MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor H Griffiths - Chairperson

H T Bennett	A R Berrow	F D Bletsoe	JPD Blundell
E L P Caparros	N Clarke	RJ Collins	HJ David
P Davies	M J Evans	N Farr	J Gebbie
RM Granville	GH Haines	D T Harrison	M L Hughes
D M Hughes	M R John	M Jones	M Lewis
J Llewellyn-Hopkins	J E Pratt	JC Spanswick	JH Tildesley MBE

HM Williams E D Winstanley

Present Virtually

S Aspey	S J Bletsoe	C L C Davies	P Ford
S J Griffiths	RM James	MJ Kearn	W J Kendall
R J Smith	I M Spiller	T Thomas	G Walter
A Wathan	A Williams	AJ Williams	I Williams
MJ Williams	R Williams	T Wood	

Apologies for Absence

W R Goode and P W Jenkins

Officers:

Nicola Echanis Head of Education & Family Support

Mark Galvin Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Rachel Keepins Democratic Services Manager

Carys Lord Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change

Claire Marchant Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing

Michael Pitman Alex Rawlin Zak Shell Mark Shephard Kelly Watson Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services
Corporate Policy & Performance Manager
Head of Neighbourhood Services
Chief Executive
Chief Officer - Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy

Declarations of Interest

Minutes Silence

Prior to considering the business of the Agenda, the Mayor confirmed with some considerable sadness, the passing on of ex-County Borough Councillor Julia Williams, mother of Councillor Alex Uberini-Williams, following a long illness. Julia he confirmed, had been a first class Councillor and had served the ward of Hendre admirably when she was formerly a Member of the local authority.

Tributes were paid to Julia in turn by Members, including the 3 political Group Leaders.

All those present in the meeting then stood for a minutes silence, as a mark of respect to Julia.

43. Apologies for absence

Decision Made	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors PJ Jenkins, WR Goode, the Corporate Director Communities and the Corporate Director Education, Early Years and Young People.
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024

44. Declarations of Interest

Decision Made	The following personal declarations of interest were made:-
	Councillor E Winstanley – Items 6, 8, 10 and 11, as an employee of Awen Cultural Trust.
	Councillor R Williams – Item 8 as he had been campaigning for some considerable time for the Pencoed

	Road Bridge and in relation to the refurbishment of Pencoed Library referenced to in the report. Item 11 as he was unsure if he was still in receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance.
	Councillor H Bennett – Items 6 and 8, as an employer at BAVO which was mentioned in the reports relating to these items.
	Councillor M Evans - Item 8 as he had been campaigning for some considerable time for the Pencoed Road Bridge and in relation to the refurbishment of Pencoed Library referenced to in the report.
	Councillor W Kendall – Item 11, no reason given.
	Councillor J Pratt – Item 6 as a family member is in receipt of Social Care.
	Councillor R Smith – Item 6 as a family member was in receipt of Social Care and due to him having an interest in a company that is in receipt of funding from BAVO.
	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing – Item 6 as a family member was in receipt of Social Care.
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024

45. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	RESOLVED:	That the Minutes of meetings of the Council dated 15 May and 24 July 2024, be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024	

46. To receive announcements from:

Decision Made	Announcements were received from the following Cabinet Members and Chief Executive (No decisions
	required/made):-

	 Mayor; Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Social Services and Health; Chief Executive
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024

47. To receive announcements by the Leader

Decision Made	Announcements were received from the Leader (No decisions required/made)
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024

48. Social Services Annual Report 2023/24

Decision Made	The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to present to Council the 'Director of Social Services' Annual Report for 2023/24 and request that Members endorse this; the analysis therein of the strengths and areas for improvement in Social Services and Wellbeing and the next steps set out.
	The Deputy Leader highlighted that despite some immense financial pressures in Social Services, the Council has some excellent facilities for children's and adult services and the Deputy Leader had recently met with Mario Cleft from the Care Forum for Wales, who had been very complimentary of BCBC's Adult Services team, adding that the workforce there were both engaging and energetic;
	 Members raised several queries and comments as part of the debate including the following:- It was noted in the presentation that there had been a 5% reduction from 29% to 24% for assessments for care and support plans, though there were still some considerable delays in processing social care packages and social care assessments, which in turn, resulted in delayed hospital admissions. Members asked therefore if they could have some details of figures in respect of the above outside of the meeting. The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing

	 confirmed that she would provide this information to the member, at the earliest convenience; A member was pleased to note that recruitment and retention of staff had been improved last year when compared to previous years reports. With regards to the part of the report that referred to Risks and Issues, he asked, taking the financial pressures that existed out of the equation, which areas of these gave the most cause for concern. The member acknowledged however that the report largely made for positive reading; A member noted that the Social Services Directorate overspend was improving (previously a £11.827m overspend), presently standing at around £6m. She further noted that the service was improving through different ways of working and added innovation. She was concerned however, that the current if not addressed sooner rather than later, would negate the improvements that had been made (to the service). A Member highlighted the £22b 'black hole' in the UK economy has had a very negative affect on organisations, such as local authorities, budgets, particularly such as those related to Social Services. The Council's proposal to cut other key services, such as Home to School Transport, may negatively affect the Children's Services area of the Directorate further; The Leader advised that though recently there had been cuts to the Council's Education budget, this had been protected (eg for schools) in previous years. Local authorities were now facing a position however, where budget cuts needed to be made fairly and proportionately, across all Directorates and service areas. He reminded members that the Communities Directorate that supported public facing services had taken a large amount of cuts in the last number of years. He added that he was pleased to see from the report before Council, that improvements were being made in Social Services.
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024

49. Urban and Rural Grass Cutting Capital Equipment

Decision Made	The Head of Operations – Communities presented a report, which provided an update in relation to the
	delivery of the Urban and Rural Grass Cutting Service and sought Council approval, for a proposed
	amendment to the Capital Programme to incorporate a capital budget of £340,000, vired from the existing
	Raven's Court capital budget.

Members and Officers made observations on the report, that included:

- Cabinet reported that efficiencies will be made going forward with an in-house service that the
 Council would not necessarily make if the contract continued to be given to a number of external
 contractors who cut grass in different areas of the County Borough. A lack of Council resources
 means that grass cutting by such external providers is not monitored sufficiently enough so as to
 ensure such grass cutting is taking place as frequently as it should be at certain locations. This then
 gives rise to complaints from residents in that area;
- Members commented that the report does not contain sufficient detail in terms of a comparison in
 costs between maintaining the contract externally as opposed to reverting it in-house. £340k is a
 considerable amount of capital revenue as a cost to make such a change in contract arrangements.
 The market needs to be the subject of further 'testing';
- Cabinet reported that the in-house service will not just cover grass cutting but other works such as litter picking and traffic management. It will bring together all green areas and not just cover grass cutting as the current external provision provides for. This will bring savings over the longer term and concentrate on improving wider issues such as the environment and biodiversity;
- As we are carrying a number of vacancies in the Communities Directorate, Members queried
 whether Officers were confident in ensuring that we will be able to recruit to any job positions that
 are intended to support the new in-house service;
- Members queried the estimated cost saving and the return on investment;
- Members queried whether there were other service areas in the Council where the estimated £340k for the purchase of equipment could be better placed from the Raven's Court capital budget, that will also deliver a better return;
- Cabinet explained that the report has been submitted to Council at this time, as the Council needs to buy the necessary equipment for next years grass cutting and associated works in order to provide the works in-house:
- The Leader reported that weed spraying has increased significantly in cost through external
 contractors in recent years and this will be included within the in-house service therefore making a
 saving to the Authority;
- Members suggested that the proposal could result in efficiency if it came in-house, as there is often
 difficulty in knowing who owns certain areas of grassed areas and open space, so therefore
 external contractors could be grass cutting private land as opposed to those maintained by the
 Council:

	maintainin As there were sor and agreed that a	 Members queried whether Sub-contracting externally been market tested in order to ensure that maintaining the contract out of house is not a cheaper option than bringing it in-house. As there were some Members against the proposals contained within the report, it was moved, seconded and agreed that an electronic vote be taken on the report's recommendations. The result of the vote was as follows:- 		
		<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
		28	18	0
	RESOLVED:		Capital Programme for the	oposed virement of £340,000 in the delivery of Urban and Rural Grass s being vired from the existing amme budget.
Date Decision Made	25 September 202	24		

50. Self-Assessment 2023/24

Decision Made	The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager introduced a report that covered the Council's 3rd self-assessment, for the period April 2023 to March 2024.
	The Leader advised that the report before Council today had also been considered by Cabinet yesterday.
	He felt that there may be scope in future such reports, to cutting back or modifying certain targets, particularly those relating to the Council's wellbeing objectives – maybe through reducing some of these.
	He added that further examination of performance indicators and commitments may be required, in order to establish if they are both appropriate and measureable. The Leader concluded by stating that it was important to give an open and honest opinion on our own performance as part of the Self-Assessment.
	A Member referred to page 168 of the report and of the importance of consultation with our residents and collating their feedback on aspects of the report, so that we can feedback any positive contributions into

	future Council policies and improved delivery of performance improvements.	
	A Member asked one final question, namely that on page 157 of the report, performance had been rated as good in terms of 'thriving valleys communities'. He asked what analysis had been undertaken to obtain that judgement.	
	The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager summarised the aims, commitments and performance indicators that make-up that judgement.	
	RESOLVED: That Council :-	
	 Approved the draft self-assessment at Appendix 1 to the report Approved the performance summary contained at Appendix 2. 	
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024	

51. Information Reports for Noting

Decision Made		The Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy informed Council of an information report for noting, that had been published since the last scheduled meeting.	
	RESOLVED:	That Council acknowledged the publication of the report referred to in paragraph 3.1 of the report.	
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024		

52. To receive the following Questions from:

Decision Made	1.	Councillor T Thomas to the Cabinet Member – Climate Change and the Environment (response
		circulated previously to members)
		A supplementary question was asked by Councillor Thomas
	2.	Councillor R Penhale-Thomas to the Cabinet Member – Regeneration, Economic Development
		and Housing (response circulated previously to members)

	A supplementary question was asked by Councillor Penhale-Thomas
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024

53. Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Mark John

Decision Made	Councillor John outlined a Notice of Motion, the wording of which was as follows:-
	'This Council regrets the Westminster Governments decision to cut the Winter fuel allowance which will leave many of the most vulnerable in our County Borough with the agonising decision to eat or heat their homes.
	We therefore wish to invite pensioners into our Civic offices in Angel Street during the Winter months where they can be assured of a safe warm space and hot drinks.
	We authorise Officers to make arrangements and report back to the next full Council meeting.'
	Members debated the motion and it was moved and duly seconded, that it be amended as follows:-
	'This Council regrets the Westminster Governments decision to cut the Winter fuel allowance which will leave many of the most vulnerable in our County Borough with the agonising decision to eat or heat their homes.
	So, we therefore invite any older person affected to take advantage of one of the many local community spaces such as community centres, libraries, warm hubs which are supported by this Council. We also recognise that pension credit is an underclaimed benefit and we encourage our residents to utilise the resources available via our commissioned support agencies a number of whom provide income maximisation services to support and complete relevant forms. That this Council uses its communication and engagement channels to raise awareness of the pension credit application process.
	We shall also signpost to trusted agencies and partners anyone struggling with their heating bills'.
	As certain Members objected to the amended motion immediately above, a vote was taken, the result of which was as follows:-

	For (the amendment)	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
	32	12	0
	RESOLVED:		of Motion above in bold be approved, as tion proposed by Councillor John.
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024		

54. Urgent Items

Decision Made	There were no urgent items.
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024

55. Exclusion of the Public

Decision Made	RESOLVED:	The minutes and report relating to the following item were not for publication as they contained exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation)(Wales) Order 2007. Following the application of the public interest test Council resolved pursuant to the Act to consider these items in private, with the public will being excluded from the meeting during such consideration.
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024	

56. Approval of Exempt Minutes

Decision Made	RESOLVED:	That the exempt Minutes of a meeting of the Council dated 24 July 2024, be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	25 September 2024	

57. Redundancy and Early Retirement Costs

Decision Made	The content of this minute is exempt and therefore not for publication
Date Decision Made	25 September 2025

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this link

The meeting closed at 19:30.