

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL - 12TH
DECEMBER, 2019**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. MOORE (CHAIR)

Councillors J. Holt (Deputy Chair)

P. Baldwin

D. Bevan

G. Collier

J. Collins

M. Cook

M. Cross

N. Daniels

D. Davies

G. A. Davies

G. L. Davies

P. Edwards

D. Hancock

K. Hayden

S. Healy

J. Hill

W. Hodgins

M. Holland

J. Mason

H. McCarthy

C. Meredith

J. Millard

J. C. Morgan

L. Parsons

G. Paulsen

K. Pritchard

K. Rowson

T. Sharrem

T. Smith

B. Summers

B. Thomas

G. Thomas
S. Thomas
H. Trollope
J. Wilkins
D. Wilkshire
B. Willis

WITH: Managing Director
Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Education
Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
Chief Officer Resources
Chief Officer Commercial
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Communications, Marketing and Customer Access Manager

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor L. Winnett.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest were reported:</p> <p>Councillors G. Collier, M. Cross, M. Holland & J. C. Morgan Item No. 28: Council Tax – Removal of Empty Property Discount Allowance for Prescribed Class C Dwellings.</p> <p>The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance confirmed that the above-named Members may remain in the meeting whilst the item</p>	

of business was discussed.

Councillor W. Hodgins

Item No. 30 – Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Performance Review 2018/19 Q4.

Councillors M. Cook & J. Hill

Item No. 36 – Future Management of the Waste Transfer Station and Household Waste Recycling Centre.

No. 4

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations were expressed to:

- 21-year-old Nicky Pepper Junior who had been awarded Young Groundsman of the Year by the Institute of Groundsmen. Nicky had been educated at Glyncoed Comprehensive School and had started out his career by cutting lawns for local people. The award was presented to Nicky by the BBC's Dan Walker.

It was also noted that Nicky Pepper Senior had also been recognised for his groundsmanship at Ebbw Vale by the Cricket League.

RESOLVED that a letter of congratulations be sent.

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council had received the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award for its commitment to ensuring service personnel, veterans and their families were not unfairly disadvantaged when seeking employment with the Council.

The award was received on behalf of the Authority at the Armed Forces in Wales Awards at St Fagans Museum on Thursday 28th November, 2019 by Councillor Brian Thomas, the Council's Armed Forces Champion. As part of achieving the Silver Award the Council had recently adopted a Time-off for Reservists Policy that included fifteen days paid leave for training for reservists, in addition to supporting their mobilisation.

Blaenau Gwent Council had signed the Armed Forces Covenant, reflecting its on-going commitment to the armed forces community in 2014 along with a range of civilian and military partners who the Council worked with through the Blaenau Gwent Steering Group. The Council would now be looking to achieve the Gold Award through further measures such as a guaranteed interview for all members of the armed forces community meeting the essential criteria of the post they applied for.

At this juncture, the Armed Forces Champion presented the award to the Chair of the Council and expressed his appreciation to the Leader of the Council for supporting the work of the Steering Group.

Christmas 2019: Food Bank Charity Initiative

The Council was teaming up with Unison to support the Blaenau Gwent Foodbank Network this Christmas and was asking staff to consider donating food and toiletries.

The Blaenau Gwent Foodbank Network had been helping people in crisis for over 10 years. The Network provided emergency food packages at foodbank distribution centres in Ebbw Vale, Beaufort, Tredegar, Abertillery, Brynmawr and Nantyglo.

This initiative would run from Monday, 2nd December to Thursday, 19th December, 2019 and donation points had been created for staff at the Central Depot, Civic Centre, Anvil Court, VITCC and the General Offices. Information on those items most in need at the moment had also been made available to staff via the

	<p>December newsletter.</p> <p>Elected Members were also welcome to donate if they wished to participate. A collection station had been set up in the Member's Lounge at the Civic Centre, where further information could be obtained.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>MINUTE BOOK - JULY - NOVEMBER 2019</u></p> <p>The Minute Book for the period July – November 2019 was submitted for consideration, whereupon:</p> <p><u>Executive Committee – 13th November, 2019</u> <u>Item No. 14 – 2019 School Performance for: End of Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 (Provisional Only)</u></p> <p>It was noted that the second line of the paragraph two should be amended to read:</p> <p>“The Corporate Director Education concurred with the comments and advised that schools in Blaenau Gwent was performing in line with similar schools in the South East Wales region”.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL</u></p> <p>Approved.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Approved.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Approved.</p>	
No. 9	<p><u>STATUTORY LICENSING COMMITTEE</u></p>	

	Approved.	
No. 10	<p><u>PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE (GENERAL LICENSING MATTERS)</u></p> <p>Approved.</p>	
No. 11	<p><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p><u>Executive Committee – 13th November, 2019</u></p> <p><u>Item No. 14 – 2019 School Performance for: End of Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 (Provisional Only)</u></p> <p>It was noted that the second line of the paragraph two should be amended to read:</p> <p>“The Corporate Director Education concurred with the comments and advised that schools in Blaenau Gwent was performing in line with similar schools in the South East Wales region”.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 12	<p><u>SPECIAL DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Approved.</p>	
No. 13	<p><u>JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING)</u></p> <p>Approved.</p>	
No. 14	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Approved.</p>	
No. 15	<p><u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Approved.</p>	
No. 16	<p><u>AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p>	

	Approved.	
No. 17	<u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> Approved.	
No. 18	<u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> Approved.	
No. 19	<u>JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (BUDGET MONITORING)</u> Approved.	
No. 20	<u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> Approved.	
No. 21	<u>SPECIAL CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> Approved.	
No. 22	<u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> Approved.	
No. 23	<u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> Approved.	
No. 24	<u>SPECIAL EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> Approved.	
No. 25	<u>MEMBERS QUESTIONS</u> The following question was submitted by Councillor S. Thomas, Leader of the Labour Group and responded to by Councillor N. Daniels, Leader of the Council:	

Question

“Given the continuing media coverage concerning the Abertillery Learning Community, would the Leader of the Council make a statement regarding the purpose of the Executive meeting held at Mitre Street Council Offices on the 21st October, 2019?”

Response

The Leader of the Council advised that the Executive Member for Education had been contacted by some members of staff at Abertillery Learning Community asking to meet with her and specifically her Executive colleagues for a private meeting.

Supplementary Question

The Leader of the Labour Group said that the on-going situation at Abertillery Learning Community was well known in the media and stated that in the media yesterday there was a photograph of the Leader of the Council at the site with the protestors. He asked whether he stood by the statement issued by the governing body to establish a redundancy panel, working with staff and trade unions and to avoid compulsory redundancies where possible i.e.

“Did the Leader agree with the stated policy of Council and the Governing Body?”

Response

The Leader of the Council commenced by stating that with regard to the photograph of him that had been pictured in Wales on-line this had been taken as he was walking through demonstrators to attend a school governing body meeting – he had not been canvassing.

He pointed out that the extracts of what had been said above, were extracts of a private meeting of a school governing body of

	which he was a member. The Leader concluded by stating that he had supported the view of the governing body that evening.	
No. 26	<p><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by members of the public.</p>	
No. 27	<p><u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT - 1ST APRIL 2019 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report which detailed the Treasury Management activities carried out by the Authority during the first half of the financial year and highlighted the following salient points contained therein:</p> <p>The Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Had effectively managed credit risk throughout the period, so ensuring that it had not been subjected to any financial loss as a result of the credit crisis and had maximised investment returns as far as was possible whilst managing the associated risk and minimised borrowing costs throughout the period. ➤ Investment returns of £35,000 had been achieved with an average interest rate of 0.55%. This was slightly below the benchmark rate of 0.57% but reflected the fact that the Authority could no longer invest in previous counterparties that paid higher rates, due to credit rating reductions. However, as the annual estimated investment was £11,000 it could be seen that this had been exceeded at the half year position. ➤ An average interest rate of 0.85% had been paid on temporary borrowings against a benchmark of 1.00% amounting to £259,000. The estimate for interest paid on short term borrowing was £428,000 for a full year. ➤ It was noted that due to an expected increase in borrowing levels, every local authority had to fundamentally reassess 	

	<p>how to finance their external borrowing needs and the financial viability of capital projects in their capital programme.</p> <p>➤ During the first half of 2019/2020 due to the advantageous borrowing rates the Authority entered into long term debt arrangements of £13m with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) from other public authorities. These arrangements were made to either replace maturing loans or to finance capital expenditure.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the activity undertaken during the first half of the 2019/2020 financial year be noted and the record of performance and compliance achieved during the same period be accepted.</p>	
No. 28	<p><u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 1ST APRIL 2018 TO 31ST MARCH 2019</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources advised that investment returns of £43,004 had been achieved with an average interest rate of 0.62%. During the year the Council had converted £3m of short term debt into long term debt to replace maturing loans and to fund the remainder of its capital expenditure.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the treasury management activity undertaken during the 2018/2019 financial year be noted.</p>	
No. 29	<p><u>COUNCIL TAX - REMOVAL OF EMPTY PROPERTY DISCOUNT ALLOWANCE FOR PRESCRIBED CLASS C DWELLINGS</u></p> <p>Councillors G. Collier, M. Cross, M. Holland J. C. Morgan declared an interest in this item and, following advice from the Monitoring Officer, remained in the meeting whilst this item was discussed.</p> <p>The report of the Chief Officer Resources was submitted for</p>	

consideration.

The Leader of the Council advised that the report recommended a change of the current policy to use the authority's discretionary powers to remove the level of discount in respect of dwelling that were classified as long term empty properties (Class C dwellings). The current arrangements determined that the discount of 0% be granted to Class A & B dwellings (holiday and second homes) and that a discount of 50% be granted for Class C dwellings i.e. long term empty properties.

It was noted that empty properties i.e. properties that were unoccupied and were substantially unfurnished were initially exempt from Council Tax for up to a period of 6 months. A property was considered to be 'long term empty' if it had been unoccupied and unfurnished for more than six months and did not qualify for another class of exemption from Council Tax.

As at 30th September 2019, 1037 dwellings in Blaenau Gwent were receiving an empty property discount. There were only 4 authorities in Wales that still awarded the 50% discretionary element of settlement from Welsh Government which took into account Class C, however, it was expected that Welsh Government would amend the funding calculation for 2020/21 onwards so that the Council Tax Base calculation would no longer take into account the discounts for the property class. Should this amendment be made this could result in a reduction in Council funding of £480,000.

The Leader continued by stating that the change in policy would allow the Council to levy circa £650,000 council tax against Class C dwellings. However, this would be offset by the loss of revenue support grant circa £480,000 if the expected change to the current formula used for distribution of unhypothecated funding was implemented. Subsequently the net effect of the policy change was an additional £170,000 income for the council, based on a 100% collection rate.

The Leader of the Labour Group in seconding the proposal said he hoped that this collection rate could be achieved.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be

endorsed, namely that the current discount for Class A, B & C dwellings be set at 0% with effect from 1st April, 2020.

No. 30

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY & BRIDGING THE GAP

Members considered the joint Officers' report.

The Chief Officer Resources spoke in detail to the report which provided an assessment of the Council's financial position over the next 5 years together with the proposed approach that the Council would take to address the financial challenges. The following salient points contained therein were highlighted:

- Appendix A of the report proposed the approach to be taken to respond to the financial challenges. This would be an iterative process and one that would be developed and refined as the Welsh Government funding settlement became clearer and strategic business reviews were further developed and implemented.
- Due to the General Election, Welsh Government had delayed the announcement of the draft local government settlement to 16th December, 2019 with the final settlement due on 25th February, 2020. This delay had implications for the 2020/2021 budget setting process and planning for the actual budget cuts required to set a balanced budget. Therefore, the Council's current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) contained a number of assumptions which impact on the level of its income and expenditure.

Councillor P. Baldwin joined the meeting at this juncture.

- Based on these assumptions a budget gap of £16.2m over the next 5 years was forecast.
- The Strategic Business Reviews have been progressing (detailed at Appendix 1) and the overall financial achievement towards the budget gap was currently assessed as between £5.4m and £7.9m over the period of the Strategy. It was noted that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee had considered the MTFS and Strategic Business Reviews at a recent meeting.
- Based on the current estimated achievement from the

Strategic Business Reviews compared to the budget gap identified in the MTFS there was a residual funding gap of between £8.3m and £10.8m over the next 5 years. For the next financial year 2020/2021 this residual funding gap was between £1.1m and £1.7m.

- For 2020/2021 additional proposals were being developed across portfolios to mitigate the possible residual funding gap should they be required – further information would be known following the announcement of the draft local government settlement.

Budget Papers - the Leader of the Labour Group referred to the delay in the announcement of the local government settlement and asked when Members could expect to receive the detailed budget papers containing the Strategic Business Reviews that were to be progressed and when the formal budget meeting of Council would be taking place as there needed to be sufficient time provided for Members to scrutinise this information.

The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that whilst details of the proposals had been presented to Scrutiny there would be a need for further work to be undertaken between 16th December (the date of the draft local government settlement announcement) and the New Year. The officer said that she anticipated that the budget report would be available to be considered by Joint Scrutiny and then Council towards the middle to the end of January 2020 and predicted that the Council Tax Setting meeting would take place towards the end of February 2020.

School Balances - a Member referred to paragraph 6.6 of the MTFS where it was reported that school balances during 2018/2019 had increased overall by £774,000 and that this was attributed to the specific grants that schools received during the year. The Member continued by stating that whilst he agreed that part of this was attributed to specific grants received, he said that a large part of this overall increase could be attributed to the good work that the schools were doing in managing their budgets especially as they worked on a 3-year budget plan and Welsh Government worked on an annual plan. The Member concluded by requesting that the tremendous work undertaken by schools be recognised and noted within the document accordingly.

The Chief Officer Resources accepted that schools and school

governing bodies were working hard to maintain financial resilience. The comment contained within paragraph 6.6 referred to the cumulative reserves position and pointed out that without this additional funding provided by the specific grants the cumulative balance would have reduced by the end of the year. The Chief Officer undertook to incorporate the comments referred to by the Member within the document.

Pupils Demographics - a Member referred to the increase in pupil numbers by 35 as at September 2019 and the large amount of additional funding requirement of £395,000 that had been included as a growth item to address this and said that he anticipated that this would have been a lower figure as the cost for an additional pupil was approximately £4,000.

The Chief Officer Resources said that the information received predicted that as at end of September there would be 35 additional pupils in schools. As a result of this information it had been recognised that funding for the ISB (Individual Schools Budget) would need to be increase by approximately £385,000 and this cost pressure had been included as a growth item within the MTFS.

Conclusion - the Leader of the Council advised that the report had been considered by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and the Trade Unions had confirmed that they were content with the direction of travel. The concern raised in relation to the cumulative reserves were noted and the lack of scrutiny of previous reports had been addressed. It was noted that this was a fluid and proactive strategy which would be amended upon receipt of further information regarding the local government settlement. The Leader concluded by proposing that Option 1 be endorsed.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved.
- Forecast funding gap for the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy be noted.
- Proposals within the Strategic Business Reviews be

approved.

No. 31

CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION CITY DEAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2018/19 Q4

Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director of Regeneration.

The Leader of the Council advised that unfortunately the information in the report was not timely because this had been produced in June 2019. It was hoped that further information with regard to the Metro and its impact would have been reported, however it was understood that whilst this report was being prepared, it was unable to be published prior to the General Election. Therefore the matter would be submitted to Council for consideration early in the new year.

Metro/Abertillery Transport Hub - the Leader of the Labour Group had previously expressed concern at Council regarding issues about the Metro Plus.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to the discussions Spelthorpe in March, 2019 regarding the scheme at which the Leader had attended. He said that discussions would be taking place on this in more detail at the Cardiff Capital Region. However, he expressed his concern that this scheme was not addressing the connectivity across the whole of Blaenau Gwent was crucial – this was preventing people from gaining employment as they were unable to travel to and throughout the borough. Travel to industrial estates was also a problem.

He said that any provision needed to be tested and there needed to be a focus across the whole of Blaenau Gwent particularly in communities that were hard to reach. Rail infrastructure in isolation would not solve any of the connectivity issues being experienced.

Councillor C. Meredith joined the meeting at this juncture.

He continued by expressing his concern regarding the scheme to link up Abertillery a railway when there was already a station in a nearby locality at Llanhilleth and other areas of the County Borough were being excluded from such a provision including the Sirhowy Valley where there was no provision at all. Whilst appreciated that further detail on the scheme was pending he pointed out that this was a once in a lifetime generational opportunity for Blaenau Gwent and said surely a more original scheme could have been submitted as this proposal would cost £5m worth equated to £1m per mile. The Leader of the Labour Group concluded by stating he was unable to support this proposal.

In reply to a question, the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services advised that the Abertillery Transport Hub had been included in the list of schemes being looked at as part of the City Deal Programme and would include the opening of a link between Aberbeeg and Abertillery together with associated infrastructure i.e. the interchange and station.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development stated that the issue of transport had been a problem for the valley communities for many years and therefore, the Metro could not just be about trains. This had been made clear at the Regional Transport Authority i.e. that all aspects of transport must be pursued.

The Welsh Government WelTAG Review in addition to pursuing the Metro would also be undertaking other specific pieces of work relating to all aspects of transport. It was noted that one of the main issues where concerns had been raised was the lack of public transportation to Llanfrechfa Grange. The Executive Member continued by advising that the Council's Transport Policy was also in the process of being reviewed and these proposals would be submitted for consideration in the near future.

The following concerns/comments were also raised by Members:

- The public transport infrastructure in the County Borough was diabolical and worse than any other borough. A Member stated that young people who resided in the borough were unable to look for employment due to the lack of transport as they were unable to travel out of Tredegar. He said he hoped that meetings with the Welsh Government would take place regarding the transport infrastructure and for local bus companies to provide transport at certain times during the day and at night.

- The area was a recognised industrial gateway along the Heads of the Valleys and there was a dire need for an east to west and west to east transport link connecting centres of population to industrial estates and this should be pursued in order to strengthen industrial growth in the area and provide the links in order that people could access these sites.
- It was also frustrating that there was no direct rail link to Cardiff airport from the valleys. This provision would raise the profile of the airport and a Member asked that this matter be raised with appropriate parties.

Valley Gateway Sites – the Leader of the Labour Group referred to the announcement in 2018 by Welsh Government regarding Valley Gateway Sites which would be awarded funding. It was noted that Parc Bryn Bach had received £500,000 and asked whether each site had received a similar amount of funding.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that different amounts of funding were received for each site as part of a competitive process. The outcome of the submission for Parc Bryn Bach had been for glamping pods which had been unsuccessful. Approximately £12m had been provided across all areas and the Corporate Director undertook to provide the exact figures to the Member.

At this juncture Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in this item because he was a Board Member on Aneurin Leisure Trust and the debate that had ensued related to facilities provided by Trust.

Conclusion - the Leader of the Council said that the views expressed were on borough issues that were being pursued. Work was on-going with the Regeneration Transport Authority and a number of the issues that had been raised had also been raised at the G10 Gwent Forum. In addition, the Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development would be presenting a report in the near future relating to a local review of the Transport Policy.

The Leader confirmed that when meetings had taken place with Ken Skates, Minister for Economy & Transport or a representative of Welsh Government, strong representations regarding connectivity and transportation had been made by senior officers, the Leader and Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development. Discussions had also taken place regarding the provision of bus services to certain other areas which had received more than a favourable hearing.

Unfortunately, due to the pre-election period for the General Election full information had not been forthcoming but with the onset of Tech Valleys, the Industrial Strategy and the improvements being made to the Heads of the Valleys Road, Black Gwent had the potential to be a hotspot for industry. The Leader concluded by stating it was, therefore, imperative that the transport infrastructure within the County Borough including the infrastructure on the industrial estates needed to be appropriate in order that people both inside and outside the borough could access jobs and a considerable amount of work was being undertaken by officers in respect of this issue.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed and the overall progress and completion of the key targets for 2018/19 be endorsed.

No. 32

DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS REPORT

The report of the Service Manager Performance and Democratic Scrutiny was submitted for consideration.

The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee commended the excellent report and said that the Service Manager Performance and Democratic Scrutiny was an exceptional officer.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Democratic Arrangements and Scrutiny Progress be noted.

No. 33

TIME OFF FOR RESERVISTS POLICY

Members considered the report of the Head of Organisational Development.

The Leader of the Council advised that although the Council had received the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award the policy in respect of Time Off for Reservists still had to be formally agreed.

Councillor Brian Thomas, Armed Forces Champion had put a considerable amount of work into this and had represented the Council at these events and meetings exceedingly well. The Leader, thereupon, wished to place on record his appreciation to Councillor Thomas for all the work he had undertaken in his role as Armed Forces Champion.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Time Off for Reservists Policy be ratified.

No. 34

REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PREFERRED STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development spoke to the report which sought approval of the replacement Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy which was to be taken forward for consultation. This was a key document in the process and it set out the strategic framework for the new replacement Local Development Plan.

To build consensus on the preferred strategy extensive engagement had taken place with stakeholders including Members and all comments as part of this process would be considered.

The intention was to undertake a 6-week public consultation exercise on the Preferred Strategy, the results of which would be reported to Scrutiny and Council at a later date.

The Executive Member concluded by expressing his appreciation to officers for the work undertaken to date in respect of this plan.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that this was an excellent piece of work and paid tribute to officers for the amount of work undertaken in respect of the strategy. He concluded by endorsing the recommendation.

Settlement Classes - Primary & Secondary - a Member referred to a recent development in Tredegar where 500 houses had been built because there had been a number of suitable sites available. However, moving forward the Member said that there was a need to identify sites and areas where people wanted to live as this was a far more important aspect than the number of dwellings.

Challenge 3: Improving Education and Skills - the Member continued by referring to the Key Challenges and Drivers within the document in particular Challenge 3 – Improving Education Attainment Skills which indicated that “a high proportion of adults had no qualifications and education attainment was generally low”. He expressed his concern that this was too much of a general statement and pointed out that education in Blaenau Gwent primary and secondary schools was progressing well and this needed to be recognised.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development said that whilst there was a need for Welsh Government system to be holistic, the guidelines issued by Welsh Government on housing were just guidelines and all sites would be looked at across the County Borough.

With regard to educational attainment, the Executive Member reported that Blaenau Gwent had recently won a national award for its Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme and confirmed that there would be recognition of educational achievements/attainments included within the Local Development Plan.

Challenge 5 – Creating a Well Connected Network of Communities - a Member said that there was a need to publicise good news i.e. that the infrastructure and road links within the

County Borough had and were continuing to improve.

Challenge 4 – Population Growth and Improving Housing Offer - a Member referred to the aging population within the County Borough and said that there was a shortage of bungalows in particular, to meet housing requirements. He also pointed out that there was a need to ensure developments contained a mixture of house types including social housing.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development confirmed that this need had been recognised and was being highlighted and discussed with registered social landlords and private developers.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely the Preferred Strategy be approved for public consultation.

No. 35 **MEMBERSHIPS REPORT**

Consideration was given to:

Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council

the appointment of replacement representatives for Councillors Julie Holt and Mandy Moore.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that Councillor Phillip Edwards be appointed to one of the above vacancies on the Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council.

No. 36 **EXEMPT ITEMS(S)**

To receive and consider the following reports which in the opinion of the proper officer were exempt items taking into account consideration of the public interest test and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reason for the

	decision for the exemption was available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).	
No. 37	<p><u>FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE WASTE TRANSFER STATION AND HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE</u></p> <p>Councillor M. Cook and J. Hill declared an interest in this item and left the meeting whilst it was discussed.</p> <p>Councillor H. McCarthy left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director.</p> <p>The Managing Director provided an overview of the report which presented the findings of the due diligence activity commissioned to consider the transfer of assets and liabilities of the company back to Council control and to seek approval on the process to secure a suitable arrangement for the services required by the Council.</p> <p>It was noted that a briefing on the report had been provided to both political groups and this report had been considered by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 5th December, 2019.</p> <p>Councillor H. McCarthy returned to the meeting at this juncture.</p>	

Further details of the financial and technical issues were provided including operating losses, the provision for aftercare and the potential cost pressure if the preferred option was pursued. It was noted that the aftercare liabilities would remain with the company until 2044 and following this date would then subsequently be transferred to the Council and remain until 2076.

A working group comprising of a cross section of officers from across the authority had undertaken a robust piece of work and a synopsis of this process was provided in paragraphs 2.24 – 2.27 of the report and a more detailed description of the process was included within Appendix 1.

Correction – Appendix 2 – reference was made within Appendix 2 and for clarification it was reported that the company did pay the National Living Wage and that the Council paid the Foundation Living Wage (at the higher level). However, this correction would not affect the differentiation reported to Council.

The Managing Director advised that details of the preferred option were outlined in paragraph 3.6.2. It was pointed out that the word ‘Scrutiny’ contained in the second bullet point should be amended to read ‘Council’. It was noted that the Scrutiny Committee had supported the preferred option on 5th December, 2019.

Contingency Plan - in reply to a question, the Managing Director confirmed that if there was not sufficient interest from public sector partners to take forward the preferred option, the contingency plan for the delivery of services would be submitted to Council to agree.

Carbon Footprint - in reply to a further question, the Managing Director said that the Council’s carbon footprint and the impact this would have to be at the forefront of all decisions that were made in the future. Whilst there were no specific targets imposed by Welsh Government and the Council could not be fined at this stage this may potentially change in the future as the ambition of Welsh Government was for the public sector to become carbon neutral by

2030.

It was noted that the Well Being Future Generations Act also included environmental elements that would need to be adhered to.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) be accepted and Option 1 – Collaboration with the Public Sector (Shared Services) be endorsed, namely that approval be granted to proceed to the following:

- Take forward Option 1 and carry out soft market testing to better understand the opportunity to achieve a public sector collaboration.
- Should there not be sufficient interest from public sector partners to take forward the preferred option it was requested that Council endorse a proposal for officers to develop a contingency plan for the delivery of services.
- To mitigate against the risks associated with depleting the general reserves that should be retained to cover the costs associated with the aftercare liabilities of the landfill site it was proposed that the Council explored options for securing sufficient reserves to meet the assessed costs and liabilities up to 2076.

No. 38

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER PROCESS, SELECTION OF APPROVED USER

Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public

interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services.

The Executive Member for Environment spoke briefly to the report which set out the result of the re-assessment of information by the Selection Panel provided in support of an appeal by an organisation relating to the proposed Community Asset Transfer.

It was noted that the information submitted to support the appeal process had been re-assessed against the published evaluation criteria by the same representatives of the Council's Community Asset Transfer Steering Group who had assessed the original business case. In addition, an assessment of the original and revised scoring had been reviewed and re-scored independently. The Executive Member for Environment concluded by proposing that Option 1 be endorsed.

Evaluation Matrix - a Member referred to the evaluation matrix that had been used and expressed his concern that organisations were not able to supply any historical information. He, therefore, questioned how this could then be classed as a track record if only the forward looking information was supplied. He also expressed his concern that both organisations had scored the same in terms of the financial issues which was not correct. The Member concluded by stating in his opinion the matrix was flawed.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services said that the weighting in terms of the track record had been quite low. With regard to the track record - the point was not whether clubs had fulfilled particular fixtures, it was a look forward rather

than a look back at historical information. He reiterated that an independent assessment of the scores had been undertaken. The Corporate Director concluded by pointing out that both organisations had equal opportunity to supply further information in support of their applications.

A Member said that this was one of the saddest days and in his view the Council had failed in a number of areas. The Charter that had been signed by the Council and the Town Council was a legal agreement. This particular recreation ground had been left to the people of Tredegar and any change to the recreation facilities must be discussed with the public and Town Council in the first instance. However, he pointed out that these discussions had never taken place.

He continued by stating that the track records of the clubs should have been taken into consideration as priority was being given to a club who had not played one fixture on the ground. He also pointed out that the fireworks display and horse show were also held annually at the ground and enquired whether these events would be permitted as part of the lease in the future. All factors should have been considered before a decision was made and children and senior sides should be permitted to use the facilities at the ground. The Member concluded by stating he did not support the report and would, therefore, not vote in favour of the preferred option.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services advised that if the report was supported this was providing a route on which to engage and the Town Council would form part of that process. It was noted that it was the role of the Charity Commission to take a view on whether the existing charitable objects continue to be observed and take a decision accordingly. Both parties had been treated equitably and had equal opportunities to discuss and sufficient time to present the information. In addition, there had been equity for both clubs to use officer time to help with regard to the completion of the forms. In terms of protecting current user rights and activities in any future

lease this would be considered.

Another Member said that the Town Council should be consulted before any decision was made.

Councillor M. Cook and J. Hill returned to the meeting at this juncture.

Town/Community Council Charter - a Member referred to the Charter between the Council and Town Council and asked whether this was a statutory and legal contractual agreement and if this was the case pointed out that the Council would be unable to make a decision if the Town Council had not been consulted with.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance advised that investigations would take place as to whether there was a legal obligation to consult with Town Council as part of the Charter arrangements on the proposal and pending this information suggested that the report be deferred and re-presented to Special Council the following week.

A Member pointed out that in the event the Town Council had not been consulted, it should have been consulted with as part of the Community Asset Transfer process. He, thereupon, posed the following questions/comment:

- Had the Council consulted with the Town Council in respect of the proposal.
- Was it a legal obligation under the Charter to consult with Town Council.
- If it was a legal obligation this consultation should have taken place prior to Council making a decision on the proposal.

The Leader of the Council said that he would support deferment of the report. He referred to the CAT process and the passion that the Tredegar Members had for the ground and said that he sympathised with them on this particular issue. He concluded by stating that he hoped that a solution could be found for this ground

	<p>as the Council was no longer providing services for the facility.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when it was</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be deferred pending further information and re-submitted to the Special Meeting of the Council on 19th December, 2019 for consideration.</p>	
No. 39	<p><u>APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - 15TH OCTOBER, 2019</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 15th October, 2019.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the appointment of Leanne Roberts to the post of Service Manager Customer Experience & Benefits be noted.</p>	
No. 40	<p><u>SHORTLISTING - JNC OFFICERS</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p>	

	<p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 21st October, 2019.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decision contained therein be noted.</p>	
No. 41	<p><u>APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - 8TH NOVEMBER, 2019</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 8th November, 2019.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decision not to appoint to the post of Service Manager Transformation & Digital at this stage be noted.</p>	
No. 42	<p><u>APPEAL COMMITTEE - 12TH NOVEMBER, 2019</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer</p>	

regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 12th November, 2019.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the Appeal be dismissed.
