

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL - 29TH SEPTEMBER, 2022

REPORT OF:

PRESENT:

Councillors	C. Smith (Presiding Member)
	C. Bainton
	P. Baldwin
	S. Behr
	D. Bevan
	K. Chaplin
	M. Cross
	H. Cunningham
	D. Davies
	M. Day
	S. Edmunds
	J. Gardner
	J. Hill
	W. Hodgins
	G. Humphreys
	R. Leadbeater
	E. Jones
	J. C. Morgan
	J. P. Morgan
	L. Parsons
	D. Rowberry
	T. Smith
	G. Thomas
	J. Thomas
	S. Thomas
	H. Trollope
	J. Wilkins
	L. Winnett
	D. Woods

WITH:

Interim Chief Executive
 Interim Corporate Director of Social Services
 Chief Officer Resources
 Chief Officer Commercial & Customer
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Head of Democratic Services, Governance &
 Partnerships
 Head of Regeneration
 Service Manager – Customer Experience &
 Transformation
 Service Manager – Young People &
 Partnerships
 Press & Publicity Officer

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>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <p>Councillors G. A. Davies and J. Holt.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interests were reported:</p> <p>Item No. 18: Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme</p> <p>Councillors K. Chaplin, W. Hodgins, H. Trollope</p> <p>Item No. 19: Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins</p>	

No. 4

PRESIDING MEMBER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Condolences

- Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who had sadly passed away on Thursday, 8th September. Her Majesty had ascended to the throne in 1952 and had served for over 70 years - the longest reign of any British Monarch and the longest recorded of any female head of state in history.

Condolences were expressed to the families of:

- Former County Borough Councillor and Mayor, Keith Barnes who passed away on 12th August just 25 days after his wife, Val. Keith had represented the Cwm Ward for over 30 years during his time as a Councillor.
- Former employee of the Council, Mr. Jeff Wheeler who had recently passed away.

Members and officers paid their respects with a minute's silence

It was noted that appropriate letters of condolence had been sent.

Congratulations

Congratulations were expressed to:

- Charlotte Carey on winning a bronze medal in the table tennis doubles with partner Anna Hursey at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

This was Wales' first female Commonwealth Games table tennis medal.

- Owain Dando and Jonathan Tomlinson on winning a bronze medal in the men's triple bowls event with team partner Ross Owen at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Appropriate letters had been sent to all medallists.

No. 5	<p><u>MINUTE BOOK - JULY - SEPTEMBER 2022</u></p> <p>The Minute Book for the period July - September 2022 - was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>It was noted that only the decisions of meetings would be reported going forward and not full minutes as in previous years.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the decisions be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL</u></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>PLANNING COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>PLANNING COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 9	<p><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 10	<p><u>GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 11	<p><u>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 12	<p><u>GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 13	<p><u>MEMBERS QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by Members.</p>	

No. 14	<p><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by members of the public.</p>	
No. 15	<p><u>MOTION - DECARBONISING WELSH PENSION FUNDS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Motion regarding Decarbonising Welsh Pension Funds.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council work with the Welsh Government, other local authorities and other parts of the public sector to develop a shared strategy for decarbonising the investments made by their pension funds and redirecting that investment into Wales based projects which decarbonise both energy consumption and production.</p>	
No. 16	<p><u>MOTION - REDRESS FOR EMPLOYEES WHO MISSED OUT ON WELSH GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL RECOGNITION SCHEME</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the above-named Motion.</p> <p>Following a discussion it was,</p> <p>RESOLVED that to recognise the dedication and hard work of employees from Workforce Development, Early Years, Childcare and Play, Families First and Flying Start, a one-off payment of £735 be allocated from the Council's Corporate Budget to the workers who missed out on the scheme and right the injustice suffered by them.</p>	
No. 17	<p><u>PROPOSED COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Democratic Officer.</p> <p>It was noted that the Forward Work Programme was a fluid document and would be added to over time. With regard to a concern raised that an item regarding the Highways Network had not been included it was noted that whilst there was a revenue budget available for 2022/23 to undertake day to day repairs, there</p>	

were no capital grant monies available at present which would allow for additional investment into the road network. However, if funding opportunities were generated or alternative funding identified it would be a decision of Council as to how funding was prioritised and spent. If no further funding opportunities were forthcoming, discussions would be held with Members regarding priorities once the outcome of the draft budget from Welsh Government was known in December.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Council Forward Work Programme 2022/2023 be agreed.

No. 18 **MULTI LOCATION MEETING POLICY**

Councillor D. Rowberry left the meeting at this juncture.

Members considered the report of the Service Manager Performance & Democratic.

This was a fluid policy that would be adapted as the Council moved forward and would be monitored by Members periodically.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that notification of meetings be published in the Community Hubs and General Office building to alert people without I.T. provision to the meetings that were pending. In addition, in terms of identity as the General Office building was now the Democratic Hub the matter of signage would be investigated but this would not form part of this policy.

It was noted that whilst the hybrid system was not currently in use, Members were still able to attend meetings at the General Offices albeit via Microsoft teams at present until a solution had been identified.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Multi Location Meeting Policy be approved and used to support all future democratic meetings and member sessions.

<p>No. 19</p>	<p><u>DISCRETIONARY COST OF LIVING SCHEME</u></p> <p>Councillors K. Chaplin, W. Hodgins and H. Trollope declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst it was discussed.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial & Customer.</p> <p>It was reported that the Corporate & Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 23rd September, 2022 had proposed a slight amendment to the recommendation, namely that £30,000 be provided to Blaenau Gwent Foodbank as the main recipient and a discretionary fund of £70,000 be established to allow other local food distribution groups/organisations to apply for funding from the Council to assist in delivering work within their respective communities. The proposal to provide £50,000 to Citizens Advice Bureau to enable additional resources to support individual across Blaenau Gwent with financial/debt advice was agreed by the Committee.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council, thereupon, proposed that the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee be endorsed.</p> <p>Following a discussion, it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the suggested amendment above to the Cost of Living Discretionary Scheme be agreed (Option 2).</p> <p>Heartfelt appreciation was expressed to all those people in the community, current and former Council Members that had assisted and helped the foodbanks particularly, during the course of the pandemic.</p>	
<p>No. 20</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2021/2022</u></p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst it was discussed.</p> <p>The report of the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services was submitted for consideration.</p>	

The Executive Member – People & Social Services expressed his appreciation to staff for all their hard work, dedication and commitment during the past year.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely, the publication of the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022 be approved.

The Executive Member – People & Social Services reported that the Youth Offending Service Team had undergone a recent Estyn Inspection and the service had been assessed as 'good'. He requested that congratulations and appreciation be forwarded to all concerned for their hard work and efforts during the inspection process.

No. 21

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Consideration was given to:

ADVISORY PANEL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNORS

The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 22nd September, 2022 to appoint in principle:

Coed-y-Garn Primary – Ken Jones

All Saints Primary – Laura Newall

Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg – Councillor Peter Baldwin and Rebecca Legge

St. Mary's RC Primary – Angela Davies

Pen-y-Cwm Special Needs School – Councillor Jen Morgan, J.P.

It was, thereupon, unanimously,

RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The appointment of Rhianna Lewis, Youth Forum Representative on the above Committee.

RESOLVED that the appointment of Rhianna Lewis, Youth Forum Representative on the above Committee be ratified.

NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE GOVERNANCE BOARD

To note that the above Board had also assumed responsibilities for Foster Wales.

The appointment of the Executive Member People & Social Services on the above Board be reaffirmed.

RESOLVED accordingly.

STRAYING ANIMALS/ANIMAL TRESPASS WORKING GROUP

It was RESOLVED that the above Working Group be established, and the following Members be appointed:

Executive Member – Place & Environment (Chair)
Chair – Place Scrutiny Committee

It was noted that Councillor L. Winnett would now be appointed to the Working Group in place of the Vice-Chair – Place Scrutiny Committee.

FURTHER RESOLVED that a Member of the Independent Group be invited to attend meetings of the Working Group.

No. 22 **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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 reasons for the decisions for the exemptions was available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).

The Head of Regeneration left the meeting at this juncture.

No. 23 **LOGLISTING - JNC OFFICERS**

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 Paragraphs 12 & 13, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 6th September, 2022.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decisions contained therein be noted.

No. 24 **SHORTLISTING - JNC OFFICERS**

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 Paragraphs 12 & 13, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 13th September, 2022.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decisions contained therein be noted.

It was reported that following the Appointments Committee held on 28th September, 2022 Ms. Eleanor Fry had been appointed to the post of Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services.

Congratulations were expressed to Eleanor on her new appointment.