

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b><u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u></b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b><u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 11<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2019</u></b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b><u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u></b>

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PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. MOORE (THE CHAIR,  
PRESIDING)

Councillors D. Bevan  
G. Collier  
J. Collins  
M. Cook  
M. Cross  
N. Daniels  
D. Davies  
G. A. Davies  
G. L. Davies  
M. Day  
L. Elias  
D. Hancock  
S. Healy  
J. Hill  
W. Hodgins  
M. Holland  
H. McCarthy, B.A. (Hons)  
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  
L. Winnett

AND: 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 Governance & Partnerships  
Solicitor  
Communications, Marketing & Customer Access Manager  
Organisational Development Manager – Payroll/Health & Safety

ALSO: **Representing the Wales Audit Office**  
Mr. Dave Wilson – Performance Audit Lead

<b><u>No.</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT</u></b>	<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
1.	<b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b>  It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
2.	<b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b>  Apologies for absence were received from:-  Councillors P. Baldwin, P. Edwards, K. Hayden, J. Holt, J. Mason, J. P. Morgan, J. Wilkins, D. Wilkshire and B. Willis.	

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

The following declarations of interest were reported:-

**Item No. 40 – Public Question**

Councillors W. Hodgins and L. Parsons

**Item No. 52 – Appointments Committee – JNC Officers**

Rhian Hayden - Chief Officer Resources

**4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Congratulations**

Congratulations were expressed to:-

- To all the recipients in Blaenau Gwent who had received honours in the Queen's Birthday List. Congratulations were expressed particularly to:-
  - Steve Jones on being awarded an MBE for his contribution to sport. Steve had won his first marathon in 1984 and was a world recorder holder – Steve had held the record as fastest British runner for 33 years.
  - Susan Woodward on being awarded a BEM for over 40 years dedicated and loyal service to Blaenau Gwent Otters (Disability Swimming Club).
- Allison Pope on being named Teacher of the Year in the recent 'Professional Teaching Awards Cymru'.
- Mr & Mrs Hagland of Brynithel who had celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2019.

RESOLVED that appropriate letters be sent.

### **Illness**

- It was reported that Councillor Bernard Willis had recently undergone surgery.

RESOLVED that an appropriate letter be sent.

### **Retirement**

- Members were advised that Reverend Roy Watson would be retiring from his role at the end of August. Appreciation was expressed to Reverend Watson for his many years of dedicated and loyal service to the community, the Council and School Governing Body which, he had chaired for a number of years.

Best wishes were expressed to Reverend Watson for a long, happy and healthy retirement.

### **Environmental Reward**

- Blaenau Gwent had been officially recognised as an 'Area for a Beautiful Future' by Smart Energy GB by going above and beyond in creating a more sustainable future.

As number six on the list of areas in Wales leading the way, Blaenau Gwent had received a commemorative plaque to recognise that the community was playing an important part in creating and contributing to a cleaner, greener and smarter tomorrow for Blaenau Gwent and the whole of Great Britain.

## **5 - MINUTE BOOK – FEBRUARY – JUNE 2019** **38.**

The Minute Book for the period February – June 2019 was submitted for consideration, whereupon:-

**Annual Meeting of the Council – 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2019 - Labour Group Officers**

The following corrections were made to the minutes:-

Councillor K. Hayden – Secretary *should be amended to read*  
Treasurer

Councillor H. McCarthy – Treasurer *should be amended to read*  
Secretary

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.

**39. MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

There were no questions submitted by Members.

**40. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Councillors W. Hodgins and L. Parsons declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst a response to the question was provided.

The following question was submitted by Ms. Evans of Tredegar and responded to by the Leader of the Council:-

**Question**

“Reference was made to the recent decision to award the Splash Park away from Bryn Bach Park, Tredegar to the Garden Festival Site, Ebbw Vale and Ms. Evans asked for confirmation that all Councillors had been kept fully involved throughout the process as it applied to the Scrutiny function at Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council”.

**Background:**

The Leader of the Council commenced by advising that he had been made aware that there had also been an additional part to the original question. However, the Monitoring Officer had

deemed that this part was a 'call for a statement' rather than an actual question and had advised that there was no provision for this in accordance with the Council's Constitution. Therefore, for openness and by way of an explanation the Leader provided the following background.

At the conclusion of the Council meeting, the Leader also offered to meet with Ms. Evans privately to discuss the matter.

The Leader explained that the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant had been provided by the Welsh Government. In this instance the Council had received some slippage funding at the end of January 2018 totalling £14,669, which in normal circumstances would have to be spent within 8 weeks of receipt. However, due to a number of authorities not taking up the opportunity of the grant, officers had made a further speculative bid for funding to fund a unique splash park within Blaenau Gwent - similar to the splash park facility at Cyfartha Park, Merthyr.

Welsh Government had, subsequently, supported a grant of £110,000 - this was the amount of funding that Merthyr had invested at the Cyfartha Park site. Officers then quickly developed a shortlist of sites appropriate to develop the facility where it was considered that would have most play value and these shortlisted sites that had been identified included Bryn Bach Park, Bedwellty House & Park and the Garden Festival Site. It was noted that some of the criteria that had been used in the shortlisting process had included secure, lockable sites, other play facilities located within the vicinity and refreshment facilities.

Initially Bryn Bach Park had been the preferred option and the Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT) was keen to pursue the project and the Council working with Welsh Government and ALT had proceeded to identify how the scheme was going to be delivered. However, by May/June it had become apparent that little or no progression had been made as some technical issues were identified which required additional funding of up to £100,000 for the provision of a sustainable water system. At this point ALT felt that they would no longer be in a position financially to pursue the option and without consultation with officers had returned the grant funding to the Council. This was followed by correspondence which cited concerns regarding the technical issues and additional funding required to meet the ongoing

maintenance and running costs.

This same reasoning had also applied to the Bedwellty House & Park site, therefore, in order to retain the funding for Blaenau Gwent children and families, officers had to look at an alternative site for the splash park and the only other site which was not operated by Aneurin Leisure Trust was the Garden Festival Site.

### **Response**

The Council dealt with a considerable number of grants throughout the course of the year and officers used their initiative and communicated with Welsh Government to pursue grants, apply for grants and acquire them. Project discussions had commenced in Community Services, Social Services had submitted the bid application and Regeneration had been involved due to the involvement of the Garden Festival site.

The reporting mechanism from an officer and Council perspective had not been ideal but there were mitigating circumstances. Officers at that time felt that they were not in a position until April to give a firm answer and conclusion as to where the money could and would be invested. This had then subsequently, been reported at the Special Environment, Regeneration & Economic Development Scrutiny Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

The Leader added that the first time he had been made aware of this matter was when he had sight of the Scrutiny Committee agenda. However, he absolutely did not think that the political process had been deliberately negated. There had been three portfolios involved and three different sets of officers - this had been part of problem and the reporting mechanisms had become somewhat confused. There had been trigger points throughout the process particularly, when Aneurin Leisure Trust had felt that they could not pursue the scheme when this matter should have been reported into the political arena.

It was noted that this matter was also relevant to Executive function and Executive Members had also not been made aware of this matter – therefore, it was not only Scrutiny Members negated in the democratic process. The Leader stressed and reiterated that officers had not deliberately tried to side step the democratic process – officers had felt they needed a firm

commitment before they had brought the information into any process and this had, subsequently, been reported at the Special Environment, Regeneration & Economic Development Scrutiny Committee in May. There were, however, lessons to be learnt from what had happened and for this he could only apologise.

### **Supplementary Question**

“Would the Leader of the Council apologise to the children, families and people of Tredegar for allowing a much needed project that was to be located at Bryn Bach Park to be given to the Garden Festival Site?”

### **Response**

The Leader commenced by stating that the process had been appropriately followed, however, he acknowledged and understood the concerns and disappointment of Tredegar Members and the people of Tredegar. However, he stated that it was difficult for him to apologise for something that had commenced in 2018 but he had only made aware of in April 2019. He reiterated his earlier response that there were lessons to be learnt but the Council had not been in a position to provide any additional monies to the Aneurin Leisure Trust.

As per the Special Environment, Regeneration & Economic Development Scrutiny Committee recommendation, further dialogue had been undertaken with Aneurin Leisure Trust to ascertain if they would reconsider the scheme. Contact had also been made with the Valleys Task Force to ascertain if they could provide a contribution to the scheme and Welsh Government had been approached to seek an extension to the timescale to deliver the project. It was noted that the original grant should have been utilised by March 2018.

The Valleys Task Force confirmed that the project did not fit with their strategic programme and Welsh Government confirmed it was content to provide an extension in order to achieve the outcome for Blaenau Gwent but had advised that unless significant progress had been made by September 2019 the funding would be reclaimed.



There would have been a significant issue if the grant monies had to be returned, because there would have been no investment for Blaenau Gwent and the facilities would be unable to be provided for the families and children within the community. Importantly the facility (which everyone could benefit from) would still be developed within Blaenau Gwent with no additional revenue costs being incurred for the Council. Therefore, this was not a matter for him to apologise for.

The Leader concluded by reiterating his offer at the conclusion of Council to meet with Ms. Evans in private to discuss the matter.

**41. WALES AUDIT OFFICE (WAO) - ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2018/2019**

Consideration was given to the Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report for Blaenau Gwent dated June 2019.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mr. Wilson advised that this was the annual visit to the authority to present the Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report for Blaenau Gwent.

This report summarised the audit work undertaken at Blaenau Gwent Council since the last report was published. This requirement which formed part of the Local Government Measure 2009, required the WAO to assess whether the Council was meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement.

The Annual Improvement Report detailed the work undertaken during 2018/19 and all the information contained therein had been cleared for factual accuracy with Council officers. It was noted that some of the reports had not yet been considered through the Council's governance arrangements and as such would present questioning opportunities at that time for Members.

The audit work was summarised as follows:-

- **Assurance and Risk Assessment** – the Council had recently approved its Audit Plan at the Audit Committee held in March 2019.

- **Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) Examinations: Flying Start, Families First, Early Years Childcare and Play** – this work focussed on the implementation of the Act.
- **Annual Audit Letter 2017/2018**
- **Leisure Services Review**
- **Thematic Review – Service User Perspective: Community Engagement**

Two certificates of compliance had been issued with regard to:-

- The Council's improvement plan and the annual assessment of performance.

A review undertaken by inspection and regulatory bodies included:-

- **Council's Fostering Service**

It was also reported that:-

- Details of the **National Report Recommendations** which were pertinent to local government were also contained within the appendices attached to the report.

**Conclusion:** The Council was meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement but faced challenges going forward.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that the 'conclusion' needed to be considered carefully. He continued by expressing his concern that the Leisure Services Review had not been included within this report and had to be accessed via a website link. This report had made pertinent points around the scrutiny function of the Council and within the main body of the report indicated that the Council should do more around engaging Scrutiny Members. The report went somewhat further indicating that the review of Leisure Services lacked timely and meaningful Scrutiny Member involvement which had limited effective scrutiny. The report had also indicated it was unclear of the

impact that the work of the Leisure Services Working Group would have on the review.

The Leader of the Labour Group pointed out that the Council had received an award for scrutiny but said that scrutiny needed to be effective and needed to fit and focus on areas of concern. He expressed his disappointment that issues were currently being experienced with the scrutiny function and said that these needed to be addressed.

Another Member said that the Leisure Review follow up report should be considered by the relevant Scrutiny Committee. This was not a favourable report and it indicated how Council could learn from the service review process and had identified that Member involvement was needed earlier as part of the process. In addition, the work of the Working Group needed to be incorporated within the final report.

The Managing Director explained that not all reports referenced in the Annual Improvement Report had yet been reported to Scrutiny, as identified by the Officer from Wales Audit Office in his presentation. The leisure services review audit would be reported to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee in September 2019 and this was already included in the forward work programme. This report had dealt with leisure review undertaken pre November 2018.

A Member said that the work of Working Group should be considered by a Joint Scrutiny Committee. The Managing Director confirmed that this information would be dealt with in the next report and in the next phase of leisure review.

The Leader of the Labour Group sought an assurance that the comments made would be considered and taken into account and the scrutiny function of the Council be looked at again to ensure that these policies were being adopted.

The Leader of the Council commenced by expressing his appreciation to Mr. Wilson for attending the meeting and said that the Council was grateful for the comments and advice received from the Wales Audit Office and said that this advice would be taken on board.

	<p>For 2018/19 the work of the Annual Improvement Report was showing some signs of improvement in terms of financial resilience and governance arrangements and he looked forward to these improvements continuing. 2019/20 had commenced on the right trajectory and he was hopeful that some of the reports that had been included on this Council agenda for consideration would add to that commitment to resilience and sustainability. The Leader concluded by reiterating his appreciation to the Wales Audit Office for their assistance and advice provided to the Council throughout the course of the year.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the information contained therein be noted; and</li> <li>(ii) future reports be received from the Wales Audit Office.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>42.</b></p>	<p><b><u>CORPORATE PLAN – FORWARD LOOKING PLAN 2019/2020</u></b></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Managing Director.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council explained that the Corporate Plan acted as the Council’s Business Plan and set out the vision, values and priorities for 2018 to 2022. It was noted that Directorates had considered their planned areas of activity as identified within the Corporate Plan and had agreed that, for this year, there would be no change to the priorities, activity or performance indicators.</p> <p>Upon a vote being undertaken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Forward Looking Plan 2019/2020 be approved for publication before the end of July 2019.</p>	

43. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) & BRIDGING THE GAP**

The report of the Chief Officer Resources and Chief Officer Commercial was submitted for consideration.

**Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS):**

At the invitation of the Chair, the Chief Officer Resources spoke briefly to the report and explained that the MTFS was a key element within the Council's strategic planning framework and it was this financial framework which would support the Council's resilience and ensure it operated sustainably.

The MTFS brought together all known factors affecting the Council's financial position and formed the basis for decision making and highlighted the funding requirement that would need to be made to ensure the Council could set a balanced budget each year in line with statutory requirements.

It was noted at this stage that the MTFS and Bridging the Gap document was a draft document and proposed an approach that the Council would take to respond to the financial challenges faced over the next five year period. This would be an iterative process and one that would be developed and refined as the funding position from Wales Government became clearer and strategic reviews were implemented.

The Chief Officer Resources, thereupon, gave an overview of the MTFS assumptions and these were detailed within Table 1 of the MTFS document and included Pay; Price Inflation (Non Schools); Schools Growth (ISB); Specific Grant Funding; Capital Financing; Council Tax; Estimate Funding Reduction (Aggregate External Funding) and Reserves.

Members were aware of the political changes currently in progress at Westminster and Council had recently been informed that the comprehensive spending review that was due to take place during the autumn was likely to be delayed and the indications were that this was likely to impact on timelines of the provisional and final settlements from Welsh Government.

Finally, the financial assumptions assumed no draw from general or specific reserves and also proposed that the Council build a contingency in future years budgets to maintain or increase the level of reserves in order to build the financial resilience of the Council moving forward.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that paragraph 5.1.1 of the report identified the potential future funding gap of £13.3m over the next 5 years based on the assumptions contained within the draft MTFS and paragraph 5.2.2 outlined the financial risks associated with any changes made to these assumptions.

The Leader of the Labour Group commenced by stating that clearly these were assumptions and if agreed, further political deliberations on these could be held at a later date. He pointed out that the MRP had recently benefitted the authority by £3m and expressed his concern that there was also no mention within the report of the 2019/20 forecast cost pressure on Children's Services of £1m, that Welsh Government had addressed through a grant.

He continued by advising that the Welsh Assembly's Chair of Children, Young People & Education Committee had commented recently that there was a crisis in funding of schools i.e. individual schools budgets and this needed to be borne in mind going forward.

Another Member said that school deficits had decreased the previous year due to specific grants that had been made available. Welsh Government was currently examining the funding provided for schools and schools were currently a priority for both Welsh Government and the Council moving forward. However, the Member referred to the table contained in the report and expressed his concern regarding the fluctuation in school balances which was now well over £1m.

The Chief Officer Resources explained that the school balance table detailed the net surplus of all schools across Blaenau Gwent and whilst this had been reducing over the years, this had increased from 280k to just over £1m last year. There were some schools in deficit but last year there had been an improving picture across all schools.

The Member reiterated that he required an explanation for this fluctuation in this figure.

The Executive Member – Education said that she was willing to discuss this matter with officers and convene a Member Briefing Session in order that these questions could be posed by Members. The Member advised that he had requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee regarding this matter.

The Chief Officer Resources pointed out that there were a significant number of schools in Blaenau Gwent and, therefore, there could be different reasons for these variations. However, the Chief Officer undertook to pursue the matter and report back to the Member accordingly.

### **Bridging the Gap Programme:**

At this juncture, the Chief Officer Commercial spoke to the report and said that the Council recognised the challenges faced in the short, medium and long term. Bridging the Gap Programme spanned a 5 year period and had developed a programme of Strategic Business Reviews to deal with potential gaps between anticipated funding and expenditure and aimed to build financial resilience. Designed to support a balanced budget it also focussed on creating the conditions of a commercially minded Council. This included new revenue streams and ensuring resources were aligned to Council priorities.

The Council needed to redesign and reshape services in order to reduce costs and maximise income. The following areas would be focussed on:-

- Maximising Income
- Maximising Resources
- Managing Demand
- Maximising Enablers
- Growth & Investment Strategy

Each of the themes and ideas put forward for review (contained

with the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy) would have a CLT or Wider CLT sponsor who would manage the delivery of the Strategic Business Reviews.

These Strategic Business Reviews would include:

**Maximising Income:** Industrial Portfolio; Fees & Charges; Commercial Waste; Income Recovery; Commercial Activity, Investment & New Income.

**Maximising Resources:** Third Party Expenditure – Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management; Assets and Property; Use of External Grants.

**Managing Demand:** Reducing Demand by Changing Behaviours; Prevention & Early Intervention Services.

**Maximising Enablers:** Customer Experience; Work Place Transformation; Using Data to Deliver Better Services.

**Growth & Investment Strategy:** Growth Strategy; Low Carbon.

These areas would identify opportunities and impact on both revenue streams and expenditure.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that this was a challenging area to address and said he was supportive of the work being undertaken. The assumptions needed to be managed and he looked forward to October when the document would contain greater detail and data.

The Leader of the Labour Group continued by stating that in terms of responsibility for openness and transparency, the Executive Members should be named and aligned to the areas for review within the document. It was noted that the Wales Audit Office had indicated some time ago that this would be the correct approach.

A Member said that if the Council procured its services/supplies locally this would help the local economy. The Chief Officer Commercial advised that it was very important to think local when procuring. The Council had over 2,000 suppliers on the list of procured services and there was a need to recognised local



suppliers and also ensure that value for money was being obtained from the larger contractors. Therefore, an analysis of the purchases that were being made, including local expenditure needed to be undertaken.

The Leader of the Council welcomed both reports and emphasised that these were *draft reports* and Members would have a further opportunity to consider this information again in October 2019.

The Leader continued by referring to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and advised that the previous MTFS had been introduced during December 2014 and it was, therefore, timely that this document was refreshed and updated. The assumptions were reasonable but subject to change depending on the financial settlements received.

Bridging the Gap Programme was an actual progression from the service reviews that had been undertaken the previous year. Whilst these service reviews had divided opinion they had identified £1.6m of savings by October 2018 - this would now be the task of Bridging the Gap. The service reviews were the precursor and each department would still have to continue to internally identify on-going savings (for areas that were not classed as 'strategic'). The Bridging the Gap Programme would create the conditions for the organisation to become more commercially minded and this was key.

The Leader of the Council concluded by stating that he looked forward to October when the document would be populated in greater detail.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

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

- (i) the assumptions within the Draft MTFS be approved;
- (ii) the forecast funding gap for the period of the Draft MTFS be noted; and
- (iii) the proposed approach to address the financial

	<p>challenges and 'Bridging the Gap Programme be approved.</p> <p>Councillors M. Holland and C. Meredith left the meeting at this juncture.</p>	
<p>44.</p>	<p><b><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2018/2019</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Social Services spoke to the report and advised that the safeguarding of children, families and vulnerable adults remained a priority moving forward for the directorate. Children's safeguarding was a theme of Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection of Looked After Children at the end of the 2018/19 financial year. The CIW published its inspection plan for Blaenau Gwent in June 2018 and the directorate had produced an action plan against these recommendations and was working through the areas for development. It was noted that a number of these actions had now been completed.</p> <p>The Corporate Director continued by advising that the 3 year Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy had been in place for 18 months and was supported by a clear action plan. The Supporting Change Team became operational in January 2018 and there was some evidence of green shoots emerging from the action taken so far – there had been a steady reduction in the number of Looked After Children during the year and the Supporting Change Team had been able to achieve some savings and cost avoidance as a result of their interventions.</p> <p>However, the sustained increase in the number of Looked After Children had had a detrimental effect on the budget situation with Children's Services overspending by £765,000 in 2017/18. The directorate had received an additional £530,000 added to the budget to cover the pressure in 2018/19 and although considerable work had been undertaken to try and mitigate the pressure, the increases had resulted in an overspend in the Looked After Children budget of £961,000 as at the end March 2019.</p>	

Councillor M. Holland returned to the meeting at this juncture.

In Adult Services there had been an underspend of £1m due to the prevention and early intervention approach and due to the work of the Information, Assistance and Advice Service resulting in an overall underspend for the directorate of £220,000.

Councillor C. Meredith returned to the meeting at this juncture.

The Corporate Director concluded by advising that Integrated Care Fund monies from Welsh Government which was used to reduce the numbers of children entering care would continue until 2020/2021. However, after this point the monies could potentially cease and this would place the directorate and its progress in a difficult position moving forward. It was noted that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2019 had endorsed Option 1 of the report.

**Fostering Service** – a Member referred to Page 21 of the report i.e. the fostering service should establish a procedure for monitoring the school attendance, progress and educational attainment of children placed with foster carers. He pointed out that in his role as a school governor he participated in exclusion panel meetings and said that looked after children were not supported at these types of meetings and this was not appropriate under the Well-Being of the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

He, therefore, requested that appropriate support arrangements be established for the looked after children, carers and families known to social services in all aspects of a child's educational needs.

The Leader of the Labour Group commended the work undertaken by the Corporate Director and his directorate and said that this progress was a fantastic achievement during difficult times.

The Leader of the Council supported the amendment made with regard to the attainment of children and endorsed the comments of the Leader of the Labour Group and said that the department continued to do good work. He also commended the work of the

	<p>Executive Member – Social Services and Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee who had also made significant political contributions to the directorate.</p> <p>A Member, thereupon, proposed that Option 2 be endorsed with the following amendment:-</p> <p><b>That appropriate support arrangements be established for the looked after children, carers and families known to social services in all aspects of a child’s educational needs.</b></p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that Option 2 be endorsed, and the report be accepted with the following amendment:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriate support arrangements be established for the looked after children, carers and families known to social services in all aspects of a child’s educational needs.</li> <li>- The report be submitted to the Care Inspectorate Wales.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>45.</b></p>	<p><b><u>REVISED CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES</u></b></p> <p>The report of the Head of Organisational Development was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council proposed that Option 1 be endorsed. It was noted that Corporate Leadership Team, Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and the Trade Unions had supported the revised Code of Conduct for Employees.</p> <p><b>Political Neutrality:</b> a Member asked how political neutrality would be monitored, audited and policed to ensure that an officer’s political neutrality was maintained.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial explained that when appointed every officer was required to sign a contract of employment and political neutrality would be included within this contract if it applied to their roles. If these restrictions were not complied with an officer would be breaching the terms of their contract.</p>	

	<p>The Member continued by pointing out that political neutrality would not apply to all posts and sought clarification as to who would 'audit the auditor'. The Chief Officer Commercial advised that the disciplinary process would be activated if a concern was raised and these would be addressed as either a conduct or capability issue.</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 reviewed Code of Conduct for Employees be endorsed for implementation.</p>	
<p>46.</p>	<p><b><u>CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT (CPE): PARKING ENFORCEMENT POLICY</u></b></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>Councillor S. Thomas left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Executive Member – Environment spoke briefly to the report and explained that Gwent Police had historically undertaken enforcement of contraventions of formal Traffic Regulation Orders such as parking restrictions. However, in line with all other Welsh Police Authorities, Gwent Police gave notice early in 2018 to Blaenau Gwent and four other Gwent authorities the they would cease to undertake such enforcement after July 2019.</p> <p>A formal application was made to Welsh Government for the acquisition of Civil Parking Enforcement powers in Blaenau Gwent. The Welsh Government made the Designation Order on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 and this came into force on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019, providing the Council with Civil Parking Enforcement powers. The Civil Parking Enforcement scheme therefore, had commenced in Blaenau Gwent on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2019.</p> <p>To assist scheme promotion and to inform local residents, it was proposed to undertake an initial period of two weeks where warning notices would be provided, highlighting impending enforcement. This had been advised as good practice by</p>	

neighbouring Councils who already undertook Civil Parking Enforcement.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services advised that the Council was attempting initially to introduce CPE through an education process in the first instance by issuing offenders with warning notices.

As from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2019 whilst the main focus of CPE would be around town centres and schools, however, resources would be able to be deployed anywhere to deal with traffic contraventions or to address health and safety issues. It was noted that if traffic regulations were being contravened or health and safety was being put at risk, people would run the risk of being issued with a penalty charge notice.

The Corporate Director advised that this education phase may continue for a little longer (until early August) to ensure officers became conversant with the implementation process and uniformed Enforcement Officers would be shortly be seen patrolling areas in the County Borough.

Councillor S. Thomas returned to the meeting at this juncture.

**Abandoned Vehicles** – a Member referred to Paragraph 2.13 of the report which referred to abandoned vehicles and pointed out that the Council did not have a policy to deal with abandoned vehicles on Council land and said that this needed to be addressed.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services advised that abandoned vehicles on Council owned land was different to highway parking matters. It was noted that the issue of abandoned vehicles would be dealt with as a separate matter. A Member pointed that the Environmental Health Section dealt with abandoned vehicles.

**Prohibition of Waiting Orders/Town Centres** – a Member said that consultation needed to take place with local ward Members to discuss the areas where orders need to be enforced and where orders could be removed. There were over 1700 traffic orders within the County Borough and it was an extremely lengthy process to remove a prohibition of waiting order.

However, the Member continued by stating that it had been brought to her attention that the previous week prohibition of waiting orders had been removed in the vicinity of the roundabout by the Civic Centre and within Blaina town centre and requested an explanation for this action.

Another Member said that he was also aware of on-going disputes that were taking place regarding traffic orders in the County Borough and said he believed that there should be an amnesty until disputes these were resolved.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services advised that there were a considerable number of traffic orders in the County Borough and work had been undertaken to ensure that all the existing traffic regulation orders were current and correct. Any traffic orders that did not form part of the current regulations had, therefore, been removed. A separate exercise would be undertaken to liaise with Members regarding parking restrictions within particular wards.

The Executive Member - Environment advised that correspondence regarding traffic orders within town centres had been sent to Members whose wards included town centres but in total only two responses had been received. These responses had been built into the proposals that were submitted to Welsh Government on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2019. Therefore, any removal of traffic orders had occurred following this consultation exercise.

Another Member requested that traffic orders within town centres be reviewed as a priority as shop owners were concerned. He also said that he was pleased that schools were being treated as a priority moving forward.

The Leader of the Council agreed regarding the comment made regarding schools. However, he supported the Executive Member in terms of town centres - correspondence had been sent to all Members whose wards included a town centre for observations regarding traffic orders within town centres.

**Schools** – a Member referred to the number of schools in the County Borough and the amount of parking problems that occurred around these establishments and asked the Executive Member whether he thought that two parking officers would be

	<p>sufficient to control the situation.</p> <p>The Executive Member – Environment confirmed that two officers would initially be employed, however, this would be reviewed within the first 6 months of Civil Parking Enforcement.</p> <p>Upon a vote being undertaken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Civil Parking Enforcement: Parking Enforcement Policy for Blaenau Gwent be approved.</p>	
<p>47.</p>	<p>Item Numbers 47 &amp; 48 were considered simultaneously.</p> <p><b><u>STATEMENT OF PAYMENTS MADE TO ELECTED MEMBERS 2018/2019</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>The Chair of the Democratic Services presented the report and advised that Option 1 had been endorsed by the Democratic Services Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2019.</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 Statement of Payments Made to Members during 2018/2019 be published in compliance with relevant legislation.</p>	
<p>48.</p>	<p><b><u>SCHEDULE OF MEMBERS REMUNERATION 2019/2020</u></b></p> <p>The report of the Head of Organisational Development was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee in presenting the report reminded Members that where a Member made use of their private vehicle for approved duty purposes, the vehicle must be insured for business use and Members had a duty to inform their insurance company.</p>	



	<p>It was noted that the Democratic Services Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2019 endorsed Option 1.</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 Schedule of Members Remuneration 2019/2020 be published.</p>	
<p><b>49.</b></p>	<p><b><u>MEMBERSHIPS REPORT</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to:-</p> <p><b><u>Getting to Know Our Schools Sub Group (formerly Scrutiny Schools Wellbeing Group)</u></b></p> <p>RESOLVED that the representatives on the group be amended to:-</p> <p>Chair and Vice-Chair of Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee and Councillors M. Cook, L. Elias, J. Holt, C. Meredith, D. Bevan, J. C. Morgan, T. Smith.</p> <p>*Both the Chair and Vice-Chair to endeavour to be at each meeting.</p> <p>**All Members of the Sub-Group to be invited to all meetings.</p> <p>Since the preparation of the report, the following membership was reported:-</p> <p><b><u>PATROL Adjudication Joint Committee</u></b></p> <p>RESOLVED that the following appointments be made:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chair of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>- <b>Substitute:</b> Vice-Chair of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee</li> </ul>	

**50. TIME OF FUTURE COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Consideration was given to the time of future Council meetings.

Following a discussion and upon a vote being taken, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that future Council meetings commence at 10.00 a.m.

**51. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFERS – SELECTION OF APPROVED USERS**

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.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Executive Member – Environment spoke briefly to the report and highlighted points contained therein.

The Leader of the Labour Group commenced by expressing his appreciation to the Executive Member for outlining the report. He continued by referring to the evaluation matrix that had been applied as part of the selection process of approved users and said that he was in receipt of correspondence from one particular club expressing concern regarding the outcome of the selection process and gave details thereof.

The Leader of the Labour Group concluded by requesting that the report be deferred in order that a review of the evaluation matrix could take place and to provide the clubs with the opportunity to resubmit their applications.

The Leader of the Council as a note of caution pointed out that if the matrix was modified this could change the scoring of all other organisations.

Another Member also requested that the report be deferred and discuss with groups as clubs had expressed concern that the timeframes given by the Council to submit their application.

The Executive Member – Environment confirmed that prior to the evaluation exercise being undertaken, the matrix had been sent out to clubs for their approval.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that the matrix had been evaluated by officers only. No feedback had been provided to clubs regarding the selection of approved users at this stage. He added that all clubs had received adequate time to provide the required information to the Council.

The Corporate Director continued by stating that Community Asset Transfer had been discussed for a considerable amount of time. The matrix was a forward looking assessment not an historical assessment and expressed his concern regarding the deferment of a decision in respect of one aspect of the report.

The Leader of the Council said that the CAT process had commenced in August 2017 and he had met with several clubs as part of that process. He expressed his concern regarding any amendments made to the matrix and proposed that Option 1 be approved with an addendum that all clubs would have the ability to appeal. This course of action would ensure equity to all organisations.

A lengthy discussion ensued when another Member said that the local Ward Members should have been consulted as part of the process because these Members had considerable knowledge of the local history of the areas.

In reply to a question, the Executive Member confirmed that if Option 1 was approved, the clubs would be notified of the outcome of the process immediately. He, thereupon, proposed that Option 1 be endorsed with the amendment that all clubs would have the right to appeal. Clubs would be notified of the timescales for appeal within correspondence.

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 be endorsed, namely that:-

The Council (and in particular whilst acting as Charitable Trustees for Grounds 1 & 3) approved the outcome of the selection process detailed at paragraphs 2.6 – 2.14 of the report and the Community Asset Transfers of the grounds detail in paragraph 1.2 to the successful applicants subject to:

- a. In respect of grounds 1, 2 & 3, three month licences be granted as detailed at paragraph 2.2 to permit the operation of the grounds by the successful organisations.

In respect of grounds 1 & 3, where the Council was acting as Charitable Trustees:

- b. The proposed leasehold disposals be advertised in line with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 as detailed in paragraph 5.3.
- c. The appropriate advice be taken from an RICS qualified surveyor on the method and terms of the leasehold transfer.

In respect of ground 2 and in line with the Council's Disposal Strategy powers be delegated to the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services to deal with a longer term lease.

	<p>A more detailed report dealing with the outcome of b &amp; c would be presented to the Council as Charitable Trustees for its consideration.</p> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED that all clubs be given the right to appeal.</p>	
<p>52.</p>	<p>Item Numbers 52 – 54 were considered simultaneously.</p> <p><b><u>APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE – JNC OFFICERS</u></b></p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources – Rhian Hayden declared an interest in this item and left the meeting whilst it was under consideration.</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 &amp; 13 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Rhian Hayden be appointed permanently to the position of Chief Officer Resources with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2019.</li> </ul>	

**53. 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 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

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

**54. APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE – 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 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2019.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

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

	<p>➤ the post of Service Manager Inclusion be offered to Mr. Gavin Metheringham.</p>	
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