

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 26TH NOVEMBER, 2020</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

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

Councillors P. Baldwin
D. Bevan
J. Collins
M. Cook
M. Cross
N. Daniels
D. Davies
G. A. Davies
G. L. Davies
M. Day
P. Edwards
L. Elias
D. Hancock
K. Hayden
S. Healy
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
J. Mason
H. McCarthy, B.A. (Hons)
C. Meredith
J. Millard
J. C. Morgan
J. P. Morgan
L. Parsons
G. Paulsen
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson

T. Smith
 B. Summers
 G. Thomas
 S. Thomas
 H. Trollope
 J. Wilkins
 D. Wilkshire
 B. Willis
 L. Winnett

AND: Managing Director
 Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services
 Corporate Director of Education
 Chief Officer Resources
 Chief Officer Commercial
 Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
 Head of Governance and Partnerships
 Head of Children’s Services
 Communications, Marketing & Customer Access Manager

ALSO: Matt Lewis, Chief Operating Officer – Shared Resource Service (SRS)

<u>No.</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 G. Collier, T. Sharrem and the Corporate Director of Social Services.</p>	

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

The following declarations of interest were reported:

Item No. 21 – Data Centre Business Case

Councillor W. Hodgins

Item No. 30 – Appointments Committee JNC Officer

Corporate Director of Education

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements had been received.

5 – MINUTE BOOK – MARCH – OCTOBER 2020

16.

The Minute Book for the period March – October 2020 was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

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

17. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

The following question was received from Councillor H. Trollope and was responded to by the Leader of the Council:

Question:

Councillor Trollope commenced by stating that this was not a 'political' question. He was posing this question because of the position he had recently found himself in losing a very good friend and also because the pandemic had affected every person in Blaenau Gwent.

"Given that Blaenau Gwent had, sadly, had such a high incidence of Covid-19, there was some public concern about the views of

Councillor Mark Holland expressed on social media. The question was posed why, after Councillor Holland had left the Independent Group of his own accord, you asked Councillor Holland to reconsider and return to the Independent Group? This was reported in the local press.

Please explain whether, in hindsight, you now think your leadership should have been more proactive in expelling him yourself; and whether you consider that Councillor Holland was in breach of the code of conduct?

Response:

The Leader commenced by stating that he was mindful of Councillor Trollope's unfortunate personal circumstances and did not consider this as a political question. He continued by stating that he had considered this matter very carefully and seriously and when it had first been brought to his attention his immediate course of action was to have a conversation with both the Monitoring Officer and the Managing Director regarding Councillor Holland's comments particularly, in relation to any potential conflict in terms of the code of conduct and said that if those conversations had left any major doubt in his mind, his approach and decisions would have been much different as he had clearly demonstrated in the past and particularly in 2017.

It was in the light of those conversations he had written to Councillor Holland and asked him to reflect and would have possibly have hoped to have had a conversation with him on a one to one basis. To contextualise the word 'reflect' - asking an individual to reflect was a form of consistency he had tended to adopt in matters such as this as indeed other colleagues who had indicated to leave the Independent Group could testify. He would always respect an individual's choice because for independent councillors there was no written contract or obligation but whatever the circumstances he would always value a conversation with any individual because this was the style he adopted.

However, in this instance and Councillor Holland's subsequent comments and the very clear reasons he had provided in writing to the Leader for leaving, created a position whereby he could not and probably would not want to be re-admitted to the Independent Group.

With regard to the comments regarding hindsight and being proactive in relation to his actions, mindful of the content of his response so far together with leadership style that he had chosen to adopt, the Leader said that he had dealt with the situation as he considered then and still considered this appropriate. With regard to any breach of the conduct of conduct, it was a matter for the Standards Committee and more significantly the Ombudsman who ultimately determined any breaches. To conclude, the Leader said that at this point in time he was content with the course of action he had taken.

Supplementary Question:

“Reference was made to Leader’s portfolio as part of the Cardiff Region City Deal and he was asked what colleagues in Cardiff thought of Blaenau Gwent and was the Council’s reputation being put in jeopardy as the Leader led on this particular portfolio?”

Response:

The Leader commenced by clarifying that his portfolio as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal did not relate to 5G, he shared another portfolio responsibility with the Leader of Merthyr C.B.C. He advised that this issue had not surfaced in the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal or the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) (whilst mindful of not being disrespectful towards the anguish to the Councillor and family for what they had recently gone through) advised colleagues were more concerned about concentrating and focussing resources to manage the current crisis.

He continued by stating that no member of the public had approached him with any criticism or condemnation of Councillor Holland or had asked any questions about why he had written to the Councillor and asked him come back to Group – no-one had made an issue of it. Presently, everyone was trying to concentrate on what had to be done and working towards a vaccine.

18. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted by members of the public.

19. AUTHORISED ABSENCE – COUNCILLOR GARTH COLLIER

The Leader advised that as Members were aware, Councillor Collier had been taken ill earlier in the year and did not feel that currently he was in a position to return to normal Council duties although his health was slowly improving and he was anticipating returning to duties fairly shortly. As the 6-month attendance rule for Councillor Collier would lapse in January and this was the last formal Council meeting prior to that period, he proposed that an authorised absence be granted to cover any further absence beyond January 2021.

The Leader of the Labour Group endorsed the comments made and gave his total support for this action and wished Councillor Collier the very best in his recovery.

The Leader thanked the Leader of the Labour Group for his comments and gave an assurance that when he spoke to Councillor Collier he relayed that the thoughts and best wishes of the Council (across the whole political spectrum) and he would continue to do so.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that Councillor Garth Collier be granted approved absence for a further 6-month period effective from January 2021.

20. ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE 2019/2020

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Performance and Democratic.

The Head of Governance and Partnerships in presenting the Assessment of Performance explained that it fulfilled the statutory obligations placed on the Council as part of the requirements of the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009 and fulfilled some of the Well-being Objectives which were required as part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. retrospective report covering the period 2019/2020 also included an assessment of the work undertaken as part of the response to the global pandemic, Covid-19.

The officer continued by advising that the Council had a requirement to measure a number of national performance indicators known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) which reflect those aspects of local authority work, which were considered to be important in terms of public accountability. All Council's in Wales were required to submit their performance against the PAMs. However, for the year 2019/20 a number of these indicators had not been collected nationally owing to the global pandemic, Covid-19. Where information was available this had been included within the Assessment of Performance at appendix 1.

The Head of Governance and Partnerships concluded by outlining the format of the document and advised that the document was subject to external audit.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Council's Assessment of Performance which provided a retrospective account of the 2019/20 year and fulfilled all required statutory legislative requirements, be endorsed.

21. DATA CENTRE BUSINESS CASE

Councillor W. Hodgins declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst it was discussed.

Members considered the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

The Chief Officer Resources spoke in detail to the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein. The purpose of the report was to:

- i. Present the Business Case for the relocation of the SRS Data Centre at Blaenavon to Next Generation Data (NGD) in Newport.
- ii. Agree the transfer of Blaenau Gwent's Data (currently housed at the Computer Room in the Civic Centre and the Data Centre at Blaenavon) to NGD.
- iii. Agree the Blaenau Gwent element of the capital and revenue investment required to progress the project.

The Chief Officer Resources explained that the physical data centre at Blaenavon was established to house the IT servers required to host the software systems for the original partners of the SRS and it also currently housed the NHS Wales Informatics Service, however, this contact would shortly be coming to an end. However, upon Blaenau Gwent and Newport joining the SRS, the business cases for both Blaenau Gwent and Newport had included an agreement that all servers would be transferred to the data centre at Blaenavon but to date there had been limited progress made.

The physical data centre at Blaenavon had been an asset for the SRS and partners for the last 10 years but without investment the data centre was assessed as a very high risk for all SRS partners as a result of environmental factors. It was noted that £2.6m investment was required over the next 4-year period. In addition, the computer room at the Civic Centre was not built to data centre standards and was also considered a very high risk due to building concerns and age of the equipment (coming to the end of its useful life) and would require investment to improve the resilience of the provision into the future. Furthermore, the Council was currently considering the future of the Civic Centre which may result in alternative location(s) needing to be considered to house the IT infrastructure supporting all Blaenau Gwent services.

In July 2020 the SRS Strategic Board agreed an SRS Strategy to 2026 with a shared aspiration towards a 'cloud' based provision away from an on premise data centre and as a consequence of this it was expected that there would be a decreasing need but an increasing cost for an on premise data centre provision, therefore, future alternative provision had been explored.

The Chief Officer Resources, thereupon, gave details of the 4 options outlined in the business case together with the revenue/capital and decommissioning costs and funding arrangements attributed thereto. The 4 options were:

- Option 1 – Business as Usual
- Option 2 – Do Minimum
- Option 3 – Reduce to a Single Hall in Blaenavon
- Option 4 (Preferred Option) – Alternative Provision

Paragraph 5.1.9 (table 1) summarised the financial implications of each of the options. The SRS Strategic Board and Finance and

Governance Board had considered the business case and recommended Option 4 because the other options were considered to be too high a cost. Both options 3 and 4 would result in reduced costs, however the capital investment required for option 4 was significantly lower.

For Blaenau Gwent, this would result in a slight increase for Option 4 in revenue costs of £11,000 for the first few years - this was based on the current assessment of rack space but as services moved to the 'cloud' it was expected that this cost would reduce over time. In addition, Option 4 would require an initial capital investment of £361,000 compared to £508,000 for Option 3.

It was noted that the Council had agreed £240,000 capital funding allocation in October 2019 for electrical and IT works at the Civic Centre and there was currently £209,000 remaining within that allocation. It was, therefore, proposed that this allocation be repurposed and supplemented by £152,000 from capital contingency to fund the initial investment requirements. It was also proposed in order to ensure the sustainability of the core infrastructure, that £61,000 be built into the capital programme moving forward to allow for necessary equipment replacement.

The views of Members were, thereupon, sought regarding the business case.

The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the business case had been approved by the other SRS partners.

In reply to a question, the Chief Officer Resources advised that she was unsure with regard to the future plans of Gwent Police and stated that the business case had been developed, treating SRS partners and Gwent Police separately. The proposed move to NGD would have no impact on future costs for Blaenau Gwent and other partners as a result of any change to operations by Gwent Police because if agreed and the move to NGD took place, the authority would only pay for servers that would actually be used. However, this would be a different situation if the infrastructure remained at the Data Hall in Blaenavon and Gwent Police relocated because other partners would have to fund an additional proportion of the fixed operating costs.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 4 – Alternate Provision be endorsed, namely the Data Centre Move to NGD Newport (including the move of existing services from the Civic Centre) and associated investment required (capital & revenue).

22. PROPOSED COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

Consideration was given to the report detailing the Council Forward Work Programme for 2020/2021.

The Leader of the Labour referred to the Council Forward Work Programme and stated that a report in respect of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal would be useful being included in the Forward Work Programme particularly, as a point was now being reached where decisions were being made. He also referred to the previous discussion in respect of the Members Question and pointed out a report issued by CCRCD in June 2020 did indicate that the Leader had been appointed the lead Member for Technology and 5G.

The Leader of the Council referred to the Leader of the Labour Group's final point and confirmed that this had now been corrected by CCRCD. He added that a report regarding CCRCD was due to be presented to the next scheduled meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and would subsequently be considered by Executive and Full Council.

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 for 2020/2021 be agreed.

23. STANDARDS COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT

The report of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer) was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and

- Mrs. Sarah Rosser be appointed as a member of the Standards Committee, effective from the date of Council approval (26th November, 2020).
- The term of office would initially be for 6 years; however, the relevant Regulations enable members to sit for a further consecutive term of up to 4 years. A report would be brought before Council prior to the end of the initial term, in order for the re-appointment to be considered.
- Ms. Sarah Manuel be approved as a reserve appointee should a vacancy become available within 12 months.

24. MEMBERSHIPS REPORT

Consideration was given to:

- (a) **Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council**
- to appoint a replacement representative.

The Leader advised that he had received no nominations for this position and requested that expressions of interest be submitted from the Labour Group and Minority Independent Group, if any Member was interested in taking up this vacant position.

(b) **PROPORTIONALITY CHANGES**

Due to changes being made to proportionality to **9:5:1** on the Committees below, it was RESOLVED that the following be appointed:

CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1

1. Chair - Councillor S Healy
2. Vice Chair - Councillor M. Cook
3. Councillors P. Baldwin

- | | |
|-----|--------------|
| 4. | G. Collier |
| 5. | M. Cross |
| 6. | G. A. Davies |
| 7. | L. Elias |
| 8. | J. Hill |
| 9. | H. McCarthy |
| 10. | C. Meredith |
| 11. | J. P. Morgan |
| 12. | L. Parsons |
| 13. | G. Paulsen |
| 14. | S. Thomas |
| 15. | T. Smith |

REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1

- | | | |
|----|--------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Chair - | Councillor J. Hill |
| 2. | Vice Chair - | Councillor G. A. Davies |
| 3. | Councillors | M. Cook |
| 4. | | M. Cross |
| 5. | | G. L. Davies |
| 6. | | P. Edwards |
| 7. | | K. Hayden |
| 8. | | S. Healy |

- | | |
|-----|--------------|
| 9. | W. Hodgins |
| 10. | H. McCarthy |
| 11. | J. C. Morgan |
| 12. | J. P. Morgan |
| 13. | L. Parsons |
| 14. | K. Rowson |
| 15. | B. Willis |

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|------------------------|
| 1. | Chair - | Councillor M. Moore |
| 2. | Vice Chair - | Councillor C. Meredith |
| 3. | Councillors | P. Baldwin |
| 4. | | M. Cook |
| 5. | | M. Cross |
| 6. | | M. Day |
| 7. | | P. Edwards |
| 8. | | S. Healy |
| 9. | | W. Hodgins |
| 10. | | J. Holt |
| 11. | | J. C. Morgan |
| 12. | | G. Paulsen |
| 13. | | T. Sharrem |

14. B. Summers

15. L. Winnett

**EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1**

1. Chair - Councillor H. Trollope

2. Vice Chair - Councillor J. Holt

3. Councillors D. Bevan

4. G. Collier

5. M. Cook

6. M. Day

7. L. Elias

8. J. Hill

9. C. Meredith

10. J. C. Morgan

11. J. P. Morgan

12. L. Parsons

13. T. Smith

14. B. Summers

15. D. Wilkshire

** Would also include 2 Members of religious bodies and between 2-5 parent governors with voting rights only when dealing with education matters.*

1. Mr. T. Baxter Diocesan Education Body
(R.C. Church)

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 2. | Mr. A. Williams | (Church in Wales) |
| 3. | Vacant | Youth Forum Representative |

SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Chair - | Councillor S. Thomas |
| 2. | Vice Chair - | Councillor K. Rowson |
| 3. | Councillors | D. Bevan |
| 4. | | G. Collier |
| 5. | | G. A. Davies |
| 6. | | G. L. Davies |
| 7. | | P. Edwards |
| 8. | | K. Hayden |
| 9. | | W. Hodgins |
| 10. | | J. Holt |
| 11. | | M. Moore |
| 12. | | G. Paulsen |
| 13. | | T. Sharrem |
| 14. | | T. Smith |
| 15. | | B. Summers |

PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 MEMBERS - PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1 (to include
Corporate Overview Members & Chairs of Scrutiny
Committees)

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|--|
| 1. | Chair - | <u>Chair - Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor S. Healy |
| 2. | Vice Chair - | <u>Vice Chair - Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor M. Cook |
| 3. | | <u>Chair - Social Services Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor S. Thomas |
| 4. | | <u>Chair – Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor H. Trollope |
| 5. | | <u>Chair – Regeneration Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor J. Hill |
| 6. | | <u>Chair – Community Services Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor M. Moore |
| 7. | Councillors | P. Baldwin |
| 8. | | M. Cross |
| 9. | | G. A. Davies |
| 10. | | J. Holt |
| 11. | | C. Meredith |
| 12. | | J. Millard |
| 13. | | J. C. Morgan |
| 14. | | J. P. Morgan |
| 15. | | G. Paulsen |

**PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING
COMMITTEE –
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1**

1. Chair - Councillor D. Hancock
2. Vice Chair - Councillor W. Hodgins
3. Councillors D. Bevan
4. G. L. Davies
5. M. Day
6. J. Hill
7. C. Meredith
8. K. Pritchard
9. K. Rowson
10. B. Thomas
11. G. Thomas
12. T. Smith
13. D. Wilkshire
14. B. Willis
15. L. Winnett

****Ward Members to be invited re planning site meetings
without voting rights.***

STATUTORY LICENSING COMMITTEE –
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Chair - | Councillor D. Hancock |
| 2. | Vice Chair - | Councillor W. Hodgins |
| 3. | Councillors | D. Bevan |
| 4. | | G. L. Davies |
| 5. | | M. Day |
| 6. | | J. Hill |
| 7. | | C. Meredith |
| 8. | | K. Pritchard |
| 9. | | K. Rowson |
| 10. | | B. Thomas |
| 11. | | G. Thomas |
| 12. | | T. Smith |
| 13. | | D. Wilkshire |
| 14. | | B. Willis |
| 15. | | L. Winnett |

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1

1. Chair Councillor J. C. Morgan
2. Vice Chair - Councillor B. Summers
3. Executive Member - J. Collins
4. Councillors G. Collier
5. M. Cook
6. M. Cross
7. G. A. Davies
8. G. L. Davies
9. M. Day
10. K. Hayden
11. S. Healy
12. H. McCarthy
13. L. Parsons
14. K. Pritchard
15. T. Sharrem

**** Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny Committees to be invited without voting rights.***

AUDIT COMMITTEE –
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1

CHAIR

To be confirmed

1. Vice Chair Chair - Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee
Councillor S. Healy
2. Deputy Leader of the Council
Councillor D. Davies
3. Chair - Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee
Councillor H. Trollope
4. Chair - Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor S. Thomas
5. Chair - Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Councillor J. Hill
6. Chair – Community Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor M. Moore
7. Chair – Democratic Services Committee
Councillor J. C. Morgan
8. Chair – Planning, Regulatory & General
Licensing Committee
Councillor D. Hancock
9. Councillor P. Baldwin
10. Councillor W. Hodgins
11. Councillor J. Holt
12. Councillor J. Millard
13. Councillor K. Rowson
14. Councillor B. Summers
15. Councillor L. Winnett

APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE – JNC OFFICERS
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1

1. Chair – Leader or Deputy Leader
2. Executive Member for appropriate Portfolio
3. Chair of appropriate Scrutiny Committee
4. Vice- Chair of appropriate Scrutiny Committee
5. Councillors D. Bevan
6. Councillors M. Cook
7. M. Cross
8. L. Elias
9. K. Hayden
10. S. Healy
11. J. Hill
12. C. Meredith
13. M. Moore
14. J. C. Morgan
15. T. Smith

***N.B. Appointments to be made by group leader as required.
Executive Member of Appropriate Portfolio(s)
Scrutiny Chair of Appropriate Portfolio(s)***

Substitutes

1. Councillor J. Holt
2. Councillor B. Summers
3. Councillor S. Thomas
4. Councillor L. Winnett

**APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE –
MANAGING DIRECTOR/ CHIEF EXECUTIVE
15 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:1**

1. Chair Leader
2. Vice-Chair Deputy Leader
3. Leader of the Largest Opposition Group
4. Deputy Leader of the Largest Opposition Group
5. Councillors J. Collins
6. M. Cook
7. M. Cross
8. S. Healy
9. J. Hill
10. J. Mason
11. C. Meredith
12. J. Millard
13. J. C. Morgan
14. J. Wilkins
15. L. Winnett

***N.B. Appointments to be made by group leader as required.
Executive Member of Appropriate Portfolio(s)
Scrutiny Chair of Appropriate Portfolio(s)***

Substitutes

1. Councillor B. Summers
2. Councillor J. Holt
3. Councillor K. Hayden
4. Councillor D. Wilkshire

Due to changes in proportionality to **4:2:1** on the Committees below it was RESOLVED that the following be appointed:

**SHORTLISTING – JNC OFFICERS
7 MEMBERS - PROPORTIONALITY 4:2:1**

1. Leader or Deputy Leader
2. Executive Member for appropriate Portfolio
3. Chair of appropriate Scrutiny Committee
4. Vice-Chair of appropriate Scrutiny Committee
5. Councillor P. Edwards
6. Councillor J. C. Morgan
7. Councillor T. Sharrem

Substitutes

1. Councillor S. Healy
2. Councillor J. Hill
3. Councillor K. Hayden
4. Councillor L. Winnett

**SHORTLISTING – MANAGING DIRECTOR/CHIEF EXECUTIVE
7 MEMBERS – PROPORTIONALITY 4:2:1**

1. Leader of the Council
2. Deputy Leader of the Council
3. Leader of the Largest Opposition Group
4. Deputy Leader of the Largest Opposition Group
5. Councillor J. Collins
6. Councillor J. Millard
7. Councillor J. Wilkins

Officer additions if appropriate

Substitutes

1. Councillor S. Healy
2. Councillor J. Hill
3. Councillor D. Bevan
4. Councillor J. C. Morgan

Due to changes in proportionality to **9:5:2** on the following Working Group, it was RESOLVED that the following be appointed:

GRANTS WORKING GROUP
16 MEMBERS - PROPORTIONALITY 9:5:2

**** Plus 1 Member from each Ward on a political proportionality basis.***

1. Councillor L. Parsons (Llanhilleth Ward)
2. N. Daniels (Abertillery Ward)
3. L. Elias (Brynmawr Ward)
4. T. Sharrem (Cwmtillery Ward)
5. L. Winnett (Blaina Ward)
6. G. Thomas (Beaufort Ward)
7. G. Paulsen (Badminton Ward)
8. G. L. Davies (Cwm Ward)
9. M. Cross (Sirhowy Ward)
10. D. Hancock (Six Bells Ward)
11. K. Pritchard (Ebbw Vale South Ward)
12. B. Summers (Ebbw Vale North Ward)
13. M. Moore (Tredegar Central and West Ward)
14. J. C. Morgan (Georgetown Ward)
15. D. Wilkshire (Rassau Ward)
16. K. Rowson (Nantyglo Ward)

It was FURTHER RESOLVED that:

**INVESTIGATING & DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE
(JNC & Chief Officers)**

Councillor J. Holt be appointed to replace Councillor P. Edwards on the above Committee.

CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP

Councillor C. Meredith be appointed to replace Councillor P. Edwards on the above Working Group.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT GROUP

Councillor G. A. Davies be appointed to replace Councillor P. Edwards on the above Group.

RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

Councillor G. A. Davies be appointed to replace Councillor J. Millard on the above.

**CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION CITY DEAL – REGIONAL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor G. A. Davies be appointed to replace Councillor P. Edwards as Vice-Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the above.

(c) REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED that the appointment of Councillor G. A. Davies as Vice-Chair of the above Committee, replacing Councillor P. Edwards be approved.

(d) Advisory Panel for Local Authority School Governors

The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 20th October, 2020 to appoint:

Brynbach Primary – Councillor Malcolm Cross
St. Joseph's Primary – Councillor Malcolm Cross

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.

The changes to the composition of the Advisory Panel (as agreed within the New Policy that was approved by Executive on 14th October) were noted and the following appointments were RESOLVED:

The Panel for the Appointment of Local Authority School Governors would now comprise of:

- 3 Independent Group Members (including the Executive Member for Education who will Chair the Panel),
- 3 members from the Labour Group

1. **EXECUTIVE MEMBER – EDUCATION (CHAIR)**

Councillor J. Collins

2. Councillor D. Bevan

3. Councillor J. Holt

4. Councillor C. Meredith

5. Councillor J. C. Morgan

6. Councillor H. Trollope

Substitutes:

1. Councillor M. Cook

2. Councillor B. Summers

3. Councillor T. Smith

4. Councillor D. Wilkshire

Observer: ***A representative of the Blaenau Gwent School Governors' Association (BGSGA)***

<p>(e)</p>	<p><u>RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME – LOCAL ACTION GROUP</u></p> <p>To appoint representative to replace Councillor D. Bevan on the above Group.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Councillor G. L. Davies be appointed to replace Councillor D. Bevan on the above Group.</p>
<p>25.</p>	<p>Councillors D. Bevan and M. Holland left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p><u>EXEMPT ITEMS</u></p> <p>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 were available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p>
<p>26.</p>	<p><u>FESTIVAL PARK UPDATE</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 Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Corporate Director spoke in detail to the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein. Particular reference was made to paragraph 2.3 relating to the site</p>

being placed on the open market, the Heads of Terms and the counter proposal to remove the parkland from the sale.

It was noted that if the preferred option (1) was approved, the Working Group would continue to develop the other aspects of the option considered by Council in terms of the Democratic space in the General Offices, the Community Hubs and the alternative arrangements for staff accommodation. A capital allocation of £180,000 to fund the cost of the required works at the General Offices and the Community Hubs and a further £650,000 for demolition of the Civic Centre would be required. However, the subsequent sale of land was expected to generate a capital receipt of £750,000.

The Corporate Director concluded by outlining the risks contained in paragraph 5.2 of the report which included both legal and human resources implications.

The views of Members were, thereupon, sought (summarised below) and were responded to by the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services and the Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development:

- A Member pointed out that she had raised at the previous Council meeting, that the site had been advertised on the open market prior to the vote being taken to proceed with the site acquisition. The press release that had been issued following this Council meeting had indicated that if there were private investors interested in the site, the Council would withdraw from the purchase. However, the Member expressed concern that this report did not reflect the reason for withdrawing from the site purchase.

The Executive Member confirmed that it had been agreed by the Working Group that the Council would only progress the purchase of the site as a last resort i.e. if there was no private sector interest.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to correspondence that had been forwarded to himself and the Leader back in July advising of private sector interest in the site.

The Executive Member advised that at the time the business case had been developed, the Council had not been aware of any firm offers made for the site but subsequently as information had been received confirming that there was now private interest, it was now proposed that the acquisition be left to the private sector to progress.

The Leader of the Labour Group requested that in future that all relevant information be included within reports and pointed out that the external interest should have been referenced in order to provide Members with the full information for voting purposes.

- From the marketing information that was publicly available, a Member advised that the vendor had only removed a parcel of wetland from the sale and not the parkland.

The Corporate Director confirmed that the prospectus did indicate that the vendor was exploring splitting the site into a two elements i.e. retail and parkland. The green book methodology that had to be used to value the site and the business case developed for Welsh Government's consideration had included both elements in terms of the purchase.

- In reply to a question regarding the costs incurred for progressing the work to date, the Corporate Director confirmed that £30,000 had been incurred for consultants to develop the business case (it was noted that these consultants had originally been engaged as part of the Bridging the Gap proposal in terms of Accommodation Review and their work had been repurposed to develop the business case). Other costs included a full building condition survey costing approximately £20,000 (the exact figure would need to be confirmed) and there was also a potential cost associated for the provision of legal advice in relation to the Heads of Terms – the Corporate Director advised that he would need to establish if this legal advice had been provided.

A Member requested that the full cost associated with the work undertaken be provided together with the cost of the refurbishment works undertaken on the Leader's Office and former Mayor's Dining Room.

- A Member advised that the remit and main focus of the Working Group had been the development of the business case for the Festival Park site and now this purpose had been fulfilled stated that the Working Group should be disbanded.

The Executive Member stated that the Working Group had been established to also consider the wider Accommodation Review and would continue in its current form.

The Member reiterated that as the Working Group had fulfilled its purpose and it should be disbanded and a new Working Group established to consider the wider Accommodation Review. Another Member said that the new Working Group should be a Cross Party Member Working Group and include Members of the Minority Independent Group.

The Executive Member reiterated his previous response.

- Another Member commented that it should be left to private investors to enter into negotiations but it was important for the Council to have a supportive (not financial) involvement with whoever acquired the site as part of its duty for the residents and Members of the area. The Corporate Director confirmed that this would be the case.
- A Member referred to the previous press release and said that whilst he understood the commercial sensitivity of the topic, the Council had a duty to the residents of the Cwm Ward to address the local uncertainty regarding consultation.

The Executive Member said that consultation was extremely important element but it was felt that in terms of timings the business case needed to have been completed and a firm proposal approved in the first instance. However, he noted the comments made and said that consultation would form part of the Accommodation Review going forward.

- In reply to a question regarding the £180,000 capital allocation, the Executive Member confirmed that this would be used in part to fund I.T. costs i.e. a portable microphone system and I.T. infrastructure to ensure that the venue could accommodate Council meetings.

In reply to a concern raised that both the local school and college used this venue to hold examinations, the Executive Member advised that this would not be a permanent Council Chamber and the venue would still be able for use by other organisations.

- A Member said that the report left a lot of unanswered questions and asked that if the democratic function was relocated to the General Offices, what would happen to the other functions currently based at the Civic Centre i.e. where would these be housed and the associated costs of this accommodation.

The Member continued by expressing his concern regarding the cost and risks associated with the demolition of the Civic Centre and referred to the requirements of the Local Development Plan which would not be met. He said that demolition of this building would place a burden on the council taxpayer and the authority and this large site could be vacant and remain a liability for many years to come. The Member concluded by also expressing his concern regarding the parkland and said that this could potentially be a burden for any purchaser moving forward.

The Executive Member said that the Accommodation Review would consider the location of staff and this would be reported via the usual democratic process.

The Corporate Director added that development of housing had been discussed at the previous Council meetings and confirmed that there was currently a demand for housing sites in the northern corridor. He was unaware of the reasons for the vendor splitting the site into two elements but acknowledged the concern raised by the Member regarding the parkland and said that any requests would be considered upon their receipt.

- Councillor Winnett referred to the cost of demolition and made reference to the on-going expenses that had been incurred due to asbestos removal for a building that had previously been demolished and requested that it be placed on record that she did not agree with the cost that had been provided in respect of the demolition of the Civic Centre.

- Another Member also agreed with the earlier comments regarding disbanding the current Working Group and reforming a different Working Group to consider the future working arrangements. He also made reference to community engagement, particularly in relation to transport as some members of the public would be unable to access services if located at inaccessible locations.

Following a discussion, the Leader of the Labour said that the report should be considered as two separate elements (i.e. Festival Park and the Civic Centre/Working Arrangements) and proposed the following **amendment to the preferred option**, namely that:

- **It be noted that the position agreed at Council to proceed with acquisition of Festival Park had been reconsidered by the Member Working Group, and that it should now be left to private investors who had expressed an interest in the site to take it forward.**
- **The matters of the Civic Centre and working arrangements for staff be considered by a newly formed Working Group comprising of Members of each political group.**

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

In Favour of the amendment – Councillors P. Baldwin, M. Cross, P. Edwards, L. Elias, K. Hayden, H. McCarthy, J. Millard, J. C. Morgan, K. Pritchard, T. Smith, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, B. Willis, L. Winnett.

Against the amendment – Councillors J. Collins, M. Cook, N. Daniels, D. Davies, G. A. Davies, M. Day, D. Hancock, S. Healy, J. Hill, W. Hodgins, J. Holt, J. Mason, C. Meredith, J. P. Morgan, L. Parsons, G. Paulsen, K. Rowson, B. Summers, B. Thomas, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins.

The vote on the amendment was not carried.

A recorded vote was, thereupon, taken in respect of **Option 1 (preferred option)**:

In Favour of Option 1 – Councillors J. Collins, M. Cook, N. Daniels, D. Davies, G. A. Davies, M. Day, D. Hancock, S. Healy, J. Hill, W. Hodgins, J. Holt, J. Mason, C. Meredith, M. Moore, J. P. Morgan, L. Parsons, G. Paulsen, K. Rowson, B. Summers, B. Thomas, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins.

Against Option 1 – Councillors P. Baldwin, M. Cross, G. L. Davies, P. Edwards, L. Elias, K. Hayden, H. McCarthy, J. C. Morgan, T. Smith, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, B. Willis, L. Winnett.

Abstentions – Councillors J. Millard and K. Pritchard

The vote in respect of Option 1 was carried.

It was, therefore,

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 position agreed at Council to proceed with acquisition of Festival Park had been reconsidered by the Member Working Group, and that it should now be left to private investors who had expressed an interest in the site to take it forward.
- The Council takes forward the other aspects agreed at Council to develop the democratic facility at the General Offices, community hubs in town centres, and vacate and demolish the Civic Centre.
- A capital allocation of £180,000 be agreed to fund the cost of the required works at the GO and the Community Hubs and a further £650,000 for demolition of the Civic Centre. The subsequent sale of land was expected to generate a capital receipt of £750,000.

27. 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 29th September, 2020.

It was unanimously,

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

28. 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 7th October, 2020.

It was unanimously,

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

29. 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 6th October, 2020.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decision not to appoint to the post of Lead Officer School Improvement be noted.

30. 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).

The Corporate Director of Education, Lynn Phillips left the meeting at this juncture.

Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 4th November, 2020.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the post be offered to Lynn Phillips on a salary in accordance with JNC Chief Officer (£82,247 - £90,469).	
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