

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON WEDNESDAY, 08 APRIL 2015 AT 3.00PM

Present:

Councillor G Thomas - Mayor and Chairperson

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

Officers:

D Mepham	- Chief Executive
D McMillan	- Corporate Director - Education and Transformation
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
G P Jones	- Head of Democratic Services (Electronic Support)
M A Galvin	- Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

470 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Councillor E Venables	- Childcare commitments
Councillor L Ellis	- As above
Councillor S Aspey	- Work commitments
Councillor R D Jenkins	- Family bereavement
Councillor R L Thomas	- Work commitments
Councillor D Sage	- Recuperating
Councillor R M James	- Other Council business
Councillor J C Spanswick	- Holiday
Councillor D G Owen	- Work commitments
Councillor J McCarthy	- No reason given
Councillor M Winter	- Hospital appointment

471 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of Council dated 18 March 2015 be approved as a true and accurate record, subject to the following amendment being made in respect of page 8 of the pack (412 of the Minutes), second line of first paragraph of Supplementary question from Councillor M Jones, replace the word 'of' with "this Authority places on"

472 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

473 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor hoped that all those present had a peaceful and enjoyable Easter. Thanks to some beautiful Spring weather huge crowds were drawn to areas such as Porthcawl to enjoy the sunshine, and those who visited Bryngarw House and Country Park over the weekend, they may have seen an ‘eggs-travaganza’ event which featured Easter egg hunts, outdoor theatre performances, arts and craft activities and more. He stated how lucky we are to live in and represent such an attractive part of Wales, and as we move closer to summer, he hoped to see plenty of further visitors coming here to enjoy the County Borough, boost trade and support the local economy.

The Mayor announced that the Deputy Mayor kindly stood in for him to open the Look Up Street Art Project in Bridgend town centre last Saturday. As part of the ongoing regeneration, talented local artists have painted a range of images designed to brighten up parts of the town centre that may otherwise be overlooked.

For its first phase, the project has concentrated on the alleyway next to the Bad Habits skate shop on Market Street, and on the flanking walls of The Star pub next door.

The Mayor announced that to say that they have done an amazing job, and have really brightened up this corner of the town. The project has the backing of the Council, Carnegie House, Bridgend Arts, Bridgend Town Council and many local businesses, and has been funded via the Townscape Heritage Initiative and the Special Regeneration Fund.

The Mayor added that if Members/Officers haven’t already seen the new paintings, he strongly recommend a trip over to take a look. He congratulated to everyone who has helped deliver this for the town.

He then extended his thanks to Llangynwyd Community Association who were the winners of the ‘Best change of use or conversion’ category at the council’s ninth annual building control awards as well as the ‘special planning award’. The association spent more than a decade raising funds and working with local tradesmen to convert the former St. Stephens Church into the all-new Llangynwyd Village Hall, and the 19th century building has become a valuable new community asset. This truly was an example of a community-driven partnership that has delivered a completely refurbished old building without losing any of its historical charm, and the congratulations received for this achievement were very well deserved.

Finally, the Mayor hoped people would support his ‘Social Evening With A Difference’ on 15 April and Charity Gala on 9 May 2015. He urged people to look out for more details on both of these events very soon.

474 CABINET MEMBERS’ ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) Cabinet Member – Children and Young People

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People, advised that Looked after Children in Bridgend County Borough have been treated to a sports camp featuring free activities this Easter thanks to a new initiative from The Fostering Network Wales.

Funded by the Millennium Stadium Charitable Trust and run in conjunction with SuperStars, the ‘Let’s Go’ project provided two days of high quality sports coaching, physical education, multi-skills and fitness sessions for children in care aged 5-11 years.

More than 70 children took part in the project, which featured 40 different types of sports activity and was designed to help them gain confidence and develop their social skills as well as encourage them to live an active lifestyle.

Many of the vulnerable children we look after suffer from low self-esteem and motivation, so this project was an excellent way of helping address this.

The 'Let's Go' sports camp concluded with an awards evening to celebrate the achievements of each child, who received medals and certificates marking their progress.

He was sure that Members would join him in thanking staff who worked in partnership with the Fostering Network Wales to deliver this very worthwhile initiative.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People also extended his thanks to local businesses, members of the public and Bridge FM for their fantastic support for Bridge FM's annual Easter Egg Appeal which received an overwhelming response this year. The generosity shown had helped to make Easter special for some of the County Borough's most vulnerable children. Even a small thing such as giving an Easter egg could really help to brighten up the day for our LAC.

(2) Cabinet Member - Resources

The Cabinet Member - Resources advised Members that the pre-Council briefing that was scheduled for today on European Funding will be rescheduled for a future date. He asked Members to note that there would be no pre-Council briefing in May as that day the Annual meeting of Council would take place.

In terms of Member development, he confirmed that three workshops would be led-on by the Chief Executive on "Shaping the Future" starting on the 14th April 2015. Dates and times have been put into Members calendars and he asked Councillors if they could accept or decline the appointments as appropriate.

The Cabinet Member – Resources confirmed that Members have on their desks their annual declaration of related party transactions. He confirmed that this needed to be completed and returned by the 17th April 2015. Forms will be collated by Democratic Services but any queries should be directed to Finance Manager, Kerry Price he added.

Finally he announced that on 31 March 2015, Cabinet approved the procurement of a single integrated community care information system for the whole of Wales. BCBC had led this significant project on behalf of all Local Authorities and Health Boards in Wales. It was also supported by Welsh Government, which is funding the central infrastructure costs with a £6.5 million capital grant. The procurement is a first for Wales and has taken nearly two years to come to fruition. Although the intention is for all Local Authorities and Health to eventually use the system, there will be a phased implementation with BCBC being the first to commit.

(3) Cabinet Member - Strategic Change

The Cabinet Member – Strategic Change advised that the regeneration of Porthcawl's historic harbour area was to continue with the restoration of the Pilot Lookout Tower, Customs House and former Knight's Arms Public House.

The landmark buildings will all be restored to their former glory and brought back into use following the recent launch of the Porthcawl Townscape Heritage Initiative.

Together with contributions from the Council, Cadw and the Heritage Lottery, more than £1m is being made available for the scheme which will use traditional materials and techniques to restore the buildings to their former glory.

The iconic Grade II Listed Pilot Lookout Tower building will be given replacement windows, doors, roofing and the external staircase will also be repaired, after which it will transfer to the National Coastwatch Institution who will operate a voluntary coast watch service.

Customs House, which is also Grade II listed, will have its doors, windows and slate roof reinstated, and its exterior stonework will be repaired to bring it back to its original condition.

The Knight's Arms will benefit from a traditional lime render as well as a slate roof, rebuilt chimneys and traditional windows. Rear annexes will be demolished, with the property being sub-divided, and rear gardens and parking spaces will also be created. Also included in the scheme is 35 The Esplanade which will receive a new slate roof, windows and doors as well as traditional signage and a fresh colour scheme. The restoration of these historic waterfront buildings will complement the exciting work planned for the nearby Jennings Building and is another important step in Porthcawl's overall regeneration.

The Cabinet Member – Strategic Change felt that it spoke volumes to note that the Townscape Heritage Initiative programme has helped restore 22 town centres across the UK since it was introduced in 1998, and that Bridgend County Borough is the only local authority area in Wales to have been awarded five schemes - two in Bridgend, two in Maesteg, and now one in Porthcawl. He extended his thanks to everyone who had helped deliver this for Porthcawl.

(4) Cabinet Member – Wellbeing

The Cabinet Member - Wellbeing advised colleagues that the five remaining residents at Maesglas Registered Care Home have now moved to their new home in Maesteg.

The move was planned in partnership with the residents and their families, who were very pleased with the new house which has been set up as supported living accommodation - this means that the former residents are now tenants, and are able to maximise their benefit entitlement.

The house has been adapted by First Choice Housing Association to meet the needs of the tenants and support is being provided by the Maesglas staff team who have helped to provide them with continuity of care.

The respite unit that was in Maesglas has been integrated with the service at Abbey Road within a specially adapted house and all service users have transferred over to it.

With the Maesglas building up for sale, he was happy to confirm that the resettlement of the residents marks the end of Council-provided registered care home accommodation for people with a learning disability in the county borough, and brings us into line with national and local policy and service objectives.

He extended his congratulations to staff and Managers for making this a very smooth transition.

(5) Cabinet Member - Communities

The Cabinet Member - Communities advised Members that the first of several temporary road closures will be introduced this week as part of ongoing repair works at the A473 inner bypass bridge in Bridgend town centre.

A 60 metre section of Angel Street between the fire station and nearby YMCA will be closed between 6.30pm and 6am on 8 - 9 April, 21 - 29 April and 14 - 20 May.

A temporary closure will also be in place where Merthyr Mawr Road joins the A473 on 7 - 8 May, 2 - 3 June and 15 July - 31 August.

As part of the project the underpass leading from Merthyr Mawr Road to Church Road will need to close between 16 April - 16 June, but the nearby pedestrian crossing will remain available.

The temporary closures are being carried out in the interests of public safety and diversions will be in place. Access to properties and businesses along Angel Street will be maintained at all times.

The works form part of the final phase of a project to ensure the busy A473 inner bypass bridge remains safe for drivers to use in years to come and includes repairing bridge parapets and concrete supports, replacing the bridge bearings, installing additional drainage and providing improved street lighting, waterproofing and road surfacing. Some inconvenience is of course unavoidable with a project of this size, but all that could be done was being done to ensure any disruption was being kept to an absolute minimum.

Further information regarding the above was available on the Council's website where a list of frequently asked questions was available.

475 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chief Executive announced that he would wish to give Members a brief update on developments in Local Government legislation.

The WLGA Local Government (Wales) Bill was currently at Stage One consideration by the assembly's Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee and Finance Committee.

The Minister, WLGA, SOLACE, Auditor General and the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission have presented evidence to Committee.

As Members were aware, the Bill sets out paving legislation for Council mergers. Information from the WLGA suggested that in broad terms the Bill is straightforward, although there are some matters such as the funding of reorganisation of the Council Tax implications, which had not yet been clarified.

The Bill was likely to see some Welsh Government technical and possibly policy amendments at Stage Two and Stage Three in May and June. The current timetable is that a map will be published for proposed new local authorities in July, then the Bill will seek Royal Assent in November 2015.

A policy and practice document will go out to consultation probably in December, and in early spring 2016, the first initial review will be carried out by the Boundary Commission. A series of further reviews will then be undertaken which are expected to take until 2018 to complete. In May 2019, the WLGA anticipates that shadow local government elections will be carried out on the new merged authorities, with full local elections set for May 2022.

The Minister had previously commented that his starting point for mergers was the Williams Commission report, but it remained to be seen what his map actually sets out, given that he has also spoken openly about fewer Councils than the Commission recommended.

The Chief Executive emphasised however, that this was a long way off, and all the challenges that related to making a reduction of £50m to the Council's budget were ahead of this, and this remained the Authority's most pressing focus

He confirmed that if Members wished to learn more, a series of submissions and transcripts had been made available at the Welsh Government website. In the meantime he would bring before Members further updates on the latest developments as they unfold.

In addition the Welsh Government had issued a further White Paper called Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People. He had circulated a draft response from the WLGA to Group Leaders. The paper included a push for greater diversity in Councillor membership and a commitment to a full examination of local government financing. However, it was light on devolution of powers to local government and included a number of measures that potentially increase complexity of local government such as election by thirds, reforms of Community Councils and new Area Boards.

The draft response prepared by the WLGA would the Chief Executive imagined, be shared by Group leaders in due course.

476 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader confirmed that Members may be aware that former county ecologist Steve Moon sadly passed away recently following a long illness. Steve had served as the first warden of Kenfig's local nature reserve and was MP Madeline Moon's husband of some 40 years. His funeral has taken place this afternoon at All Saints Church in Porthcawl with an interment at Margam Crematorium. Refreshments were going to take place at Kenfig National Nature Reserve Visitor Centre, something which he was sure Members and anyone who knew Steve's love for the area would agree was extremely fitting.

He confirmed that the Council's Trading Standards team do an excellent job protecting the public from unscrupulous traders, and the last few weeks have given us two instances of this. In the first, a Nantyllyon shopkeeper received a six-month community order after nine bottles of fake vodka were found on sale at his premises. The counterfeit vodka contained an industrial cleaning agent found in products such as anti-freeze, and could have been highly harmful if consumed.

In the second instance, a Porthcawl shopkeeper had lost his personal licence to supervise any premises selling alcohol after pleading guilty to selling cider to a child who was taking part in a joint Council and South Wales Police test purchasing operation. With no systems in place to try and prevent underage sales, the trader provided falsified records to suggest that staff had received training, but later pleaded guilty. Both traders incurred substantial financial penalties for their actions, and the Leader extended his thanks to the Trading Standards team for their hard work and due diligence.

Finally, the deadline for anyone who was interested in applying to be a trustee of the new not-for-profit cultural trust is coming up fast and will expire on Monday 13 April.

As Members were aware, the Council were looking for eleven volunteers who will help run a range of services and facilities throughout the County Borough, including the likes of the Porthcawl Grand Pavilion, Maesteg Town Hall, Bryngarw, Blaengarw Workman's Hall and the entire library service, some community centres and two work-based projects for adults with learning disabilities.

The new organisation will be established in autumn 2015 and would be responsible for managing and developing these services and facilities on behalf of the Council. Trustees will be crucial to the success of the organisation as they will be responsible for steering the trust at a strategic level and therefore require the relevant skills and expertise to support the Management Team.

If Members know of anyone who may be interested in this role, more information was available on the corporate website the Leader concluded.

477 THE FUTURE PROVISION OF EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY

The Assistant Chief Executive – Legal and Regulatory Services presented a report, the purpose of which, was to provide proposals for the future provision of the Scrutiny Function in Bridgend.

By way of background information, he advised that a review of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure had not taken place since 2008, and that for the reasons outlined in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.4 of the report, there was now a necessity to look at such a review in conjunction with other changes that were also considered necessary.

When considering any proposals for the future delivery of the Scrutiny Function, the Assistant Chief Executive – Legal and Regulatory Services suggested that a number of factors be taken into account, and these were listed in Paragraph 3.5 of the report. These included changing the process currently in being for the preparation and submission of Committee reports; reducing the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings and reducing the size of minutes of meetings.

The next section of the report covered the following areas, each of which the Assistant Chief Executive – Legal and Regulatory Services gave a resume upon for the benefit of Members:-

- A proposal to reduce the size of Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- Political balance/Remuneration;
- Registered representatives and Co-opted Members on Committees;
- Optimising the value of Scrutiny;
- Opportunities for increased interchange between Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Statutory Committees;
- Research and Evaluation Panels (and their intended frequency);
- Staff resources available to support the Overview and Scrutiny Function;
- Achieving Corporate Priorities (including setting and improving Forward Work Programmes of Committees, through improved planning methods);
- The remit of Overview and Scrutiny Committees (and proposed changes to some of these);
- Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations and Additional Information Request Monitoring;
- Scrutiny Impact Monitoring; and
- Suggested additional activities

In terms of the reports Financial Implications, it was advised that the requirements of the MTFs for Directorates could not be met without a significant reduction in staffing and resources. A reduction in resources may not be able to sustain the planned Scrutiny structure detailed in the report, should further reductions to staffing be required.

A Member noted that under the proposals contained in the report, the frequency of the holding of each of the 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees would reduce to 6 meetings per municipal year. Though she did not necessarily disagree with this proposal, she was mindful of the fact that some Committees had a larger remit than others, for example the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She therefore asked the Officer if there was any scope to hold further meetings of a particular Committee should the need arise throughout the year.

The Assistant Chief Executive Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services advised that with the proposal to improve methods of forward planning in terms of the Overview and Scrutiny process, coupled with more meaningful and structured Committee Forward Work Programmes, this should ensure that the business of each Committee should be tailored in such a way that

further meetings over and above the 6 proposed for each Committee should not be required, unless this was for an unforeseen item of business or possibly through the call-in of a Cabinet decision.

Training initiatives would also be made available for Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which would cover a number of issues, for example questioning techniques of Members to Invitees amongst others. This would also assist in the business of Committees being processed quicker at meetings, than may have been the case in the past.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- Noted the budget pressures faced by the Legal & Regulatory Services Department and the Authority and the impact this will have on the future delivery of the Scrutiny Function.
- Approved the proposals for the Future Provision of Effective Scrutiny as stated in Paragraph 4 of the report which includes:
 - Reducing the number of Members formally appointed to each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to 12 Elected Members.
 - Removing the 4 non-voting Co-optee roles from the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 - That each of the 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees be allocated 6 scheduled meetings with the remaining 8 meetings being allocated to Collaborative Committees to deal with cross-cutting issues.
 - The revised Statutory and Overview and Scrutiny Committee remits as shown at Appendix B.
 - Improving Work Programme planning as outlined in Paragraph 4.11 of the report
 - The additional activities to be developed as identified in Paragraph 4.17 of the report

The meeting closed at 4.20pm