

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

Present

Councillor M Jones – Chairperson

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

Apologies for Absence

A R Berrow and JH Tildesley MBE

Officers:

Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Carys Lord	Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Michael Pitman	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Heidi Bennett – Item 6 – Prejudicial – Employee of an organisation that receives funding from BCBC

Cllr Colin Davies – item 7 – prejudicial – Wife is a senior manager at Coity Primary School

Cllr Jon Paul Blundell – Item 7 – Prejudicial – LEA Governor for Bryntirion Comprehensive School

Cllr Amanda Williams – Item 7 – Prejudicial – Chair of Governors for Coity Primary School and have been campaigning for an increase in capacity there.

Cllr Ian Williams – Item 7 – Personal – Children attend Bryntirion Comprehensive School and also a child who will be going into the school in September.

Cllr Martin Williams – Personal – item 7 – Daughter attends Coity Primary School

Cllr Maxine Lewis – Personal – item 9

21. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 09/03/2022 and 18/05/2022 be approved as a true and accurate record.

22. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:

The mayor's announcements were as follows:

I hope members enjoyed the recent Platinum Jubilee bank holiday, and that you all saw the well-deserved honour which was bestowed upon our council leader shortly before the celebrations took place.

I'm referring, of course, to the Order of the British Empire which has been presented to Councillor Huw David.

Councillor David was nominated for this award by the Welsh Local Government Association.

It was presented in recognition of the strong leadership that he has consistently demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, both for the local authority and as the WLGA's Presiding Officer and Health and Social Services Spokesperson.

The OBE further acknowledges all of the hard work, enthusiasm and commitment that he has dedicated towards serving the local community, particularly during one of the most challenging periods we have ever faced in local government.

In commenting upon the award, Councillor David himself recognised how it reflects the efforts of everyone who has worked throughout the pandemic to ensure that services have been able to continue, and that vulnerable people have been able to receive essential care and support.

This is, of course, an exceptional achievement, and I am sure that members will want to join me in extending our warmest congratulations to Councillor David.

I am pleased to announce that it has been a very busy start to this Mayoral term.

The mayor's office is receiving several requests for support which is great and perhaps is indicative of life returning to some form of normality after the pandemic.

A selection of events I have attended include Bridgend College Fashion Show held in Cardiff.

This was a first for me, but an incredible experience to see creativity, talent, and hard work from students with an amazing talent.

Bridgend College can be very proud of the dynamic and successful creative arts department which supports students to flourish in whatever pathways they decide to pursue.

Can I thank my host for the evening Viv Buckley a member of staff?

The enthusiasm and commitment to develop the College not only through creative arts but with other subject matters throughout the county Borough is clearly palpable.

I joined the Bridgend Pernicious Anaemia Society where I met with some wonderful people who are experiencing extreme health difficulties in trying to negotiate life with a vitamin B12 deficiency.

The event was certainly inspiring where I was able to learn about not only the day-to-day difficulties that people must endure but the pioneering work that is being undertaken to support them.

Could I thank Karyl and Martyn Hooper once again for the invitation and their hospitality at the event.

Over the Queens Jubilee weekend, I was delighted to present commemorative coins to children at the Phillip Squire Community Centre at Coytrahen to celebrate The Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen.

There was an incredible event that involved the whole community coming together like many others to celebrate this incredible occasion.

Some 30 to 40 children received a commemorative coin which was some achievement for all those involved in arranging the event.

Congratulations to Mel James and all the team for putting on this event.

On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June I was honoured and privileged to unveil a painting at the Princess of Wales hospital Bridgend. The event was reported that evening on ITN news.

The painting was commissioned by the Bridgend Disabled Random Act of Kindness Association in recognition of the incredible work hospital staff do to support the citizens of Bridgend and beyond.

It was very good to meet NHS staff, The Hospitals Executive, and the Chair of the Health Board.

The painting and plaque can be found in the corridor near to the main entrance and depicts the legendary Florence Nightingale with one of our current hospital staff members Sophie.

It was humbling to listen to Sophie's experiences of working as a nurse at the time of the pandemic. I am sure the whole chamber will join me in thanking all NHS staff and Mr Tom Weaver for arranging this special occasion.

Last weekend, I attended the Pen y Fai folk Dancing 50th Anniversary Dinner at the Heronston Hotel.

I was joined at the event by Cllr Tim Wood and his consort who were representing Bridgend Town Council.

It was a pleasure to experience the Welsh culture of dance, tradition, and friendship.

And yes, Cllr Wood and I joined many others in trying to negotiate the many intricate moves of traditional folk dancing on the dance floor.

Not for the faint hearted, but very enjoyable.

A very special event.

Thank you to everyone at Dawnswyr Gwerin PENYFAI.

Could I take this opportunity to thank the Deputy Mayor Cllr William Kendall and his consort for attending the Variety Show for Ukraine at the Heol y Cyw Welfare Hall that same weekend.

This event clashed with my commitment at the Heronston Hotel.

I understand that the evening was enjoyed by all, and funds raised will be donated to the Ukraine Disaster Fund.

Thank you to all those who organised this event.

And finally

I look forward to attending the Unsung Heroes Award Ceremony this coming Friday evening at the Grand Pavilion Porthcawl.

**Announcements by the Deputy Leader:**

We recently marked Carers Week in Bridgend County Borough with a series of events designed to highlight what support is available for local residents.

As an annual national campaign, Carers Week aims to raise awareness of caring issues, highlight the challenges that paid and unpaid carers face on a daily basis, and recognise their value to families and communities throughout the UK.

By definition, a carer can be any age, and is someone who supports a family member, partner or friend who cannot otherwise manage on their own.

We believe that there are approximately 18,000 adult carers and 2,000 young carers that we know about in Bridgend County Borough, although there are likely to be many more, most of whom will be juggling their caring responsibilities with work, education or family life.

If you are aware of someone who acts within a paid or unpaid caring capacity within your ward, members can help by ensuring they are aware that support and advice is available.

You can find out more about this and also full details on how Carers Week was marked by visiting the websites of the council, the Care Collective or the Bridgend Carers Centre.

Thank you.

**Announcements by the Cabinet Member Resources:**

Members may wish to remind their constituents of the need to remain vigilant for scams designed to convince householders to part with cash or hand over confidential information that could be used against them.

The criminals behind these scams were forced to become more creative at the height of the pandemic lockdown, and we are continuing to receive complaints and reports from concerned residents.

One of the most common scams involves a phone call advising householders that they are owed a refund on their council tax payments.

The scammers go on to ask for confidential bank account details in order to arrange for the rebate to be paid, but victims of this scam subsequently find that their bank accounts have been raided.

Similar scams exist in a variety of forms, and we also receive complaint from people who have been offered fake refunds on their water, electricity or gas bills.

Don't forget that Bridgend County Borough Council will never phone a householder out of the blue to ask them for their bank account details over the telephone.

Anyone who feels they may have fallen victim to such a scam should contact their bank immediately, and report it to police by calling 101.

More advice on protecting yourself against scams is available at the Shared Regulatory Services website.

Thank you.

**Announcements by the Cabinet Member Regeneration:**

Following the recent news that Rest Bay, Trecco Bay and Porthcawl Marina have all retained their prestigious Blue Flag awards, it is great to see that RNLI lifeguards are patrolling the local coastline once more.

The lifeguards have returned to Rest Bay along with a new initiative which enables visitors to scan a QR code to receive up to date information designed to make their trip to the beach even safer.

They already provide daily patrols at Coney Beach, Sandy Bay and Trecco Bay between 10am-6pm.

These patrols are jointly funded by Bridgend County Borough Council and Parkdean Resorts, with the RNLI covering additional costs through their national and local fundraising activities.

The RLNI will also be at the marina from 9am this Sunday to offer free lessons on maintaining personal lifejackets and demonstrate how to check for wear and tear, replace gas bottles and more.

Huge crowds are expected to visit the coast once more this summer, so it is good to know that the RLNI will be keeping a watchful eye.

Thank you.

**Announcements by the Cabinet Member Communities:**

I'd like to draw members' attention towards a new consultation which was launched earlier this week, and which I hope you will help encourage your constituents to take part in.

The Bridgend 2030 Net Zero Carbon Strategy is asking people for their views on issues ranging from decarbonisation and climate change to the council's commitments and proposed initiatives for reducing the area's carbon footprint.

Bridgend County Borough Council declared its own climate emergency in June 2020 and set up a Climate Emergency Response programme to commit to the Net Zero 2030 target as an organisation.

As you know, our target is to achieve Net Zero Carbon status by 2030, and receiving people's views and ideas on how we can work towards this is an important part of the overall process.

We want this to be a partnership that everyone has a stake in, so I hope that you will help to make people aware.

The consultation will be live until 30 August 2022 and people can take part by visiting the council website, or contacting the Consultation team to request an alternative format.

Thank you.

**Announcements by the Cabinet Member Education:**

Members may be interested to know that preparations are underway for rolling out the new National Plan for Music Education to schools across Bridgend County Borough this autumn.

This Welsh Government initiative aims to ensure that no child will miss out on musical tuition or activities due to a lack of financial means.

Thanks to the support of the Bridgend Music Service, local children aged from three to sixteen will be able to benefit from the scheme from September 2022 onwards.

Music can play an important role in both increasing a child's confidence and supporting their general health and well-being.

This initiative will also help to protect local arts and culture in the county borough, and I hope that it will encourage young people to develop a greater interest in music while making it easier for them to try out different instruments that they may otherwise not have had access to.

Thank you.

**Announcements by the Cabinet Member Education:**

I am sure that members will be aware that the war in Ukraine has now been taking place for one hundred and twelve days, and that more than fifteen million people have been displaced.

As Bridgend County Borough Council is one of many local authorities who are playing their part in supporting the UK Government's 'Homes For Ukraine' scheme, I thought members may appreciate an update on the current position.

In brief, a corporate working group has been established to oversee our response, and has established processes to ensure that we are meeting all of the scheme's expectations.

Taff Housing has been commissioned to support the local implementation of the scheme as refugees leave the established Welsh 'welcome centres'.

They are recruiting a new team who can provide additional resource and deliver wrap-around support for families and hosts.

In the interim, we are meeting needs by utilising the skills of existing council staff who already provide support to Syrian and Afghan refugees.

So far, 64 local households have applied to the Home Office to act as hosts.

Out of more than 180 visa applications, 116 have been approved by the Home Office, and 65 are still awaiting approval.

A total of 59 Ukrainians have already arrived in Bridgend County Borough and are receiving full support, and we anticipate that this figure will soon rise to 64.

We also believe that the area could potentially attract a further 117 refugees in coming weeks and months.

Work is underway to identify new hosts who can support the initiative further, and so far, around 100 have been sourced and contacted.

To date, we have received interest from 18 hosts who are now in the process of completing property and background checks, and one offer has already been made.

Together with other participating councils, we are continuing to enquire about what the arrangements will be for supporting longer-term accommodation needs.

Currently, host arrangements are short-term in nature, and the 'thank you' payments last only 12 months.

We are still waiting to receive formal funding instructions from the Home Office or from Welsh Government, and are also seeking clarification over a number of ongoing operational issues.

These range from confirmation around health screening actions to establishing how we receive details on the needs of refugees who arrive via the Family Visa route.

Like all councils, we are facing huge demands upon both our housing and homelessness services, and must take a number of additional wider pressures into consideration, too.

Nevertheless, officers are investing a great deal of hard work into ensuring that we can offer our support to refugees of the conflict, and I am sure that members will want to extend their thanks and appreciation for this.

I will of course bring you further updates as the situation develops further.

Thank you.

23. **TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER**

The Leaders announcements were as follows:

Since announcing that the council wants to amend the designation for how almost 20 hectares in the Sandy Bay and Griffin Park area will be used to facilitate future stages of Porthcawl's regeneration, we have already received a lot of feedback.

While this is excellent and we continue to encourage people to study the proposals set out within both the Porthcawl Placemaking Strategy and the land appropriation plans, it has also resulted in some confusing and inaccurate assumptions, especially on social media.

I would like to just take this opportunity to clarify one or two points.

Firstly, some people are concerned that Griffin Park may become smaller or have houses built upon it, but the opposite is true.

Once the extension and the land previously used for the monster park have been added, the park would actually double in size from four to eight acres.

And far from building houses upon it, we want to retain this newly expanded Griffin Park, and ensure that it remains at the heart of the local community for future generations to enjoy.

Others have asked if Porthcawl is about to lose its tennis courts.

While the current location is required for an access route into the wider Sandy Bay development area, the proposal is to relocate the courts to a new spot, provide new all-weather facilities instead, and ensure that Porthcawl can benefit from high-quality tennis courts built to a modern standard.

We have also seen inaccurate housing statistics being quoted which miss the fact that we have already reduced the number of dwellings intended as part of the plans, especially at the nearby Salt Lake site where housing land has been reduced by a third to make way for an all-new seafront park.

This was introduced in direct response to feedback gathered through previous public consultation, and demonstrates how people's views are actively influencing what is taking place.

It is essential for people to study the proposals directly, and to consider what the potential benefits could be before having their say.

Full details of how you can do this online or by visiting Porthcawl Library are available at the council website.

Members may also be interested to know that the Home Office is inviting applications to a new fund which is designed to improve security measures at churches, mosques and other places of worship.

Known as the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme, it is open to all faith communities in England and Wales who feel that their place of worship is vulnerable to hate crime.



Examples of how the funding could be used include the installation CCTV cameras, security alarm systems, perimeter fencing and more.

All places of worship who feel they are vulnerable to hate crime are encouraged to apply, and further information is available at the Home office website.

The deadline for applications is 14 July 2022.

Thank you.

24. **REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2021-22**

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change presented a report which provided Council with an update on the Council's revenue financial performance for the year ended 31st March 2022, and sought approval for budget virements between £100,000 and £500,000, as required by the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

She explained that on 24th February 2021, Council approved a net revenue budget of £298.956 million for 2021-22. As part of the Performance Management Framework, budget projections are reviewed regularly and reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis. The delivery of agreed budget reductions is also kept under review and reported to Cabinet as part of this process.

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change provided the summary financial position at 31st March 2022 and highlighted the many changes that occurred throughout the year as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. She explained that Welsh Government allocated £206.6 million in its budget to the Hardship Fund to support local government for the first six months of 2021-22 along with various other support payments throughout the quarters. Further details on these funds were at 4.1.1 of the report.

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change outlined two further significant changes which occurred between quarter 3 and quarter 4 of the year which were:

- the £1.151 million contribution from WG in March 2022 in recognition of the reduced council tax collection rates experienced by Councils in 2021-22, as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, and;
- the one-off increase to the Revenue Support Grant of £2.703 million against the context of inflationary and service pressures, the ending of the WG Hardship Fund as well as continuation of decarbonising services and responding to the climate and nature emergency, increasing the Council's net budget from £298.956 million to £301.659 million for 2021-22 (Table 1).

She added that given the changes that have occurred which have resulted in a better financial position at the end of 2021-22, the Council was able to apply some of this funding to investments to support its residents. Details of this were at appendix 4 of the report. Section 4 of the report provided various tables highlighting Budget virements/technical adjustments, covid 19 cost claims as well as loss of income claims for the year 2021/2022.

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change stated that as outlined in previous monitoring reports during the year there were still £2.376 million of outstanding prior year budget reduction proposals that had not been met in full. Directors have been working to realise these savings during the 2021-22 financial year. A summary of the latest position is attached as Appendix 1. She added that Table 5 and Table 6 outlined

the prior year reductions as the budget reductions for year. Figures were broken down by directorate.

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change highlighted the net budget for each directorate and some key areas that contributed to the improved outturn position. Further details were at section 4.3 of the report.

The Cabinet Member Resources thanked the Chief Officer and the team for the hard work that had gone into drawing funds from various sources particularly the hardship fund, and this was something that should not be underestimated. He added that it was pleasing to see that the Council had ended the year in a financially secure position and the work by the WLGA on ensuring Local Governments were listened to by Welsh Government and have provided the necessary support.

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- noted the revenue outturn position for 2021-22, and;
- approved the virements between £100,000 and £500,000 as outlined in paragraph 4.1.15

25. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change presented a report which sought approval from Council for a revised capital programme for 2021-22 to 2031-32 (Appendix A).

She explained that the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Wales) Regulations 2003 as amended, contained detailed provisions for the capital finance and accounting controls, including the rules on the use of capital receipts and what is to be treated as capital expenditure. The Council's Capital Strategy, incorporating the Prudential Indicators for 2022-23, was approved by Council on 23 February 2022. On this date, Council also approved a capital programme covering the period 2021-22 to 2031-32 as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Since then, a review has been undertaken of available capital resources, taking into consideration uncommitted funding in the capital programme, the anticipated year end revenue position for 2021-22, the position on earmarked reserves and revenue budgets available for 2022-23. Further background was at section 3 of the report.

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change explained that the capital programme approved by Council in February 2022 for the period 2021-22 to 2031-32 totalled £230.174 million, of which £123.542 million is to be met from Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) resources, including capital receipts and revenue contributions from earmarked reserves, with the remaining £106.632 million coming from external resources, including General Capital Grant. A number of proposals for new capital schemes have been received, and these have been considered and prioritised by Cabinet and Corporate Management Board, in line with the Council's Capital Strategy.

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change outlined the proposed new capital schemes as well as the funding of new capital schemes as indicated in Table 1 and Table 2 of the report. Some key areas were highlighted below:

- Telecare Transformation Project (£1,405,209)
- Cardiff Capital Region Metro Plus – Penprysg Road Bridge (£500,000)
- Community Asset Transfer (£500,000)
- Children's Playground Refurbishment (£500,000)

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- Cosy Corner (£500,000)
- Highways Carriageway & Footway Refurbishment (£1,500,000)
- Unadopted Roads (£500,000)

Further details on these were at section 4 of the report.

The Cabinet Member Resources welcomed the report and stated the additions to the capital programme mentioned in Table one were exciting opportunities that were much needed. He added that some of these items were for known schemes whilst a number of them will require further reporting to cabinet and council.

A Member eluded to the figure in the report relating to outgoings to the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal totalling £7.7 million. He asked that some clarification be provided on what the money would be used for. He also asked if after 2025 the payments to the CCRCDC would end, as there was no further reference of figures beyond this date.

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change explained that the £7.7 million was total spend in regards to schemes paid into or supported by the CCRCDC, not total money paid in. She added that she did not have the figures on what had been paid in to date but could gather than information and provide this to Members following the meeting.

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change explained that a number of the schemes provided regional benefits as well as local benefits. A number of the schemes listed in table 1 were local benefits that BCBC may not have been able to find the funds for, hence why they have only recently been earmarked. She further added that one of the key drives in CCRCDC is the job creation and transport links that funding will provide, and this was something that benefited the whole region.

The Corporate Director Communities outlined a number of specific areas that the CCRCDC funding provided support in. The Chief Executive also stated that a briefing session in the future would be beneficial for Members to gain a greater understand on the various elements that made up the CCRCDC.

A Member asked for clarification on the funds allocated to highways carriageway and footway refurbishment and what that meant for historical towns and villages in the Bridgend area.

The Corporate Director Communities explained this money would be allocated on a priority basis whereby evaluations were carried out throughout Bridgend and fed back into a technical database. . This was then evaluated and those roads that required significant repair would be dealt with first.

A Member asked for clarification on the Penprysg Road Bridge and what that involved as well as what kind of investment over the next few years this would require.

The Corporate Director Communities explained that £500,000 was to fund the detailed design of the Penprysg Bridge, which would also include an active travel bridge at the site of the level crossing. She added that we have been working with Network Rail and it had been agreed that as the bridges would be passing over a main railway line, they will be commissioned to progress the designs of the bridge for BCBC.

The Corporate Director Communities stated that the consultation was very successful and a lot of feedback was given including some minor concerns, about land take, She added that when we reached a more detailed position, the Council wanted to engage

with the community, to provide reassurance in that their views had been taken into account.

She also explained that this scheme would be submitted as part of a levelling up fund bid and the bridge was estimated to cost within the region of £25 to £30 million. It has been difficult to make detailed assessments on the full cost of the scheme due to it being a main line and site investigations can only be made when trains were not running. A large risk contingency has therefore been added. The LUF bid goes in on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and we will know if were successful sometime in the Autumn.

The Leader added a point regarding CCRC funding and that the South Wales Metro scheme was an example of a scheme that would not have gone ahead without the match funding from CCRC.

A Member was pleased to see the investment into Coety Primary School as it had been hard fought for and was much needed. He added that now that the recognition of the current school was there in that it was too small for the needs of the area, we would still be waiting until 2025 for the new school. He asked if it was possible to provide some temporary solutions at the current site to allow for the additional pupils until the new school was built.

The Member also asked in relation to the two-year-old school in Pencoed which is also in need of expansion, why this was not foreseen during the development stage.

The Corporate Director Education and Family Support stated that during the time these schools were being designed, Welsh Government only accepted projected pupil number from residential developments that have received planning permission at that time. Therefore, any further housing development in the area, as well as any current plans for developments that had not yet been approved, could not be included in the original assumption. At the time, the adopted supplementary planning guidance SPG16 which was applicable for Band A and used to calculate the size of the provision. In 2019, a review of pupil yield rates for the new housing developments demonstrated a significant demographic change in population and the SPG16 has since been updated to reflect the revised rates and has now been adopted by council.

The Corporate Director Education and Family Support added that in relation to the temporary solutions at Coety Primary School, he welcomed the suggestions and agreed to take the suggestions forward to the School Modernisation Programme Board for further consideration.

A Member asked in relation to table 1 of the report regarding the unadopted roads. He asked for clarification on what this would be used for. The Corporate Director Communities provided a detailed response on the process of adopting roads and how that funding would be incorporated into the process.

A Member expressed concerns that the funding would not bring forth many adopted roads, however he was hopeful that a strategy could be put in place to tackle this in the near future.

A Member asked with regards to the funding to improve play areas in the borough, was any of this money going to be used to improve accessibility as there are various children with complex needs who may not currently be able to access or use the play areas. He also asked for some clarification on the disparity between the figures in the report.

The Corporate Director Communities explained that there were 107 play areas in the borough which were in varying degrees of condition. Every year there was an annual

play assessment which looked at the suitability and condition of play areas and highlighted those that required investment. Last year BCBC pledged £800,000 for investment into play areas and a tender process was carried out. As there was an underspend from last years budget a further £500,000 has been added to the investment programme totalling just under £1.3million for 22/23

She added that not all play areas would be able to be brought up to a significant standard that would provide inclusion of all children with disabilities however the aim is to include as many aspects within the play areas that include as many children's needs as possible.

A Member mentioned that many roads and lanes in Maesteg appeared to be at an adoptable standard and sat parallel to roads that looked the same that were already adopted. He asked why these roads were not adopted if they were the same as an already adopted road in the next street over.

The Corporate Director Communities defined what the difference was between an adopted and an unadopted road. She explained that where roads were at an adoptable standard, then they would be adopted by the Council. If they were not adopted, there is a reason as to why, which could be minor works that were preventing that. She explained that unfortunately the borough historically had a large number of unadopted roads. It does take time to get roads up to an adoptable standard and the current financial resource of the Council would prevent all unadopted roads coming forward for adoption at this time. She added that if the member wished to put a referral in, we could take a look on site to see what the differences were between these roads to gain a greater understanding.

**RESOLVED:** That Council approved the revised Capital Programme for 2021-22 to 2031-32 (Appendix A).

26. **MULTI-LOCATION MEETINGS POLICY**

The Monitoring Officer presented a report which sought approval of Council for the Multi-Location Meetings Policy.

At the outset of the Covid-19 Pandemic in March 2020 the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 enabled local authorities to convene meetings by remote means.

The Monitoring Officer explained that under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, local authorities are required to put in place, and publish, arrangements for multi-location meetings, that is, formal meetings where meeting participants may not all be in the same physical place. Further background was at section 3 of the report.

The Monitoring Officer explained stated that the draft policy attached as Appendix 1 took into account of interim statutory guidance issued by Welsh Government (WG), which set out a number of guiding principles to be considered in developing multi-location meeting arrangements, as well as practical considerations.

She stated that since June 2020, the Council had held all of its meetings by remote means, previously through Skype for Business, and now Microsoft Teams. She highlighted the benefits that remote meetings had provided as indicated in section 4.3 of the report.

The Monitoring Officer stated that the Council would continue to use Microsoft Teams as its primary remote meeting platform. This will be used by Elected Members from their Council provided devices to ensure effective security. Non-Council devices may be used although the functionality available when using these “guest” devices may differ from that provided by the Council. Other participants are able to join meetings using links provided by the Council contained within the meeting invitation.

She added that works were ongoing in the Council Chamber to upgrade the systems to allow for hybrid meetings. It is anticipated that these works will be completed by the end of June which will allow training sessions and some meetings to take place, on a hybrid basis, in July, subject to Health and Safety guidance.

A Member welcomed the report and believed that many Members would agree that the hybrid approach allows for choice in methods for attending depending on what they prefer. He asked in relation to the voting software that this was much needed as the roll call method previously used was not fit for purpose, as it was time consuming. The Monitoring Officer agreed and this was something that was being looked at. Once the Council Chamber works were completed, we would look at methods of voting.

**RESOLVED:** That Council approved the policy attached as Appendix 1.

27. **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION FROM:**

Cllr Tim Thomas to the Cabinet Member – Resources

Question:

Will the Cabinet Member for Resources comment on what this Council is doing to tackle the cost-of-living crisis for County Borough residents?

Response:

The Council has provided support to residents in the County Borough via a number of different means in recent times and is continuing to do so now.

**Discretionary Housing Payments**

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are paid from a cash-limited budget, provided by the Department of Works and Pension, and are intended to help people meet housing costs, usually where there is a shortfall between their Housing Benefit (HB), or housing element of Universal Credit (UC), and their rent. A DHP can only be awarded if the claimant is claiming HB, or UC with housing costs towards rental liability.

A DHP can be awarded for a rent deposit or rent in advance for a property that the claimant is yet to move into if they are already entitled to HB or UC at their present home, and also payments for past housing costs (including arrears of rent).

These payments are emergency payments and the council has to ensure that any payment reaches those who are most in need. The initial allocation of funding to Bridgend in the current year is £253,067.

We do promote these services via our own resources and also work with free advisory organisations such as CAB, who offer free advice to residents and promote this support.

**Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme helps people on low incomes to pay their council tax. This support is provided via an application process and individuals can receive this help to pay their council tax whether or not they are receiving other benefits, working, unemployed, caring for an adult or child or retired.

The total financial support provided to individuals in Bridgend via this route is estimated to be £15 million in the current year. Currently 12,671 individuals or families are receiving financial support via this scheme.

Again, information on how to claim this support is available via our website.

#### Fuel Payments

During the last financial year, the Council acted as an agent for Welsh Government and paid the Winter Fuel bills monies. This scheme supported eligible households with the cost of heating their homes throughout the winter months and provided applicants with a one off £200 payment. The scheme was open to households where someone was claiming universal benefit, income support, working tax credits, means tested welfare benefits, income related job seekers allowance or employment and support allowance.

In total 8,649 payments were made, totalling £1,729,700

#### Cost of Living Scheme

The cost of living scheme is another Welsh government initiative which is being managed locally by this council. The scheme is intended to provide support as Wales recovers from the pandemic and support households to deal with the impact of increasing energy and other costs. The criteria for accessing the scheme has been set by Welsh government. Each eligible household within the county borough will receive a payment of £150.

The total funding allocated to Bridgend for the main part of this scheme is £7.514 million, with a further £1.236 million towards a discretionary scheme that the Council will also be administering, and the funding for both should be distributed by September 2022.

#### Business Rate Relief for businesses in the area

Support has been given to local businesses via the Small Business Rates Relief Schemes and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme to ensure they can continue to trade to support the local economy and maintain employment levels in the County Borough.

Through the Small Business Rates Relief scheme 3187 businesses in Bridgend with a rateable value below £12,000 receive relief on a sliding scale of between 0% and 100% depending on their rateable value.

Currently there 267 are businesses that are benefiting from 50% Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief.

#### Council Tax 2022/2023

In setting the revenue budget for the current year, the Council agreed to a 0% Council Tax increase. Within the budget report it states clearly that the rationale for this was to support the citizens of Bridgend to deal with the rising cost of living, such as increased energy and food bills, other inflationary increases, mortgage interest rises and national insurance increases.

#### Free Parking

During the pandemic the council has had a generous parking offer of free parking for 3 hour in its primary car parks.

#### Grants

We have been providing capital grants across the County Borough for business and new home owners, to bridge the gap in being able to get on the property ladder or to allow businesses to operate differently.

Since March 2021, £371k in grant has been awarded to 23 new home owners in our Valley communities to enable them to get on to the property ladder and bring back into occupancy previously vacant residential properties in their local communities.

Almost £600k of capital grants were also given to 83 businesses across the County as a result of covid to invest in their premises and in outdoor spaces. The changes enabled businesses to remain viable and operational, and will support their business going forward.

#### Food Poverty

The community pantries were established as part of our RDP (LEADER) funded project on Sustainable Community Venues. The project was refocused at the beginning of the pandemic to provide relief to residents in terms of access to affordable food.

The aim of the pantries was to provide an affordable bag of food per week (£5/bag) and the income went directly to cover the costs of the food deliveries from FareShare Cymru and the membership fee each centre had to pay FairShare to be part of the scheme.

The remaining money went straight into the community centres to support their costs which supported the overall aims of the project to support community centres to thrive and continue to provide services to their communities.

The Council funded the pantries until October 2021 and it is now being delivered through a Community Interest Company who have secured funding from a number of other sources. This is a real success story for BCBC as not only was the project very successful in supporting communities in rural wards but it went on to continue post pilot phase and has created a CIC and associated jobs.

Up to October 2021 we supplied 6037 bags of food equating to approximately 53,750Kg of food.

In addition to the community pantries, the Council is helping to support the mobilisation of Welsh Government Big Bocs Bwyd scheme across the County Borough. The scheme supports a network of 'pay as you feel' shops based in converted shipping containers in school grounds. Called the Big Bocs Bwyd project, there will be 60 of these projects in situ across Wales by the end of 2022 and Bridgend Local Authority area has received the largest number of these projects in one county – 16 in total. These Big Bocs Bwyds provide affordable food, to both the school families and the wider communities.

The Council is part of the Food Poverty Network of providers, co-ordinated by BAVO, and has worked with BAVO to deliver a capital/revenue grant fund to support community organisations addressing concerns within their localities.

#### Employability Bridgend

Through the Employability Bridgend programme, the Council continues to provide training opportunities and assist our residents back into work through initiatives such as "Employability Bridgend" which supports disadvantaged participants across the whole Council, regardless of location, by offering a suite of interventions that aim to break patterns of multi-generational worklessness and poverty.

The schemes work closely with community venues, particularly with our new UK Community Fund project (Connect, Engage, Listen, Transform) CELT to ensure that we are providing services locally that meet a local need.

From April 2021 to end of March 2022, the Employability Team helped 954 people from Bridgend engage in the programme, including 84 people who were already in work being supported to improve their labour market position; 342 people have achieved qualifications and 556 have gone into work.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Tim Thomas:

Having had discussions with various constitutions who had budgeted for the Cost of Living payments, could the Cabinet Member Resources provide an apology for the delay in payments that had caused great concern for constituents.

Response:



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The Cabinet Member Resources stated that the delay had been undesirable. However it was important to ensure due process was given and that the payments were made correctly to the people that needed them.

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change added that approximately 30,000 out of 50,000 payments have already been completed. However the process was being looked at to see if any further improvements could be made to speed the process up.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Maxine Lewis:

Was there any further funding available to assist in food poverty in Bridgend.

Response:

The Cabinet Member Resources stated that there was a discretionary element to the cost of living payment provided by Welsh Government and some of that would be used to support the food pantry.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Ross Penhale Thomas:

Could the Leader provide an update on the poverty truth commission suggestion that was put forward.

The Leader stated that not much progress had been made on this element due to the challenges that BCBC have had throughout the pandemic however he would speak to the officer involved and ensure an update was provided.

28. **URGENT ITEMS**

None

The meeting finished at 5:05pm