

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

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| REPORT TO: | <u>THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u> |
| SUBJECT: | <u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 28TH NOVEMBER, 2024</u> |
| REPORT OF: | <u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u> |

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

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

AND: Corporate Director of Corporate Services
 Corporate Director of Education
 Interim Corporate Director of Social Services
 Chief Officer Commercial & Customer
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Service Manager – Performance & Democratic
 Team Manager – Trading Standards & Licensing
 Press & Publicity Officer

ALSO: Natasha Harris – Head of Gwent Regional Partnership
 Team

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
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| 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:</p> <p>Councillors P. Baldwin, D. Davies, J. P. Morgan, J. Thomas, and the Joint Chief Executive.</p> | |
| 3. | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p> | |
| 4. | <p><u>PRESIDING MEMBER’S ANNOUNCEMENTS</u></p> <p>There were no announcements reported at the meeting.</p> | |

STORM BERT

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

The Leader of the Council referred to the recent Storm Bert which had brought devastation across South Wales and had deeply affected communities within Blaenau Gwent, causing significant disruption and distress.

He expressed his appreciation to Council staff and partner agencies for their tireless efforts during this major incident – there were too many people involved to thank personally. Their dedication to protecting and supporting the communities had been extraordinary. Appreciation also to Councillors for their visible presence and support on the ground and most importantly, appreciation was expressed to the communities. Once again, Blaenau Gwent had shown immense resilience and solidarity.

The Leader concluded by stating that the Council was continuing to work with partners, including Welsh Government, to provide the necessary support and resources for recovery.

It was, thereupon, proposed that a Flood Recovery Grant Scheme be established for flood victims in Blaenau Gwent following Storm Bert. The scheme would be available to qualifying residents who had suffered internal flooding to provide a grant of £1,000.

This proposal was seconded and unanimously supported by Members.

RESOLVED accordingly.

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17.

DECISION BOOK – SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2024

The Decision Book for the period September – November 2024 was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

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

18.

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

The following question was received from Councillor Lee Parsons and responded to by Councillor Helen Cunningham, Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member - Place & Environment.

Question:

Following recent and past events where Members had been threatened with violence, what measures and professional devices were the Council going to implement to ensure the safety of its Members?

Response:

As outlined by the Chief Executive in his written communication to Members, the Council was working to develop a comprehensive Member briefing and Member resource tailored specifically for Member needs and this was built around the LGA/WLGA recommended best practice.

Gwent Police had also offered to record home addresses of Elected Members on their internal dispatch system which would place a Critical Marker on a Member's personal home address, should they choose to opt into it.

Discussions had taken place with officers and jointly with counterparts in Torfaen on Member safety. As part of that work, the next Member Wellbeing Session would focus on these exact areas in order to gather the range of experiences

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| | <p>and perspectives that Members had on this matter, to help inform this work as it progressed.</p> <p>Supplementary Question:</p> <p>What safety devices were the Council going to implement, why was there such a disparity between the LGA and WLGA and the way Members were treated, as their safety was paramount and was the WLGA going to be contacted to ensure that not only our Members were safe in the future but every Member in Wales was safe?</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>At present, the purchase of lone working devices was being investigated, these devices would be able to be loaned to Members upon request. With regard to the differences between the LGA and WLGA, the Deputy Leader was unable to comment on either of the organisations behalf but said that this was something that could be pursued as part of this process and taken forward to ensure that no Members felt disadvantaged in any way and by utilising all the resources available to Members, that they felt fully supported.</p> | |
| <p>19.</p> | <p><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by members of the public.</p> | |
| <p>20.</p> | <p><u>GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Data Protection and Governance Officer submitted on behalf of the Governance and Audit Committee.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the information within the report</p> | |

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| | <p>which was given by the Governance & Audit Committee as assurance that appropriate oversight and monitoring was taking place and any shortfalls had appropriate controls in place to make the necessary improvements, be accepted.</p> | |
| 21. | <p><u>GAMBLING ACT 2005 – REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the revised Gambling Policy as recommended by the Statutory Licensing Committee be approved.</p> | |
| 22. | <p><u>REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD ANNUAL REPORT (2023/2024) AND GWENT AREA PLAN</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of the Gwent Regional Partnership Team.</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 Regional Partnership Board Annual Report including progress made against the objectives be approved.</p> | |
| 23. | <p><u>MEMBERSHIPS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to:</p> <p><u>Advisory Panel for Local Authority Governors</u></p> <p>The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 5th November, 2024 to appoint in principle:</p> | |

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| | <p> Ystruth Primary School – Lorette Hinson Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community – Helen Mifflin Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community – Hayley Jones Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community – Kerys Amos Deighton Primary School – Councillor Jacqueline Thomas Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community – Councillor Sue Edmunds </p> <p>It was, thereupon, unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.</p> <p><u>Governance & Audit Committee – Appointment of Chair</u></p> <p>The appointment of Mrs. Cheryl Hucker as Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee for the remainder of the 2024/25 year was noted.</p> <p>The following additional membership was verbally reported:</p> <p><u>Governance & Audit Committee Appointments Panel</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that the Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee be appointed to the above-named Panel.</p> | |
| <p>24.</p> | <p><u>EXEMPT ITEM</u></p> <p>To receive and consider the following report which in the opinion of the proper officer was an exempt item taking into account consideration of the public interest test and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reason for the decision for the exemption was available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p> <p>Councillor L. Winnett left the meeting at this juncture.</p> | |

25.

LEISURE AND LIBRARY SERVICES

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 Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

The report of the Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships was submitted for consideration.

A discussion ensued when the following alternative option was proposed:

- That a Member Working Group be established with the service provider to consider and discuss alternative options. This would ensure that Members were involved from the inception of the development of the business cases.
- Appropriate officers meet with the Chair of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee as soon as possible to establish the terms of reference of the Working Group.

This proposal was seconded and unanimously supported by Members.

RESOLVED accordingly.

