

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2024

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB /REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2024 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor W J Kendall – Chairperson

H T Bennett	F D Bletsoe	S J Bletsoe	JPD Blundell
E L P Caparros	N Clarke	HJ David	P Davies
N Farr	J Gebbie	W R Goode	D T Harrison
P W Jenkins	M R John	M Jones	RL Penhale-Thomas
J E Pratt	R J Smith	JC Spanswick	G Walter
A Wathan	A Williams	AJ Williams	HM Williams
I Williams	E D Winstanley	T Wood	

Present Virtually

S Aspey	A R Berrow	RJ Collins	C Davies
C L C Davies	S Easterbrook	M J Evans	P Ford
RM Granville	S J Griffiths	M L Hughes	D M Hughes
RM James	M Lewis	J Llewellyn-Hopkins	I M Spiller
T Thomas	MJ Williams	R Williams	

Apologies for Absence

H Griffiths
Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing

Officers:

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

Kelly Watson
Oscar Roberts

Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services
Cabinet and Committee Officer

2. Declarations of Interest

Decision Made	<p>The following declarations of interest were made:-</p> <p>Councillor P Davies – personal declaration in Agenda item 7</p> <p>Councillor S Bletsoe – personal declaration in Agenda item 7</p> <p>Councillor JC Spanswick – prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7, as a family member is in receipt of Council Tax Reduction</p> <p>Councillor RM James – prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7, as a family member is in receipt of Council Tax Reduction</p> <p>Councillor E Winstanley – prejudicial interest in Agenda item 8 (second question) as a member of an organisation who has protested against the sewage on Newton beach, which is referenced to in the question. Councillor Winstanley had also followed this up with a written representation through the appropriate channels.</p> <p>All those Members above who declared prejudicial interests left the meeting whilst the items they had declared an interest in were being considered.</p>
Date Decision Made	17 January 2024

3. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>That the following minutes of meetings of Council be approved as true and accurate records:-</p> <p>18 October 2023 22 November 2023</p>
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	Councillor N Clarke confirmed that the minutes of the 22 November above, reflected that she had attended the meeting remotely. However, she had actually attended this meeting in person.
Date Decision Made	17 January 2024

4. Presentation To Council By The Chief Fire Officer, South Wales Fire And Rescue Service

Decision Made	<p>The Chief Executive presented a report that introduced Mr. Huw Jakeway and colleagues from the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) to the meeting to give a presentation on the latest work of the Service.</p> <p>The Officers advised that the SWFRS covered the following County Borough's that included a varying number of Fire and Rescue establishments in each of these locations:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bridgend• Rhondda Cynon Taf• Vale of Glamorgan• Caerphilly• Merthyr Tydfil• Blaenau Gwent• Torfaen• Monmouth• Cardiff• Newport <p>It was confirmed that each of the constituent Authorities committed a budget towards the operation of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service that was in proportion of the population of each of the areas. The Service also was supported financially by a nominal amount of grant funding allocation. A large percentage of this budget he explained, went to employees, but this also included resource for the likes of Transport, Supplies, Training, Premises, Pensions and Capital Finance.</p> <p>In terms of the Service Medium Term Financial Strategy and the budgetary outlook, SWFRS shared with Members information on how funding was allocated to the SWFRS from the ten participating Authorities</p>
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and how its budget including from the local authorities, was allocated to the different services it supports, for example for their premises, training, employees and transport ie fleet, etc. A slide showed the budget for the current year compared with previous years as far back to 2009-10. It was emphasised that there were budget and inflationary pressures the SWFRS faced, similar to what other large organisations faced in the present climate.

Mr. Jakeway then shared with Members the number of different services the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service supports, which included putting out wildfires and flooding rescues, supporting NHS colleagues, road traffic collisions and large animal rescues. He added that the Service had also played a major role in community safety support, in incidents where fire is used to intentionally injure or kill.

The Service also reached out to schools, in order to educate young people about the dangers associated with fire.

He advised that the Service undertook approximately a significant number of home safety checks each year, that included Fire Risk Assessments and involved the installation in homes of hardware equipment, as well as giving advice to homeowners etc, about electrical safety measures residents should be mindful of.

The Service also had an active involvement with partner organisations around Sexual Abuse, Domestic Abuse and Human Trafficking, that included pathway signposting to referrals.

The Service also actively looked at issues of cladding, particularly in any high-rise buildings, in order to check their fire safety resistance levels.

In terms of future challenges the Service faced, he confirmed that some of the main ones here were:-

- Cost of Living crisis and the impacts of this;
- Governance and Funding Reform;
- Welsh Government's ambition;
- Challenges of Climate Change;
- Ageing and Population Changes;
- Outcome of Independent Culture Review;
- Industrial Relationships; and
- Built Environment post Grenfell tragedy

Mr. Jakeway stressed that methods of prevention and educating the public on fire safety issues was

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	<p>considered extremely important by the SWFRS and a financial commitment was made towards this by the service. He further paid tribute to the operational side of the service, which was often unseen when compared to the fire fighting division. He added that the Control Room was mainly the base where incidents were first reported and this was connected to other emergency services, for example the Police.</p> <p>Members were then invited to ask any questions of the SWFRS representatives by the Mayor.</p> <p>The Leader advised that he recognised the incredible often life-saving work that the SWFR service undertake across the County Borough and wider and the intervention and prevention work they also do in order to assist in educating the public. He added that he had spoken with the other Council Group Leaders following the publication of the Independent Cultural Review into the service and along with all other Leaders of the Constituent local authorities, he had written to the Chairperson of the SWFRS seeking assurance that all of the 82 recommendations proposed as a result of the review be accepted and implemented in full. This would in turn, ensure that the significant behavioral changes that are required in the workforce are put in place and indeed it has been evident already that improvements had taken place. There was no place in any workforce for instances of discrimination, sexual harassment, misogyny, bullying or other associated issues highlighted in the review. The Leader confirmed that he was also pleased to note, that the recommendations when implemented would be monitored and be the subject of a scrutiny process, in order to bring more trust and confidence in the SWFRS and its associates.</p> <p>Members were also pleased to note that the Action Plan had been shared with SWFRS staff.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That both the report of the Chief Executive and the presentation made by Mr. Jakeway and his SWFRS colleagues, be noted.</p>
Date Decision Made	17 January 2024

5. To receive announcements from:

Decision Made	<p>Announcements were received from the following dignitaries (no decisions made):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Social Services and Health• Cabinet Member – Education• Cabinet Member – Climate Change and the Environment
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member – Community Safeguarding and Wellbeing• Cabinet Member – Finance, Resources and Legal• Cabinet Member – Housing, Planning and Regeneration• Chief Executive
Date Decision Made	17 January 2024

6. To receive announcements by the Leader

Decision Made	Council received the Leader’s announcements (no decision made)
Date Decision Made	17 January 2024

7. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-25

Decision Made	<p>The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change submitted a report, which outlined the requirement for the Council to adopt a Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme for 2024-25 by 31 January 2024. If the Council did not adopt its own scheme by 31 January 2024, then such scheme would default to that applied by the Welsh Government.</p> <p>This scheme provides vital assistance for those on low incomes with a liability to pay council tax.</p> <p>Amendment regulations have been laid by Welsh Government uprating the financial figures used in the CTR schemes and making amendments to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• disregard a Widowed Parents Allowance (WPA) back payment from the calculation of an applicant’s capital and, for a period of 12 months, disregard a retrospective Bereavement Support Payment (BSP).• disregard any compensation or support payment received from the calculation of an applicant’s capital for Post Office Compensation payments (made in connection with the failings of the Post Office Horizon system), the Vaccine Damage Payment scheme and the Infected Blood Inquiry.• make minor technical amendments to the 2013 CTR Regulations to align provisions in Wales with England and housing benefit provisions.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reflect changes to the legislative landscape as a result of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022. <p>The 2024-25 scheme maintains the maximum level of support at 100% for eligible claimants.</p> <p>The cost of the CTR scheme for 2024-25 is estimated at £16.5m, which includes the cost of disregarding war pensions in full when calculating CTR entitlement (estimated at £4,127).</p> <p>Council noted that 12.435 households were receiving Council Tax relief this year, which was a slight reduction on last year's figures.</p> <p>It further noted following advice from the Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, that 9,658 households received a 100% reduction rate.</p> <p>A Member asked if an Impact Assessment had been undertaken by either BCBC or Welsh Government as to the level of Council Tax set by local authorities on the impact it will have upon what is required to continue the Reduction Scheme.</p> <p>The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change confirmed that this had been by Welsh Government when the regulations had been drafted. She added that it should be noted from the report, that the funding received as part of the settlement had been the same for many years and this amounted to £244m, but this was on an All-Wales basis (not solely for BCBC).</p> <p>She added that BCBC had enhanced the amount of funding as part of its budget for the above purpose in recent years, in order to fully support the level of residents who qualified for Council Tax Reduction under the scheme.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Council noted the report and adopted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-2025 as set out in paragraphs 3.15 to 3.20 of the report.</p>
Date Decision Made	17 January 2024

8. To receive the following Questions from:

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Decision Made	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Councillor E Caparros to the Cabinet Member – Climate Change and the Environment (response circulated previously to members) A supplementary question was asked by Councillor Caparros2. Councillor I Williams to the Cabinet Member – Climate Change and the Environment (response circulated previously to members) Supplementary questions were asked by Councillor I Williams and Councillor M Williams
Date Decision Made	17 January 2024

9. Urgent Items

Decision Made	There were no urgent items.
Date Decision Made	17 January 2024

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