

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 21ST MARCH, 2024</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

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

Councillors P. Baldwin
S. Behr
D. Bevan
M. Cross
D. Davies
G. A. Davies
M. Day
S. Edmunds
J. Gardner
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
G. Humphreys
E. Jones
J. Millard
J. C. Morgan
J. P. Morgan
L. Parsons
D. Rowberry
T. Smith
G. Thomas
J. Thomas
S. Thomas
D. Wilkshire
L. Winnett

AND: Interim Chief Executive
 Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
 Interim Corporate Director of Social Services
 Chief Officer Commercial & Customer
 Chief Officer Resources
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships
 Head of Organisational Development
 Service Manager – Policy & Partnerships
 Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality & Welsh Language
 Team Leader - Performance
 Press & Publicity Officer
 Policy Officer – Engagement & Equalities

WITH: Chloe Simmonds, Youth Mayor

<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, H. Cunningham, R. Leadbeater, J. Morgan, J.P., H. Trollope, J. Wilkins, D. Woods, Interim Corporate Director of Education, Mara Moruz - Outgoing Youth Mayor and Ellie Colwell - Deputy Youth Mayor.</p>	

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

The following declarations of interest were reported:-

Item No. 27 : Pay Policy Statement 2024/2025

- Damien McCann - Interim Chief Executive
- Ellie Fry - Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
- Tanya Evans - Interim Corporate Director of Social Services
- Bernadette Elias - Chief Officer Commercial & Customer
- Rhian Hayden - Chief Officer Resources
- Andrea Jones - Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance/Monitoring Officer
- Sarah King - Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships
- Andrea Prosser - Head of Organisational Development
- Andrew Parker - Service Manager – Policy & Partnerships
- Kate James - Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality & Welsh Language
- Leigh Vella - Team Leader – Performance
- Louise Bishop - Press & Publicity Officer
- Lissa Friel - Policy Officer – Engagement & Equalities
- Ceri Edwards-Brown – Democratic Officer

The Monitoring Officer advised that officers could remain in the meeting whilst this item of business was considered.

Item No. 30 : Returning Officer & Electoral Registration Officer

- Andrea Jones – Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance/Monitoring Officer

Members were advised that the above-named officer could remain in the meeting whilst this item of business was considered.

4. MARA MORUZ – OUTGOING YOUTH MAYOR

In the absence of Mara, the Policy Officer – Engagement & Equalities gave a brief overview of the outgoing Youth Mayor’s democracy journey and a short film was shown on Mara’s main priority during her time in office which was Climate Change.

Members commended Mara on her truly inspirational journey and expressed their best wishes to her for the future.

The incoming Youth Mayor, Chloe Simmonds and Deputy Youth Mayor, Ellie Colwell were also welcomed and congratulated on their successful election and best wishes were expressed to both for their forthcoming year in office.

5. PRESIDING MEMBER’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations were expressed to:

- Iris Fry from Cwm (now residing in Ebbw Vale) who had celebrated her 100th birthday on 8th February.

A letter of congratulations had been sent on behalf of the Council.

- Abertillery Bluebirds FC – the club had been listed as 40th in the top 50 of football grounds in the U.K. on the SPORTbible website.

<p>6 - 21.</p>	<p><u>DECISION BOOK – JULY 2023 – MARCH 2024</u></p> <p>The Decision Book for the period July 2023 – March 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>	
<p>22.</p>	<p><u>MEMBERS QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by Members.</p>	
<p>23.</p>	<p><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by members of the public.</p>	
<p>24.</p>	<p><u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW – SEPTEMBER 2023 & QUARTER 3 UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</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 first nine months of 2023/24 be noted and that there were no amendments to be made to the previously agreed Treasury strategies and performance indicators.</p> <p>Councillor P. Baldwin left the meeting at this juncture.</p>	

<p>25.</p>	<p><u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT – TREASURY STRATEGY STATEMENT, INVESTMENT STRATEGY & MRP POLICY STATEMENT 2024/2025 (INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS)</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the Annual Treasury Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy & MRP Policy Statement for 2024/2025 financial year together with the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators contained therein at Appendix A, be approved.</p>	
<p>26.</p>	<p><u>CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/2025</u></p> <p>The report of the Chief Officer Resources was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Capital Strategy for the 2024/25 financial year be agreed.</p>	
<p>27.</p>	<p><u>PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/2025</u></p> <p>The following officers declared an interest in this item but on the advice of the Monitoring Officer remained in the meeting whilst it was considered:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Damien McCann - Interim Chief Executive - Ellie Fry - Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services - Tanya Evans - Interim Corporate Director of Social Services 	

- Bernadette Elias - Chief Officer Commercial & Customer
- Rhian Hayden - Chief Officer Resources
- Andrea Jones - Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance/Monitoring Officer
- Sarah King - Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships
- Andrea Prosser - Head of Organisational Development
- Andrew Parker - Service Manager – Policy & Partnerships
- Kate James - Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality & Welsh Language
- Leigh Vella - Team Leader – Performance
- Louise Bishop - Press & Publicity Officer
- Lissa Friel - Policy Officer – Engagement & Equalities
- Ceri Edwards-Brown – Democratic Officer

The report of the Head of Organisational Development was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Pay Policy Statement 2024/2025 be approved.

28. FOSTERING FRIENDLY POLICY

The report of the Head of Organisational Development was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Fostering Friendly Policy be adopted.

29.

REVIEW OF AGILE WORKING, AGILE WORKING AND FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICIES

Due to the need to consider the following item as a matter of urgency, the Presiding Member confirmed that the following matter could be considered under the Provisions of Paragraph 4(b), Section 100(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

Members considered the report of the Head of Organisational Development.

The Leader of the Council proposed the following amendment to the Flexible Working Policy:

In recognising that the core service operating hours of the Council were 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., the proposal to increase the flexi bandwidth to 6.00 a.m. – 7.00 p.m. be not endorsed and the existing bandwidth of 7.00 a.m. – 7.00 p.m. be retained.

RESOLVED accordingly.

It was unanimously,

FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing amendment, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the outcome of the agile working review, recommendations, progress/improvement be noted and the reviewed policies for Agile Working and Flexible Working be endorsed.

30.

RETURNING OFFICER & ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance/Monitoring Officer declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst it was considered.

	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Chief Executive.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the appointment of the Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance to act as the Returning Officer & Electoral Registration Officer for Blaenau Gwent, until such time as the designation was reviewed, be confirmed.</p> <p>Councillor S. Behr left the meeting at this juncture.</p>	
<p>31.</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ETHICS & STANDARDS COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance/Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council reported that the Ethics & Standards Committee had requested that consideration be given to the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A statement being made at the commencement of each Council meeting expressing commitment to the Marmot Principles of good behaviour. - That Members partake in the Personal Development Review (PDR) Process (participation in this scheme was currently voluntarily). - That Members complete Annual Reports (completion of these reports was voluntarily). <p>In order that consideration could be given to these requests, the Leader proposed that a report be prepared for consideration by Members of the Democratic Services Committee detailing the options for promotion/implementation for each of the recommendations.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p>	

	<p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that it was confirmed that the statutory duty imposed by the Act had been met.</p>	
<p>32.</p>	<p><u>COUNCIL’S CORPORATE PLAN 2022/27 REVIEW</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Interim Chief Executive and the Service Manager Performance and Democratic.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the revisions made to the Corporate Plan be agreed.</p>	
<p>33.</p>	<p><u>STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-28</u></p> <p>The report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 be approved, in-line with the expectations of the specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.</p>	
<p>34.</p>	<p><u>MULTI LOCATION MEETING POLICY AND COUNCIL CHAMBER OPTIONS MOVING FORWARD</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Performance and Democratic.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p>	

	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the following Options be endorsed, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Option 1a – the Multi Location Meeting Policy be approved and used to support all future democratic meetings and member sessions. - Option 2a – Future Options for a Council Chamber – that a Members Working Group be established to look at requirements, costs and potential alternative options for the provision of a Council Chamber and the findings be reported back to Council for consideration. <p>It was noted that the composition of the Working Group would be agreed in due course.</p>	
<p>35.</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</u></p> <p>The Council considered the report of the Statutory Head of Democratic Services.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Council was satisfied that there was a sufficient level of support provided for Elected Members.</p>	
<p>36.</p>	<p><u>PRESIDING MEMBER’S ACTIVITIES REPORT APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Presiding Member’s Annual Activities Report.</p> <p>It was unanimously</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the activities and events attended by the Presiding Member for the period April 2023 – March 2024 be noted.</p>	

37.

MEMBERSHIPS REPORT

Advisory Panel for Local Authority Governors

The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 14th March, 2024 to appoint in principle:

Cwm Primary School – Councillor Derrick Bevan
Blaen-y-Cwm Primary School – Natasha Tepielow
The River Centre – Councillor Jennifer Morgan
Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community – Darryl Tovey

It was, thereupon, unanimously,

RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that Councillor Jonathan Millard representing Ebbw Vale South Ward be appointed to the above Committee.

GRANTS WORKING GROUP

RESOLVED that Councillor Jonathan Millard representing Ebbw Vale South Ward be appointed to the above Committee.

TOMORROW VALLEY PROJECT GROUP

It was noted that the above-named Project Group had been disbanded.