

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

|                   |                                                                           |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>REPORT TO:</b> | <b><u>THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u></b>             |
|                   |                                                                           |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>   | <b><u>SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 12<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2024</u></b> |
|                   |                                                                           |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b> | <b><u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u></b>                                          |

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

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

AND: Interim Chief Executive  
 Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services  
 Chief Officer Resources  
 Head of Adult Services  
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance  
 Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships  
 Head of Organisational Development  
 Service Manager – Performance and Democratic Communications & Marketing Manager  
 Press & Publicity Officer

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <u>ACTION</u> |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 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>                                                                                                                             |               |
| 2.          | <p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H. Cunningham, J. Millard, J. Morgan, J.P., Interim Corporate Director of Education, Interim Corporate Director of Social Services and Chief Officer Commercial &amp; Customer.</p> |               |
| 3.          | <p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>                                                                                                                                   |               |

4.

#### **CLOSER WORKING WITH TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Leader of the Council and Interim Chief Executive.

Councillor D. Bevan left the meeting prior to Council endorsing the report.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that:

- A new shared role of Chief Executive be agreed, as detailed in section 2.9 of the report, across Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen County Borough Councils for a defined period based on the proposed salary.
- An appointment of a Deputy Chief Executive be agreed from within existing management undertaking additional responsibilities with the payment of an honorarium.
- Up to a 9 month 'discovery phase' be agreed to identify the potential benefits, risks, and challenges before determining whether to put the arrangement on a more permanent footing.

#### **Appreciation**

The Leader of the Council at this juncture, announced that this was the last formal meeting of Council that the current Interim Chief Executive would be attending prior to retiring. Damien's journey within Blaenau Gwent had been long and productive, having commenced his early career in the housing service, followed by a number of years as the successful Corporate Director of Social Services and latterly as the Interim Chief Executive.

Damien had maintained stability and progress throughout the course of his tenure, ensuring that the Council thrived under challenging conditions. Since 2022, when Damien initially took up the role of Interim Chief Executive, he had showed unwavering dedication and remarkable skill, guiding the Council through some of the most challenging times in local government history. Damien had led the Council admirably with his calm and steady manner, strong leadership and was respected and liked by all and he would leave behind a great legacy.

The Leader said that Damien would be greatly missed and expressed his appreciation to Damien for his service, leadership and friendship and expressed his best wishes to him on behalf of Council for a long and happy retirement.

Members echoed the comments made by the Leader and also expressed their best wishes to Damien for the future and a long and happy retirement.

The Interim Chief Executive expressed his appreciation to the Leader and Members for their kind words and said it had been an honour and privilege to work for Blaenau Gwent for last 16 years and to have led the paid staff for the last 2 years. He also expressed appreciation to the senior leadership team who had supported him over the last few years. Appreciation was also expressed to all Members for their support and assistance over the last 2 years and to all current and former Members for the support he had received over the last 16 years.

Damien continued by paying tribute to the dedicated staff for their commitment and hard work on a daily basis, trying to meet the needs of the communities. He applauded the foresight of Members from both councils accepting to work more closely with each other, which he believed was a positive step in local government survival given the financial challenges that continued to be faced. He wished Members and officers good fortune in their endeavours to make the two Councils more sustainable over the years to come and said he was confident that Stephen Vickers would work hard to ensure the Councils would collaborate to deliver better, more sustainable, and resilient services going

forward and would lead both authorities to a stronger position in the future.

Damien concluded by wishing the Council well on its journey and said he would be looking from the outside to see how this leap of faith progressed over the coming months and years.

**5. TIME OF FUTURE COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Members considered the time of future Council meetings.

It was unanimously,

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