

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2015 AT 3.00PM

Present:

Councillor G Thomas - Mayor and Chairperson

S Aspey	D Hughes	J E Lewis	C E Smith
M W Butcher	E M Hughes	L C Morgan	J C Spanswick
N Clarke	R M James	D R W Lewis	M Thomas
H J David	P John	J E Lewis	H J Townsend
G Davies	C L Jones	J R McCarthy	E Venables
P A Davies	R C Jones	H E Morgan	K J Watts
G W Davies MBE	M Jones	M E J Nott OBE	C Westwood
E Dodd	B Jones	A D Owen	D B F White
D K Edwards	R D Jenkins	D G Owen	P J White
E P Foley	C J James	D R Pugh	H M Williams
C A Green	P James	C Reeves	R Williams
M Gregory	D R W Lewis	M Reeves	R E Young

Officers:

D Mepham	- Chief Executive
D McMillan	- Corporate Director - Children
M Shephard	- Corporate Director - Communities
N Young	- Corporate Director - Resources and Section 151 Officer
S Cooper	- Corporate Director - Wellbeing
P A Jolley	- Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer
G P Jones	- Head of Democratic Services (Electronic Support)
M A Galvin	- Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

440 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members for the reasons so stated:

Councillor J H Tildesley	- Unwell
Councillor D Owen	- School governor duties
Councillor D Sage	- Hospital

441 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the following meetings of Council were approved as a true and accurate record:-

Extraordinary meeting – 24 November 2014
Ordinary meeting – 10 December 2014

442 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7, Council Tax Reduction Scheme, for the reasons so stated, and left the meeting whilst this item was being discussed:-

Councillor E Venables – Due to her mother being in receipt of Benefits

Councillor M W Butcher – Due to a member of her family being in receipt of Rate Relief

Councillor D B F White – Due to a member of his immediate family being supported through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Councillor C L Jones - Due to his mother-in-law being supported through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Councillor H Townsend – As she is supported through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Councillor G Thomas - As his ex-wife is being supported through Council Tax Reduction Scheme

443 MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENT

Former Mayor Councillor C J James on behalf of himself and Councillor P James extended his thanks to all Members and Officers for their encouraging words of support during the time of his illness.

444 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that as this was the first Council meeting of 2015, he began by wishing Members a very Happy New Year. He hoped that they all enjoyed a peaceful and merry Christmas, and made the most of the festive season, which was particularly busy for himself and the Deputy Mayor as between us they had attended 58 events.

Just before Christmas, it was announced that the Community Chest grants scheme has invested more than one million pounds into grassroots sport in Bridgend County Borough since it began 15 years ago. A Sports Wales initiative which is run locally by the council's Active Young People team, and in that time the scheme has helped hundreds of local clubs, organisations and businesses to create opportunities for people to get active and live healthier lifestyles. The most recent beneficiary was Maesteg Golf Club, which received £1,500 to expand their junior section, purchase equipment and train volunteers. That investment has already paid off with the news that the young players have won the Welsh Inter Club County Championships and the Glamorgan County Championships for the first time in the club's history. I recently met with the young players to discuss their success, and found out that the club works hard with local primary schools to make the sport as accessible as possible. To pass the one million pound funding mark was a significant achievement for the Community Chest scheme. He stated though that he would urge more clubs, organisations and businesses to find out more about it, and Members may also want to bring it to the attention of their constituents, too. Further details can be found at the Sport Wales website or by contacting our Active Young People team.

Nominations for this year's Mayor's Citizenship Awards are set to close on Friday 30 January. He asked those present, that if they knew of an individual, group or business within your local community who deserve to be recognised for going the extra mile to help others, please consider putting them forward for one of the awards. Members could find out more by visiting the mayor's page at the corporate website, and winners will be announced and honoured at a mayoral event here at the Civic Offices in March.

Congratulations were also extended to the following who have been awarded New Year Honours:-

MVO was awarded to Mary Squire, Clerk to the Lord Lieutenant for Mid Glamorgan. MBE's were awarded to Mrs Jennifer Ann Morgan from Penyfael for services to Special Education and the community in Cardiff, and also to Mrs Shirley Rose Davies-Fox Chair of ISA Training in Bridgend for services to the Hairdressing Industry.

Finally, the British Empire medal was awarded to Mrs Karyl Carter from Stroke Association, Bridgend for services to Stroke Survivors.

445 CABINET MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) Cabinet Member - Communities

The Cabinet Member – Communities advised that, Members may recall recent incidents where people have reported becoming temporarily stuck in soft sand and mud while walking or exercising their dogs at Newton Beach in Porthcawl.

This is of course a common coastline feature, but due to the number of reports and media stories, the council has arranged for new signage to be erected alerting people to the issue and advising them to be aware. The signage which reads 'Caution: soft sand and mud' has been purchased by the authority and erected at the entrance to Newton Beach in partnership with the Porthcawl Powerboat and Ski Club using a metal post owned by the club. Newton Beach is a beautiful corner of the county borough, and the signage will hopefully help people avoid further difficulties.

Members may also want to remind their older constituents that people aged over 60 are entitled to a free concessionary bus pass. The council is currently publicising the scheme in an effort to boost take-up as relatively few eligible residents have applied to date. We are fortunate in Wales to have such a scheme as it enables older people to travel for free at any time of the day. Applications for free concessionary bus passes can be made up to three weeks prior to a residents' 60th birthday. They have to be made in person here at the Civic Offices or at libraries and life centres in Aberkenfig, Maesteg, Ogmere Vale, Pencoed, Pontycymer, Porthcawl and Pyle.

Application forms can be downloaded from the council website and completed in advance, but you will need to bring along ID such as a birth certificate, passport, driving licence or pension book as well as a bank statement or utility bill as proof of address. People with certain disabilities are also entitled to a free bus pass or a companion pass for when they require assistance to travel. Your constituents can find out more by contacting the Council directly on 643643.

He confirmed that Cyd Cymru was a Wales wide collective energy switching project led by Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils. BCBC signed up to the scheme last year and promoted the financial benefits of the scheme, namely reduced energy bills, to County Borough residents. Many of the constituents accessed the scheme and were now enjoying typical savings of £185 per year on their energy bills. For every person that switches their energy tariff through the Cyd Cymru scheme, money is paid into a Community Fund which was then distributed to local authorities within Wales, based upon the percentage of people from each local authority that have switched with the scheme. Last year BCBC was awarded £670.74 from the fund which will be donated to the Mayor's Charity.

(2) Cabinet Member - Children and Young People

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People advised that this year's Holocaust Memorial Day will commemorate both the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the 20th anniversary of the Bosnian genocide, and the Council would be marking the event with the theme of 'keeping the memory alive'. On 23 January, a HMD ceremony will take place here in the Council Chamber. Students from Bridgend College will deliver a piece of performance art and there will be screenings of videos featuring survivors of the Bosnian genocide. A second, more schools-based event is also being planned which will feature the participation of Holocaust survivor Eva Clarke. Eva will be giving a talk about her experiences and take part in a Q&A session with pupils from Brynteg Comprehensive. The pupils will also read a poem that they have written especially for the

occasion and the event will climax with the planting of a tree and unveiling of a plaque, around which 'remembrance stones' will be set in place. These are sure to be very moving events and I am sure that Members will give them their full support he added.

Pupils at Trelales Primary are to be congratulated for picking up their third Green Flag award from Keep Wales Tidy. The flag has been presented to the school in recognition of its ongoing commitment towards saving electricity, encouraging recycling and being as 'green' as possible. Among the eco-ouches that can be found throughout the school include a greenhouse made from plastic bottles, composting facilities, bug hotels and a nature area. Achieving a Green Flag is the culmination of a lot of hard work and commitment to being as 'green' as possible, so well done to them all - special thanks are due to the school's eco committee, 'Bike it' crew and eco co-ordinator, Janet Fullstone.

He advised Members that the BBC has carried out some filming at Oldcastle Primary as part of a programme they are making about efforts to boost pupil numeracy levels across Wales. Oldcastle had experienced a lot of success with the 'Numbers Count' initiative and the BBC have decided to use the school as a case study, and this would be on BBC Wales news broadcasts throughout Wednesday 28 January.

He also had a hat-trick of good news about our Flying Start programme. First of all, he was very pleased that funding had been confirmed for the scheme to be expanded with a brand new setting at Garth Primary School in Maesteg. He also extended his congratulations to Victoria Owens, a Flying Start worker from Porthcawl who picked up the top prize in The Welsh Government's inaugural 'Stars In Their Lives' awards earlier this week. The awards recognise the valuable contribution hard-working Flying Start professionals make to people's lives and children's development, and Victoria was announced as the overall national winner, as well as the Cardiff and South East Wales regional winner.

Victoria was nominated by a new-mum for the invaluable support and advice she was given by Victoria to help get her new-born baby daughter to breastfeed successfully.

Finally, the Cabinet Member – Children and Young People congratulated the Flying Start health visitors, who had been praised by UNICEF UK for the excellent support they are providing to new mums and babies. The Flying Start team were part of the ABMU health visiting service, and have been accredited with the 'Baby Friendly Initiative Award' from UNICEF in recognition of the way they help parents to bond with their babies, and make informed decisions on how best to feed them. Flying Start was making a really positive impact on the health, wellbeing and parenting skills of families living in a number of our communities, and we are delighted that it is among the local health services to receive this international recognition.

Efforts to help narrow the gap between child poverty and educational achievement at Pencoed Comprehensive have been singled out for praise by the Wales Centre for Equity in Education.

The school has been put forward as a model of good practice and its One Thousand Club held up as a leading example of how to boost attendance and engagement with pupils.

Each child receives 500 points at the start of term and is encouraged to earn more by hitting targets, participating with classes, joining school clubs, undergoing regular assessments and more.

The scheme is sponsored by local businesses and there is a draw where pupils can win bikes, scooters, tablets, vouchers and other popular prizes.

Poverty can often be an obstacle towards doing well at school, but Pencoed Comprehensive has demonstrated ways in which this can be overcome and I would like to congratulate pupils, teachers, staff and governors for their hard work in achieving this.

(3) Cabinet Member - Wellbeing

The Cabinet Member – Wellbeing advised that pre- 2010, the Meals at Home vehicle base moved from Bryncethin depot to Pyle Life Centre, which was more secure and generated savings through a reduction in mileage and reduced travel time

In February 2010 a quality assurance audit was undertaken on the meals at Home service. The subsequent report identified that the service was not achieving:

- Value for money
- Flexibility
- Appropriate nutrition standards
- Variety of meal to suit all needs and wishes
- Services were not available seven days a week across the Borough
- Efficient payment processes

In February 2011, a Cabinet briefing was produced by Wellbeing proposing to introduce an invoicing system, extend the meal delivery to 7 days a week in all areas of the Borough, explore the option to transfer to catering services, and reduce the numbers of drivers on a van from two to one

The Cabinet Member – Wellbeing went on to state that in September 2011, the Meals at Home service was transferred to Catering services, as it was deemed to be better placed because of the catering expertise in preparing nutritious meals

Catering Services implemented a choice menu for the clients, and implemented the one driver per van initiative. At this time, Wellbeing only delivered to two areas of the Borough on weekends

From August 2012 the service was extended to all areas of the Borough on weekends and bank holidays

In April 2013, when Catering Services took over the service, there were 8 vans on the road daily. In April 2013, this was reduced to 7 vans on week days, 5 vans on weekends and 5/6 vans on bank holidays (dependant on uptake)

By way of summary, he confirmed that since transferring the Meals at Home service to BCBC's Catering Services, the following had taken place:

- A 7-day- a-week service is now delivered across the whole of the county
- Service users now have a greater menu choice
- There have been improvements in nutritional standards
- Price increases to service users are kept to a minimum (3.4% average annual increase)
- An effective and efficient payment process is now in place

Service users and meal costs

Date Service Users Cost per meal (£)

2010/11	325	£3.45
2011/12	318	£3.53 (+2.3%)
2012/13	275	£3.68 (+4.2%)
2013/14	260	£3.82 (+3.8%)
2014/15	246	£3.94 (+3.1%)

In terms of the current situation and existing service users, the Cabinet Member – Wellbeing explained that the

table below provides a breakdown of service users (in October 2014), by age and eligibility:

b. An evolving service – a strength-based approach

- Since January 2014, the Directorate has been developing a strengths based approach to assessment and review assessment
- In the last year, all 246 service users receiving Meals at Home have been individually reviewed. Alternative meal provision and local alternative solutions were explored with individuals, as well as the implications of any potential increase in cost
- We reviewed how we support people to regain their confidence and independence at home in our Community Resource Team, Enabling and Re-ablement services. The enabling programme teaches people how to heat and prepare frozen meals safely, and enables them to have choice and control over their meal, keeping them independent and more resilient
- Rather than refer people immediately for meals at home, the referral management centre has been engaging with people in strength-based conversations, discussing alternative ways of supporting people with food preparation by advising about accredited frozen meal providers and local community solutions.

c. Quality of service

In September 2014, a short 'service quality' survey was undertaken with existing service users. 185 questionnaires were sent out, to which there were 142 responses (77% response rate):

- 86% enjoy the current menu choice
- 90% are happy with the current delivery time
- 91% are happy with the temperature of their meal

He added that below are some additional comments made by service users when completing the survey:

"I am fully satisfied with the service provided – thank you"

"Thank you all for the kindness shown to me by your ladies, I could not manage without their help"

"Keep up the good work and thank you"

"No complaints, fully satisfied with the service"

"I have found the meals a big help – all ready and hot. The servers are always cheerful, helpful and appearance is immaculate – I look forward to their visit and also look forward to seeing what's on the menu – always a varied choice. Thank you"

d. Benchmarking

The Cabinet Member – Wellbeing proceeded by advising that in September 2013, all authorities in Wales were invited to participate in a benchmarking exercise:

- 10 of the 13 participating authorities provide a community meal service
- The service models for those who provide a service are very diverse, from full in-house provision (7 LAs) to a fully commissioned service from an independent provider (Apetito)
- Of the 3 authorities who do not provide a community meal service, all have arrangements in place to signpost to alternative arrangements i.e. Third Sector, Lunch Clubs or re-ablement

- Vale - Provide a traditional, in-house service
- Charge service users £4.10 a meal (2014/15)
 - No plans to review the community meals service in the near future
- NPT - Purchase meals and hire vans from Apetito – NPT staff deliver the meals
- Charge service users £4.00 a meal – plan to increase this to £4.50-£5.00 from April (TBC)
 - Under review – BCBC meeting with NPT in Jan 2015 to scope potential for joint working
- CCS - Do not provide a community meals service – sign-post to alternative arrangements

3. Moving forward

There are some immediate short-term solutions that will deliver savings against the MTFS in 2015/16, although there will be a shortfall which will be made up from elsewhere in the service:

Solution	Benefits/savings	Risks/costs
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Service efficiencies and potential small increase in charges

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| - Catering services continue to provide Meals at Home | | |
| - Review budgets & charges | | |
| - Reduce unit cost through service efficiencies | | |
| - Increase income via levy on tea-time service | | - No redundancy costs |
| - Little impact on service users | | |
| - Little impact on staff | | |
| - Additional tea-time service | | |
| - 7-day service continued | | |
| - Full control of quality/nutrition | | |
| - Savings achieved in 2015/16 | | - Increased meal costs |
| - Chilled meal on 1 day | | |
| - Up-front costs of £15,250 through identified corporate resources to adapt existing vans | | |

A breakdown of the savings that could be achieved in 2015/16 was detailed below:

2015/16 MTFS Target £82,000

Description	Savings (£)
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Service Efficiencies

- Reduce to 5 vans
 - Deliver 6 days a week – deliver one chilled meal to fulfil 7 days service
 - Provide an additional tea-time (sandwiches and cake) service
 - Reset base budget to reflect actual demand (54,000 meals per annum) & costs
 - Net effect is gross cost per meal reducing to £5.32 from £6.96, which would be the gross cost in 2015/16, based on existing costs & services £47,480
- Potential options for increases in charges
- Increase amount paid by service users for a meal:
- Increase meal cost by £0.30 (up 7.62%) rising to £4.24 per meal
 - Increase meal cost by £0.40 (up 10.16%) rising to £4.34 per meal
 - Increase meal cost by £0.50 (up 12.69%) rising to £4.44 per meal

£16,200

£21,600

£27,000

He concluded by stating that longer term decisions will need to be made in the future, in respect of alternative remodelling solutions to deliver the Meals at Home service.

The Cabinet Member – Wellbeing announced that he was pleased to confirm that following the appointment of a catering company, Bryngarw House will re-open its doors in spring 2015 as a venue for functions, conferencing, exclusive use weddings and other special occasions.

Members will be aware that the house will no longer operate as a restaurant and hotel, but is instead focusing its efforts on the special events market.

Leading South Wales caterer Five Star Chef, who already cater for venues such as Dyffryn Gardens, Caerphilly Castle and Penarth Pier Pavilion, have been awarded the contract to provide catering for events at the house. As part of the agreement, they will also be investing significantly in the venue as well as the wider works programme for the park over the next five years.

Refurbishment work to the function rooms is due to be completed by mid-February and the first public event will be a wedding fayre held at the end of that month.

More events are planned for both the park and the house, so look out for further details on this very soon.

(4) Cabinet Member – Resources

The Cabinet Member – Resources advised that Show Racism the Red Card is an educational charity that aims to combat racism through enabling role models, who are predominantly but not exclusively footballers.

It offers school workshops which are though provoking and covers such issues as racism against Muslims, Gypsy Travellers and Asylum Seekers. Show Racism the Red Card stresses the importance of peer respect through fun interactive activities.

On 11th February Show Racism the Red Card will facilitate an interactive workshop with elected members who sit on the Cabinet Committee – Equalities together with students from local schools. This workshop will serve as a pilot for consideration of arranging further workshops in Bridgend County Borough.

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales was holding a series of meetings across Wales to gather the views of elected members and officers. The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee and the Head of Democratic Services will therefore be attending a meeting on the 4th March to provide feedback on behalf of BCBC.

The Panel are particularly keen to receive views on members' access to ICT support, and the distribution of allowances within the cap. They have also asked for considerations on the Care allowance, for example any barriers that would prevent members claiming this element.

All representations on these or any other concerns should therefore be made to either Councillor Jeff Tildesley or Gary Jones prior to the meeting.

(5) Cabinet Member - Strategic Change

The Cabinet Member – Strategic Change stated that he was sure that Members will share his delight at the news that funding has become available which will help more people learn about Kenfig National Nature Reserve and preserve it for future generations.

The Council has been offered a grant from Natural Resources Wales which we will match from our rural development programme so that visitor information and interpretation at the reserve can be improved.

Kenfig offers one of the most fascinating sand dune and wetland habitats in Europe, and is popular with walkers, bird watchers, horse riders, photographers, dog walkers, orchid enthusiasts, surfers, runners, anglers, astronomers, holiday makers and more. We are also mindful of the need to strike a sensitive balance between attracting visitors and conserving the reserve's ecology (refer to video on Internet), so a key message will be to encourage responsible behaviour.

He hoped that these improvements will enhance people's visits to Kenfig National Nature Reserve, and help ensure that they can continue to enjoy this fantastic landscape.

He was also very impressed with the recent drop-in workshops organised by the Library and Information Service to help make elected members aware of the wide range of resources that are now available at local libraries. Staff were on hand to demonstrate how members of this very modern library service can benefit from ICT facilities and music, film and audio book resources. What was particularly impressive was the wide range of electronic information and materials that can be downloaded directly to your own mobile phone, tablet or other device, and anything from e-magazines and e-books to e-periodicals or e-audiobooks. Not only that, but he had been reliably informed that our libraries offer normal books, too!

The Cabinet Member – Strategic Change extended his thanks to the service for helping us to keep up to date with these latest developments in library services, and if any Member hasn't already done so, he strongly recommended giving them a go.

Finally, he wanted to share with Members information regarding new funding that has been announced for three exciting community projects.

Lesley Griffiths, The Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, has revealed that the charity Emmaus will receive £500k to provide high quality accommodation and support for homeless people in their first ever 'Emmaus Community' in Bridgend. The funding will help to transform lives and I know that the news will be particularly welcomed by Councillors David White and Jeff Tildesley, who are both closely involved with the charity.

The Minister also announced that the Porthcawl Harbourside Community Interest Company will receive around £300k for their project to further develop the town's harbour quarter. This is excellent news as the Council has provided the project with 'seedcorn' investment counted in officer time and tens of thousands of pounds which has helped the group to attract this funding. The proposed new water sports activities and education facilities for visitors and young people would be another positive step in the regeneration of Porthcawl, and I sincerely hope that the project will ultimately result in the successful delivery of a multi-million pound project for the area.

He was also pleased to pass on some excellent news about St John's House in Newcastle Hill, Bridgend. The historic grade two listed building has received a £60k development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund which will help towards making it a local heritage hub.

446 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chief Executive updated Members on the outcome of the recent Estyn inspection of our Children's Services.

As Members may recall, he mentioned in the December meeting of Council that we had received good informal feedback from Estyn, particularly with regards to improvements in educational performance.

Since then we have been provided with more specific details, and while he stressed that the report was still in draft form, he was pleased to be able to inform Council that the feedback we have received is highly positive.

The recommendations proposed to improve outcomes for learners, especially at Key Stages 2 and 3, had been addressed, by setting more robust targets and by strengthening the rigour and consistency in our challenge to schools.

He felt that the local authority had made great strides in tackling attendance rates in primary and secondary schools by continuing to develop joint working between education welfare and family engagement officers.

Estyn also found that we have improved the quality of information we provide to elected members so they can challenge the performance of our services and schools more robustly.

And we were also continuing to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training, by implementing key components of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, and working closely with our partners at Careers Wales and Job Centre Plus.

Again, the Chief Executive stressed that the report is still in draft form, and we would soon be hearing about it formally, but overall I think that we can be very proud about how far our Children's Services have come in the last two years.

Thanks were due to the Councillors, Cabinet Members, head teachers, governors, Council Officers and others who met with the Estyn inspectors as part of this process. Once we receive formal notification, the information will be cascaded more broadly and the findings would be publicised.

447 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader advised that Members may be aware that the Development Control Committee recently resolved that no further coaling should be allowed to take place at the Margam opencast, and that the high water levels at the site require urgent action. The Committee also agreed to look at ways of making the site safe using existing restoration funds, and to organise a public meeting with Neath Port Talbot to bring everyone up to speed on joint efforts to deal with the problem. Both he and his fellow Cabinet Members fully supported the Committee's decisions, as the site has long been a major concern and he was aware that a lot of work had been taking place between Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot, the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales, to find a long term solution on this very difficult issue. There will be further updates about this as the situation develops and Members would be kept informed accordingly.

He confirmed that colleagues in health had advised that Wales is experiencing its highest flu levels in four years, and are urging people to do all that they can to help stop it from spreading further. Recent figures have shown that while not everyone with flu symptoms will visit their GP, more than 3,000 have already done so. It is important that anyone who is in an at-risk group such as the elderly, the very young, pregnant women or people with a chronic health condition makes sure they are vaccinated as soon as possible. Further advice is available from local GPs, and Members may want to share this information with their constituents.

Finally, the Leader stated that he was conscious of the fact that this was the first time Council had met since the tragic accident at Maesteg Comprehensive that resulted in the death of pupil Ashley Talbot. The loss of a pupil is always a sad affair, but especially so when it involves such sudden and tragic circumstances. This was a dreadful incident for all concerned, but Maesteg Comprehensive School had always been a strong, close-knit community, and pupils, teachers, staff and governors were continuing to support one another. A full investigation into the incident is underway and we as a Council we were continuing to provide support for the school. The leader extended his thanks the Council crisis team who responded so promptly, and acknowledged the many offers of support that we received from neighbouring Councils, organisations and individuals, all of which were greatly appreciated. Ashley was a popular child with lots of friends, and will be sadly missed. Our thoughts remain with family, friends and everyone who knew Ashley, and who has been affected by this tragic accident.

One of the local Members echoed the comments of the Leader and thanked the support of the school in response to the tragic accident, in that all that could have been done was done. The school and its teachers and pupils had also been supported and still were, in order that they could try and start to possibly come to terms with their very sad loss.

He wanted to say that his and the thoughts of many others, were extended to the teacher who had been directly involved in the accident, Chris Brookes, whose life had been so unfortunately shattered as a result of the accident.

448 TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION FOR THE EXECUTIVE

Question from Councillor Elaine Venables to the Cabinet Member – Children and Young People.

On the 9th December 2014, Cabinet ratified the new Code of Conduct for issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence from School. The new Code advises head teachers to NOT authorise ANY term time holidays (apart from exceptional circumstances). Can you please explain how this complies with the All Wales Attendance Framework, the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 and the Education (Penalty Notice) (Wales) Regulations 2013?

Response from the Cabinet Member – Children and Young People

In line with the All Wales Attendance Framework the roles and responsibilities of parents, school and the EWS are made clear. The Education Act 1996, Section 7, provides that a parent is responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and that a school under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 is required to undertake a register twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon to determine and record pupil attendance.

Also, under section 437 of the Education Act 1996, Local Authorities have a duty to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 schools have a discretionary power to grant leave for the purposes of a holiday. There is no automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and in law parents have to apply for permission in advance. The Regulations state that only in exceptional cases should a pupil be granted more than 10 school days leave in any school year. Whilst Heads have this discretion, BCBC is advising schools to use their discretion to not authorise term time holidays except where exceptional circumstances apply. Such exceptions would include, but are not limited to, pupils whose parents are in the armed forces, in recognition of the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant

Bridgend County Borough Council's advice to Head teachers is to look at individual requests on a case by case basis and make decisions based on the individual circumstances of the case as the list of exceptional circumstances is not exhaustive. Holidays being cheaper in term time is not an exceptional circumstance. If the holiday is authorised then a FPN will not be requested.

Welsh Government guidance (All Wales Attendance Framework) clearly states that parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that schools will agree to family holidays in term time. Schools may need to remind parents of this and refer to their cluster attendance policy. When considering requests, a list of factors such as time of year, length and purpose of holiday, circumstances of family, overall attendance of the pupil, duration of the holiday and its impact on continuity of learning should be considered.

Where parents fail to apply for permission then this should result in an unauthorised holiday.

He reminded colleagues of the reasoning behind the requirement to introduce Fixed Penalty Notices. The reason for this was to improve school attendance figures in Wales, as it was well researched and evidenced that there was a link between attendance and attainment. For example, if a child was in school only 80% of the maximum time he/she could be, the chance of them attaining 5 GCSE's equated to just 20%. As their attendance improves their attainment in obtaining GCSE's improves and this is in line with regulations and the School Attendance Strategy. It was incumbent upon the Corporate Director - Children to feed information such as this to all headteachers and it was then up to them to make a decision regarding any application by parents for their children to be absent from school outside of statutory school holiday periods dependent upon each individual case. There are extreme exceptions that would allow for a child(ren) to be granted special leave, for example if their parent(s) were in the armed forces etc, and were due leave home for a specific period.

Supplementary question (1) from Councillor Elaine Venables

In paragraph 3 above, it says that BCBC advises headteachers to not authorise any term time holidays and then paragraph 4 of the reply goes on to say that requests should be decided on individual circumstances which may be an exceptional circumstance.

Therefore, BCBC's advice does not comply with the Welsh Government guidelines and regulations. As they categorically state that a term time holiday, regardless of exceptional circumstances, should be assessed on individual circumstances on a case by case basis.

She asked then, if BCBC as an Authority, will penalise headteachers and schools in any way, if they choose to follow Welsh Government guidelines and not BCBC advice.

Response from Cabinet Member – Children and Young People and Corporate Director - Children

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People responded by saying that the key word here was advises, in that it was ultimately up to the headteacher in any school to make a decision as to whether a child should be granted special leave from school. Headteachers and their schools were judged through Estyn inspections on a number of key issues, and one of these was good attendance by pupils. As a local Authority, BCBC were responsible and legally required to ensure that pupils had a good school attendance record.

The Corporate Director – Children added that under 7.8 of the Council's School Attendance Strategy, there was a minimum of 10 unauthorised absence (5 school days) that could be granted to a child or young person. Bullet point 3. Of 7.8, stated that unauthorised absence could be taken due to a family having a term time holiday, ie when the duration of the holiday extends over the end of that statutory term holiday period.

Under the provisions of the Code of Conduct, she added that there needed to be a minimum of 10 days unauthorised absence from school before a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued, though there were other instances where they could be issued aside of unauthorised absence.

Supplementary question (2) from Councillor Cheryl Green

There are concerns that families with lower incomes are going to bear the brunt of any possible issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices, in that the cost of a holiday in periods where there are statutory school holidays, especially the school summer holiday period, far exceeds the cost of the same holiday in term time. She asked if there was any evidence to suggest, that the children of families who take term time holidays away aren't so successful in terms of attainment academically speaking, as children whose families take time off in school holiday periods.

Response from Cabinet Member – Children and Young People and Corporate Director – Children

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People advised that he had no information to hand to confirm this or otherwise, so he would endeavour to obtain a response to this question and forward this to the Member outside of the meeting. He was aware of the fact that there was a direct correlation between poor attendance at school and that young person's subsequent academic attainment. It was irrelevant he felt as to the reason for their absence, as if they are in school they are obviously learning. A week absence from school in term time was bound to have some detrimental effect on their attainment as they were then missing 35 hours of teaching, that was hard to catch-up on when they returned to school.

The Corporate Director – Children added that it was a statutory duty for children to attend school for the purpose of receiving education. There was a maximum of 190 days school time a year, and this left including weekends and school holiday periods, 175 days where children could be at home or away on family holidays. It was proven that 20 days absence from school a year, would have a big impact on a child's ability to aspire to reaching their maximum in terms of potential from an attainment perspective. She had some concerns over the fact that headteachers at some primary schools routinely authorised absence for children in term time, in that they could authorise up to a maximum of 10 days absence per year. Headteachers who allowed this to take place and for a number of different pupils, would however be then leaving themselves and the school open to having a poor assessment for attendance if they were then subject to an Inspection by Estyn. Schools were therefore monitored by the local authority so as to address any such problem should it occur. She emphasised the point that the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices was seen as a last attempt to resolve problems such as continued absence from school in term time. Prior to that, meetings would take place with the family and the child to address any problem associated with a child's continued or regular absence.

Supplementary question (3) from Councillor Della Hughes

The Member referred to Section 7.8 of the School Attendance Strategy that was recently approved by Cabinet and that bullet point 3 of this section confirmed that Fixed Penalty Notices could be used for unauthorised absence due to a term time holiday, but it did not specify how many days should be taken in cases of this, before a Fixed Term Penalty would be issued. She added that the previous two bullet points in 7.8 stated the number of absences allowed ie minimum of 10 unauthorised absences (5 school days) in the current term, that do not need to be consecutive, and a minimum of 10 sessions of lateness after close of registration. She therefore asked, did this mean that a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued if a parent took a child out of school for 1 or 2 days (eg if the family were going

away for the weekend), or should this bullet point state 10 sessions the same as the other two bullet points.

Response from the Cabinet Member – Children and Young People

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People replied that it was 10 unauthorised absences as referred to in the other two bullet points in 7.8 and that this was illustrated in Section 6.1 of the Strategy.

449 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

The Mayor having declared an interest in this item vacated the Chair, and the Deputy Mayor took the Chair in his place, for this item only.

The Corporate Director – Resources submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to provide Council with information regarding the implementation of the 2015 -16 Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR), the requirement to adopt a CTR Scheme by 31 January 2015, together with the funding implications.

The report gave some background information, and confirmed that on 8 January 2014, the Council adopted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2014-15 in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013.

From the latest data, there were currently 14,898 households receiving CTR; 8,844 of these are of working age and 6,054 are of pensionable age. Out of the 14,898 households receiving CTR, 11,225 were entitled to full benefit.

The CTR Scheme in Wales she explained, was 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 2015 had now been laid. Subject to approval by the Assembly, the figures used to calculate applicants' entitlement to CTR will be uprated in line with Housing Benefit. These Regulations also incorporate additional amendments to reflect consequential changes related to social security benefits and other minor technical changes.

The Corporate Director – Resources advised that within the Prescribed Requirements Regulations, there was limited discretion given to the Council to apply discretionary elements that are more generous than the national scheme. These were outlined in Paragraph 4.7 of the report.

Consultation on the Prescribed Requirement Regulations was undertaken in 2013 and the results detailed in the Corporate Director – Resources' Council Tax Reduction report to Council on 8 January 2014. This report can be found at <http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/web/groups/public/documents/agenda/111742.hcsp>. As it was proposed not to change the discretionary elements, a further consultation exercise had not been completed.

The Corporate Director – Resources advised that it was proposed that the discretionary elements remain as those detailed in Paragraph 4.12 of the report.

The Council was obliged to make a scheme under the requirements of the Prescribed Requirements Regulations notwithstanding the fact that a default scheme would come into effect even if the Council failed to make a scheme. The obligation is a statutory duty and applies even if the Council chose not to apply any of the discretions available to it.

In terms of the adoption of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, the Corporate Director – Resources suggested that the Council adopts the provisions as shown in bullet point format included in Paragraph 4.21 of the report.

Paragraph 4.24 of the report detailed the recommended available discretionary elements of the Scheme, following which the Officer referred to the reports financial implications, which stated that the 2015-16 Final Local Government Settlement showed that the sum provided for CTR was at a lower level than 2014-15. Bridgend's 2015-16 final settlement from Welsh Government included £12.551m to fund the CTR scheme, down from £12.625m in 2014-15. This amount did not take into account any increase in Council Tax charges or variations in caseload, and is distributed on a fixed rather than a demand-led basis.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Noted the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013, and the 2014 and 2015 amendment regulations.
- (2) Adopted the Scheme, the details of which are given in paragraphs 4.19 to 4.24 of the report.

450 AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report, the purpose of which was to seek Council's approval of proposed amendments to the Constitution which reflected changes to the Council Procedure Rules and the recent realignment of responsibilities.

By way of background information, the Monitoring Officer advised that on 10 December 2014 Council approved the proposal to realign the responsibilities of the Corporate Director – Wellbeing and the Corporate Director – Children. The new arrangements took effect from 1 January 2015, and therefore, it was necessary to update the Constitution.

The realignment of responsibilities of both Corporate Director posts, the titles of which had also been amended, were shown in Paragraph 4.1 of the report. However, the Monitoring Officer explained that contrary to part of the provisions of this paragraph, the service area of Family Support would be aligned to the Corporate Director – Education and Transformation, whilst Safeguarding would fall under the remit of the Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing.

In relation to the Council Procedure Rules, he explained that some of its present wording had caused confusion amongst certain Members, and due to this, it was proposed that part of this be amended as set out in italics and underlined in Appendix 1 to the report.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the amendments to the Constitution as set out in Paragraph 4.1 (subject to the suggested amendment above) and Appendix 1 of the report.

451 AMENDMENT TO THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION OF FUNCTIONS

The Monitoring Officer presented a report, the purpose of which was to seek Council approval to amend the Scheme of Delegation of Functions.

He reiterated that Council had previously approved the proposal to realign the responsibilities of the Corporate Director – Wellbeing and the Corporate Director – Children, with the new arrangements taking effect from 1 January 2015. It was therefore necessary to update the Scheme of Delegation to reflect this.

The Monitoring Officer referred to Paragraph 4.1 of the report where reference was made to the changes proposed, ie with both the job titles being amended and some areas of their respective responsibilities, taking into consideration the amendment to part of their respective roles as referred to in the previous agenda item.

The Monitoring Officer then referred to the second part of the report, and the necessity for a further update, namely to add a new paragraph 6.7 to Scheme B2 of the Scheme of Delegation as shown in Paragraph 4.4 of the report. This was required in light of amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, with this further provision being allocated to the Corporate Director – Communities.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the content of the report and approved the amendments to the Scheme of Delegation of Functions as set out in Paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 of the report:

The meeting closed at 4.30pm.