furthermore, Bridgend enjoys an above national average waste recycling rate.

It should also be noted that the Building Regulations is also a devolved function and is seen as a principal means of ensuring that new buildings are as energy efficient as possible and proposed changes to Part L of the regulations will further increase the standards necessary to provide more environmentally friendly development.

In addition Bridgend is leading the way in smart energy provision including proposals for district heating schemes and the Caerau Minewater.

Councillor Hussain in asking a supplementary question of the Cabinet Member sought assurance that step changes in planning policy were being taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as he believed that this had not been the case at the Hillside development in Penyfai where regular flooding was being witnessed. The Cabinet Member Communities referred the Member to the minewater scheme and that a number of other projects were being run advancing technology. He stated that the Council has a local area strategy to reduce carbon emissions, being one of the few councils in Wales and the UK to have a strategy.

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A member of Council referred to developers following planning legislation and questioned whether the Council encouraged developers to meet the Council's aspirations of de-carbonisation. The Cabinet Member Communities informed Council of the Welsh Government's intention for Wales to be powered by clean energy and that it has a budget for zero carbon properties which he hoped would be a catalyst for a change in legislation.

A member of Council questioned where is the Council ranked in Wales for low carbon properties. The Cabinet Member Communities informed Council that the local area strategy has enabled the Council to develop expertise and work with potential partners.

397. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 16:47