

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 23RD NOVEMBER, 2023</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR C. SMITH (PRESIDING MEMBER, CHAIRING)

Councillors P. Baldwin
S. Behr
D. Bevan
M. Cross
H. Cunningham
D. Davies
G. A. Davies
S. Edmunds
J. Gardner
W. Hodgins
G. Humphreys
E. Jones
R. Leadbeater
J. C. Morgan
J. P. Morgan
L. Parsons
D. Rowberry
T. Smith
G. Thomas
J. Thomas
S. Thomas
H. Trollope
D. Wilkshire
L. Winnett
D. Woods

AND: Interim Chief Executive
 Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
 Interim Corporate Director of Social Services
 Interim Corporate Director of Education
 Chief Officer Commercial & Customer
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships
 Service Manager – Accountancy
 Service Manager – Policy and Partnerships
 Communications & Marketing Manager
 Service Manager - Registration, Elections & Corporate Complaints
 Policy Officer

WITH: Phil Diamond – Head of Regional Partnership Team, Torfaen CBC
 Natasha Harris - Service Manager, Partnerships and Development, Torfaen CBC

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
2.	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Chaplin, M. Day, J. Hill, J. Holt, J. Morgan, J.P., J. Wilkins, and the Chief Officer Resources.</p>	
3.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interest was reported:</p>	

Item No. 22: Council Motion – Animal Welfare

- Councillor W. Hodgins

Upon the advice of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance/Monitoring Officer, the Member remained in the meeting whilst the item of business was considered but took no part in the discussion.

4.

PRESIDING MEMBER’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Condolences

Condolences were expressed to:

- Councillor Lisa Winnett on the sad passing of her father.
- Councillor Malcolm Cross on the sad passing of his sister.

Members and officers paid their respects with one minute’s silence.

Condolence letters had been sent to the families.

Councillor Carl Bainton – Resignation

The Leader of the Council made the following statement:

It was with regret that he had to announce the resignation of Carl Bainton who had served the Ebbw Vale South Ward since being elected in May 2022. This situation had developed because the Council at the request of Welsh Government, had been asked to transfer Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) staff employed on the Communities for Work Plus Programme into the Council in order to align with the model adopted by the other 21 local authorities across Wales. As a result, Carl had transferred under TUPE regulations into the Council and had, therefore, had to resign as a Member of the

Council. This was a unique situation, however, the provisions of the Local Government and Elections Act 2021 applied and regrettably Carl was unable to remain both a Councillor and employee. Carl had sought advice and clarity throughout the TUPE transfer process and although an unprecedented situation, confirmation had substantiated that the Act applied in this situation.

During his tenure Carl had demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the betterment of the community and citizens of Blaenau Gwent by working tirelessly to address the needs and concerns of residents. His efforts in areas such as his role of Cost of Living Champion had left a lasting impact, so much so, that the Leader had recently discussed making him Chair of the Cost of Living Cross Party Working Group, such was his dedication and commitment to the work.

The Leader concluded by stating that all were grateful for Carl's outstanding service and dedication and wished him all the best for the future. Inevitably this resignation would trigger a by-election in the Ebbw Vale South Ward in the New Year.

The Leader then proceeded to read out a letter received from Carl:

“Dear fellow elected members,

Many would know when I started my term of office as a Councillor for Blaenau Gwent that I was employed by GAVO in the Communities for Work Plus Team. At the request of Welsh Government, GAVO recently transferred the team including myself to the Council under TUPE regulations. It was initially believed in these unique circumstances that I may be able to undertake a dual role. Unfortunately, it had since been clarified that the legislation does not permit me to continue in both roles. Therefore, I have no alternative but other than to disqualify myself from being a Councillor with immediate effect.

At this juncture, I would like to thank all Councillors for their comradery and support shown during my tenure and to hardworking staff of the Council whose efforts sometimes goes unnoticed and a massive sincere thanks to all my constituents in Ebbw Vale South who had supported me to the hilt during both good and challenging times. I hope that they are happy with my efforts as a first time Councillor during the past 18 months.

Also, it would be remiss of me not to mention and recognise the huge contribution of the Leader, Deputy Leader and Labour Group who mentored, educated and supported me as a first time councillor, helping me through at first a complex bureaucracy and later having faith in me to become the Cost of Living Champion for the Council.

My time as a councillor has been immensely rewarding and it has been an honour to serve the community and it is with great sadness that I find myself in this position but will sign off by saying 'Hasta las vista' and see you at the next election when my circumstances may be different. Best wishes and good luck to you all. Carl."

Members reiterated that these were unprecedented circumstances and that it had been a pleasure working with Carl and he would be sorely missed. All Members expressed their best wishes to Carl for the future and to him in his current role as a Blaenau Gwent officer.

5. – DECISION BOOK – MARCH – NOVEMBER 2023
19.

The Decision Book for the period March – November 2023 was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the decisions be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.

<p>20.</p>	<p><u>MEMBERS QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by Members.</p>	
<p>21.</p>	<p><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by members of the public.</p>	
<p>22.</p>	<p><u>COUNCIL MOTION – ANIMAL WELFARE</u></p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins declared an interest in this item and remained in the meeting whilst it was considered but took no part in the discussion.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the Motion submitted regarding Animal Welfare.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Motion be supported and the Council agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Ban outright the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council land. (ii) Write to Welsh Government urging an outright ban on giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land in Wales. 	
<p>23.</p>	<p><u>SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE</u></p> <p>Councillor Jules Gardner joined the meeting at this juncture.</p>	

	<p>Members considered the report of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance.</p> <p>Following a lengthy debate, a Member proposed that Option 1 i.e., to retain the current First Past The Post voting for local elections be endorsed. This proposal was seconded.</p> <p>Another Member proposed that Option 2 i.e., to carry out a consultation exercise before bringing a report back to Council to consider changing the voting system which, would require a two thirds majority of Council before the voting system could be changed, be endorsed. This proposal was also seconded.</p> <p>A recorded vote was, thereupon, requested for the public record.</p> <p>In Favour of Option 1 – Councillors D. Bevan, M. Cross, D. Davies, W. Hodgins, G. Humphreys, J. C. Morgan, J. P. Morgan, L. Parsons, D. Rowberry, C. Smith, T. Smith, G. Thomas, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, L. Winnett, D. Woods.</p> <p>In Favour of Option 2 – Councillors P. Baldwin, S. Behr, H. Cunningham, G. A. Davies, S. Edmunds, J. Gardner, R. Leadbeater, E. Jones, J. Thomas.</p> <p>The vote on Option 1 was, therefore, <u>carried</u>.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the current First Past The Post voting system for local elections be retained.</p>	
<p>24.</p>	<p><u>PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance/Monitoring Officer.</p>	

	<p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the suggested amendment below be approved and incorporated into the existing Constitution:</p> <p>11.10.3 Appointment of Chief Executive</p> <p>“The Full Council will interview and appoint the Chief Executive. A shortlisting exercise will first be undertaken by a Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council, and the Committee or Sub-Committee must include at least one Member of the Cabinet. There will then be a suitable candidate assessment process to determine candidates to be interviewed by Full Council.”</p>	
<p>25.</p>	<p><u>COMMITTING TO THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT</u></p> <p>The report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Council commits to the Armed Forces Covenant which would be signed by Councillor Derrick Bevan, Armed Forces Champion.</p>	
<p>26.</p>	<p><u>GWENT REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD (RPB) AREA PLAN AND RPB ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Head of the Regional Partnership Board.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the joint regional commitments as outlined in the Area Plan and the</p>	

	<p>Regional Partnership Board Annual Report including progress made against the objects be approved.</p>	
<p>27.</p>	<p><u>MEMBERSHIPS REPORT</u></p> <p><u>Advisory Panel for Local Authority Governors</u></p> <p>The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 15th November, 2023 to appoint in principle:</p> <p>Beaufort Hill Primary School – Belinda Tolman Georgetown Primary School – Jacqueline Thomas Bryn Bach Primary School – Nyree Davies-Jones</p> <p>It was, thereupon, unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.</p> <p><u>GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE LAY MEMBER APPOINTMENT</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that Mrs Cheryl Hucker be appointed as a Lay Member on the Governance & Audit Committee.</p> <p><u>ETHICS & STANDARDS COMMITTEE TOWN COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENT</u></p> <p>The following appointment was verbally reported:</p> <p>RESOLVED that the appointment of Councillor Joshua Rawcliffe from Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Councillor to the Town Councillor vacancy on the Ethics & Standards Committee be noted.</p>	

