

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

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

**SUBJECT: ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL - 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2024**

**REPORT OF:**

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**PRESENT:**

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

WITH: Joint Chief Executive  
 Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services  
 Corporate Director of Corporate Services  
 Interim Corporate Director of Social Services  
 Head of Children's Services  
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance  
 Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships  
 Service Manager – Performance & Democratic  
 Press & Publicity Officer

Representatives of Tai Calon Community Housing  
 Mr. Richard Hopkins  
 Mr. Martyn Price

Representatives of Gwent Police  
 Superintendent Mike Richards  
 Inspector Richard Tovey

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <p>Councillors M. Day, J. Holt, L. Parsons, Corporate Director of Education and the Chief Officer Commercial &amp; Customer.</p>	
No. 3	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>The following declarations of interest were reported:</p> <p><b>Item No. 19: Tai Calon Rule Changes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Councillor P. Baldwin</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>Item No. 24: Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2023/2024</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Councillor W. Hodgins</li> </ul> <p>The Members remained in the meeting whilst the items of business were considered.</p> <p><b>Item No. 33: Shortlisting JNC CO (Chief Officers)</b>  <b>Item No. 34: Appointments Committee JNC CO (Chief Officers)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rhian Hayden, Corporate Director of Corporate Services.</li> </ul> <p>The officer left the meeting prior to these items of business being considered.</p>	
<b>No. 4</b>	<p><b><u>PRESIDING MEMBER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</u></b></p> <p>There were no announcements reported at the meeting.</p>	
<b>No. 5</b>	<p><b><u>DECISION BOOK JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2024</u></b></p> <p>The Decision Book for the period June – September 2024 was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the decisions be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<b>No. 6</b>	<p><b><u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL</u></b></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
<b>No. 7</b>	<p><b><u>PLANNING COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
<b>No. 8</b>	<p><b><u>GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
<b>No. 9</b>	<p><b><u>STATUTORY LICENSING COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	

No. 10	<p><b><u>PLANNING COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 11	<p><b><u>CABINET</u></b></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 12	<p><b><u>CORPORATE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 13	<p><b><u>GOVERNANCE &amp; AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 14	<p><b><u>CORPORATE &amp; PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 15	<p><b><u>ETHICS &amp; STANDARDS COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Agreed.</p>	
No. 16	<p><b><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by members of the public.</p>	
No. 17	<p><b><u>MEMBERS QUESTIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by Members.</p>	
No. 18	<p><b><u>MOTION - CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN BEING GIVEN PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC STATUS</u></b></p> <p>The Council considered the above-named Motion.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Motion be accepted and it was agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Care experienced people' be added to the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment, so that any impact of policy decisions on people with care experience was identified and</li> </ul>	

taken into account when those decisions were made.

- In relation to recruitment, the Council guaranteed an interview to individuals who have been in care provided they meet the selection criteria set out in the job description.
- When setting and reviewing the Council's Strategic Equality Objectives, the Council include consideration of how it might overcome the disadvantages and discrimination experienced by care experienced people.

**No. 19**

**SUPERINTENDENT MIKE RICHARDS**

A warm welcome was extended to Superintendent Mike Richards of Gwent Police who was in attendance to provide an overview to Council on policing activity and crime trends within the County Borough. It was noted that regular updates on this activity would be provided to Council at future meetings. Also in attendance was Richard Tovey, the newly appointed Inspector for the Blaenau Gwent area.

A brief summary in relation to crime statistics and patterns was provided, which included:

**Quarter 1 (April – June 2024) Statistics:**

**Crime Figures** – there had been a positive reduction in crime by approximately 6.5% compared to the same quarter the previous year. This equated to 140 fewer victims of crime.

This included a reduction in public order offences, violent offences, criminal damage, violence with injury and residential burglary.

However, there had been an increase in vehicle crime and shoplifting not only locally but on a national basis.

**Anti-Social Behaviour** – there had been a considerable amount of partnership working undertaken around anti-social behaviour which had been led by Sarah King, Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships and this had resulted in a significant 34% reduction in the number of incidents compared to the same period the previous year. This equated to 195 fewer reports.

Members were then provided with the opportunity to ask questions to which the Superintendent responded.

The Leader of the Council expressed his appreciation to the Superintendent and Inspector for attending the meeting and said he looked forward to further dialogue at a future meeting.

He advised Members that this was the last Council meeting that Sarah King, Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships would be attending and he placed on record his and Council appreciation to Sarah for the work she had undertaken during her time in the role.

**No. 20**

**TAI CALON RULE CHANGES**

Councillor Peter Baldwin declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst it was considered.

The report of Martyn Price, Director of Resources & Company Secretary, Tai Calon Community Housing was submitted for consideration.

The Leader of the Council advised that this report had been discussed at length in Labour Group and whilst the need for governance improvements was acknowledged, the Group had not agreed with the proposed changes regarding the selection of local authority Councillors and tenant representatives on the Tai Calon Board.

It was believed by moving to a recruitment process, based solely on skills and experience would risk losing the valuable voice of ordinary tenants. The current approach which allowed tenants to directly elect their representatives ensured their unique perspectives were heard. Furthermore, Councillors played a crucial role as a direct link between the board and real tenants and as elected representatives they brought the concerns and experience of the community to the forefront. Replacing this direct connection with a recruitment process could weaken the bond between Tai Calon and the tenants it served.

The Leader concluded by stating that he hoped that the process could be halted, at least until the new Chief Executive was in post in order to allow further discussions on the matter and these

	<p>comments would be formally conveyed to Tai Calon following the meeting.</p> <p>Following a discussion, it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 21</b></p>	<p><b><u>PROPOSED COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Democratic Officer.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Forward Work Programme 2024/2025 be agreed.</p>	
<p><b>No. 22</b></p>	<p><b><u>ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2023-24</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the ‘scrutiny activity that had been undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2023/24 be approved and the report published on the Blaenau Gwent website.</p>	
<p><b>No. 23</b></p>	<p><b><u>COUNCIL CHAMBER OPTIONS</u></b></p> <p>The report of the Service Manager – Performance &amp; Democratic was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>A lengthy discussion ensued when the Leader of the Council proposed that Option 3 be endorsed together with the following supplementary recommendation, namely that the Chief Executive be tasked with investigating a solution that would include the possibility of utilising the Jack Williams Room at the General Offices. Options to be discussed by the Member Working Group prior to consideration at Council.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p>	

	<p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 3 be endorsed, namely that the current arrangements be maintained for Council Meetings.</p>	
<b>No. 24</b>	<p><b><u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL OUTTURN REPORT 1ST APRIL 2023 TO 31ST MARCH 2024</u></b></p> <p>The Council considered the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>Councillor Sonia Behr left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the treasury management activity undertaken during the 2023/24 financial year be noted and the record of performance and compliance achieved during the year be accepted.</p>	
<b>No. 25</b>	<p><b><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2023/2024</u></b></p> <p>Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst it was considered.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services.</p> <p>Councillor Jacqueline Thomas left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the publication of the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2023/2024 be approved.</p>	
<b>No. 26</b>	<p><b><u>DECLARING NATURE EMERGENCY AND ADOPTING LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY ACTION PLAN (LNRAP) &amp; POLLINATOR POLICY</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services.</p>	

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and

- A Nature Emergency be declared.
- The adoption of the LNRAP be approved.
- The adoption of the Pollinator Policy be approved.

It was noted that the following statement emerged as the preference for declaration of a Nature Emergency during Members workshops:

“Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has declared a Nature Emergency to recognise urgent action to be taken to halt the loss of biodiversity and is committed to maintaining, protecting and enhancing spaces to create resilient ecosystems that contribute to our requirements in our Net Zero carbon goal”.

No. 27

**FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH - CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP**

Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2024.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the following Options be endorsed, namely:

**Freedom of the Borough**

**Option 1a:** To bestow the Freedom of the Borough on Ray Reardon (posthumously).

**Frequency of Meetings**

**Option 2a:** The Freedom of the Borough Cross Party Working Group meet on a bi-annual basis to consider applications received.

No. 28

**MEMBERSHIPS REPORT**

Consideration was given to:

**Advisory Panel for Local Authority Governors**

The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2024 to appoint in principle:

**Glyncoed Primary School – Clive Meredith**

**Soffryd Primary School – Phil Dando**

**Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community – Clive Meredith**

It was, thereupon, unanimously,

RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.

**COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER STEERING GROUP**

It was noted that the above Steering Group had been disbanded.

**ABUHB Independent Review panel to meet continuing healthcare needs**

It was noted that only officer representation was required on the above-named panel.

**Council Tax Premium Appeals Panel**

RESOLVED that the Panel comprise of 3 Labour Members, 2 Independent Members and 1 non-aligned Member and the following appointments be endorsed:

Councillor Jen Morgan, J.P. (Chair)

Councillor Sonia Behr

Councillor Jonathan Millard

Councillor Jacqueline Thomas

Councillor Gareth Davies

Councillor Joanna Wilkins

It was noted that should an appeal be received for a ward of one of the appointed Councillor's, this Member would not participate in the Appeal Panel process.

<p><b>No. 29</b></p>	<p><b><u>EXEMPT ITEMS</u></b></p> <p>To receive and consider the following reports which in the opinion of the proper officer was exempt items taking into account consideration of the public interest test and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reasons for the decisions for the exemptions was available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p>	
<p><b>No. 30</b></p>	<p><b><u>SHORTLISTING - JNC OFFICERS</u></b></p> <p>The Corporate Director of Corporate Services left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Item Nos 30 – 35 were considered simultaneously.</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 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2024.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decisions contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 31</b></p>	<p><b><u>APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - JNC OFFICERS</u></b></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 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2024.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the post be offered to Loredana Moruz on a salary in accordance with JNC 5 (£78,825 - £86,507).</p>	
<b>No. 32</b>	<p><b><u>SHORTLISTING - JNC CHIEF OFFICERS</u></b></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 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2024.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decisions contained therein be noted.</p>	
<b>No. 33</b>	<p><b><u>APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - JNC CHIEF OFFICERS</u></b></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 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2024.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the post be offered to Luisa Munro-Morris on a salary in accordance with J NC CO (£90,605 - £99,458 per annum).</p>	
<p><b>No. 34</b></p>	<p><b><u>SHORTLISTING - JNC CHIEF OFFICERS</u></b></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 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2024.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decisions contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 35</b></p>	<p><b><u>APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - JNC CHIEF OFFICERS</u></b></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>	

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 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2024.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the post be offered to Rhian Hayden on a salary in accordance with JNC CO (£90,605 - £99,458 per annum).