



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 10 March 2021 at 4.00 pm

County Borough Councillors - Council Members in attendance:-

Councillor S Powderhill (Chair)

Councillor M Adams	Councillor S Belzak
Councillor R Bevan	Councillor H Boggis
Councillor J Bonetto	Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor A Calvert
Councillor G Caple	Councillor A Chapman
Councillor A Cox	Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor J Cullwick	Councillor A Davies-Jones
Councillor G Davies	Councillor J Davies
Councillor L De Vet	Councillor J Edwards
Councillor J Elliott	Councillor S Evans
Councillor M Forey	Councillor A Fox
Councillor H Fychan	Councillor E George
Councillor D Grehan	Councillor E Griffiths
Councillor M Griffiths	Councillor J Harries
Councillor G Holmes	Councillor L Hooper
Councillor G Hopkins	Councillor P Howe
Councillor G Hughes	Councillor J James
Councillor P Jarman	Councillor G Jones
Councillor K Jones	Councillor L Jones
Councillor W Jones	Councillor R Lewis
Councillor W Lewis	Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor A Morgan	Councillor K Morgan
Councillor S Morgans	Councillor M Norris
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor W Owen
Councillor M Powell	Councillor S Powell
Councillor S. Rees-Owen	Councillor S Rees
Councillor A Roberts	Councillor J Rosser
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor E Stephens
Councillor G Thomas	Councillor W Treeby
Councillor R Turner	Councillor L Walker
Councillor M Weaver	Councillor M Webber
Councillor E Webster	Councillor D Williams
Councillor J Williams	Councillor T Williams
Councillor R Yeo	

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services

108 Apologies

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillors Sera Evans, M Fidler Jones, S Pickering, M Tegg and C Willis.

109 Welcome & Introductions

Introductions were made by the Group Leaders present:-

County Borough Councillor M Webber (In the Group Leader's absence -Deputy Leader of the Labour Group)
County Borough Councillor P Jarman (Plaid Cymru Group)
County Borough Councillor M Powell (RCT Independent Group)
County Borough Councillor L Hooper (In the Group Leader's absence- Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group)
County Borough Councillor S Belzak (Independent Member)

110 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations were made pertaining to the agenda:-

- County Borough Councillor R Lewis declare the following personal interest in Agenda item 11 – “YGG Abercynon is referenced within the report, I am Chair of Governors at the School and a close relative works at the School”
- County Borough Councillor S Belzak declared the following personal interest in Agenda Item 11 – “My daughter works in one of the schools referenced within the report”
- County Borough Councillor P Jarman –Agenda items 9-14 “Dispensation to speak and vote on all matters for the duration and adoption of the 2021-22 Budget process in my capacity as Leader of the Opposition”
- County Borough Councillor M Powell - “Dispensation to speak and vote on all matters relating to the Children's Services department (within the Community and Children's Group), save for any specific matters that directly affect his wife, who is employed by the Council in the Children's Services department as a Contact Worker”
- County Borough Councillor K Morgan declared the following personal and prejudicial interest and did not participate in the matter when the item was voted upon– Agenda item 15 Notice of Motion – “My brother is a striking employee of British Gas”
- County Borough Councillor J Harries declared the following personal interest-“My father works for the Council”

In respect of Item 14 – The Council’s Pay Policy Statement:

- Mr A Wilkins– Director, Legal Services on behalf of all Council Officers present in relation to Agenda Item 14 - “The Pay Policy statement for the Council has no effect on existing terms and conditions applying to individual employees and simply sets out the Council’s approach to previously approved pay policies, therefore Officers will remain in the meeting whilst the item is presented by the Director of Human Resources and during subsequent discussion.”

111 Cardiff Capital Region City Deal

Council received the Director of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the

Council received the Director of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Chair of the Regional Economic Growth Partnership (RECP) who delivered a Power Point presentation which addressed the following areas:-

- Executive Summary – last four years & what next
- CCR - Connected, Competitive, Resilient - We have strong sense of core purpose
- Solid Foundations - Data, Process, Frameworks and Collaboration
- Governance and Partnership Structures
- Effective Governance and Partnership Engagement -We have transformed working practices and speed of decision making
- Investment and Intervention Fund
- Approved Projects to date
- Wider investment pipeline
- Wider Impact of Investment – CS Foundry Project and Cluster
- Impact Overview -What does all this mean for RCT?
- The future for RCT...?
- New Corporate Joint Committees
- Regional Public Investment
- CCR Regional Cabinet – (Corporate Joint Committee)
- Next Five Years and Levelling Up
- Why Act as a Region? Because **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore

The Leader of the Council thanked both the Director of the Cardiff Capital

Region City Deal and the Chair of the Regional Economic Growth Partnership (REGP) for their comprehensive overview of the CCRCD.

The Leader outlined some key projects of the CCRD such as the Housing Investment Fund, the Graduate Scheme, agreed and enhanced by the funding from the 10 Local Authorities, Zip World, Porth Hub Transport (with over £6m investment) and he outlined the benefits of match funding from WG on a number of projects. He alluded to over £200m of metro funding to be invested in RCT, as a key beneficiary of core Metro funding through enhancements to the stations and the electric lines to Cardiff. An electric vehicle charging strategy across the region with further funds from WG. The Leader advised of strategic sites such as the A465 and potential development of disused industrial sites which have all promoted the closer working relationship between the 10 Local Authorities and he alluded to the advantages the City Deal will bring to this Local Authority.

Councillor P Jarman (Plaid Cymru Group)

- The key objective is to uplift GBA by 5% growth and to achieve 25,000 additional jobs, when this is likely to be achieved?
- Flexicare is a successful and valued employer in the community and has been for many years, it would be of benefit if they could expand in the ward
- The Housing Viability Gap Fund - Is the phurnacite plant one of the sites identified?
- Key to securing the new Regional Fund relates to the levelling up with reference to national infrastructure, does that refer to UK or Welsh Government?
- Corporate Joint Committees - Councillor Jarman hoped that a full report would be presented to Council to explain what that will mean

The Director of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal confirmed that the targets of the City Deal mentioned are over a 20-year period from March 2021. The Director advised that there is a slight increase in productivity, but it is a long-term journey. In terms of Flexicare, the Director explained that a group of companies working together on medical devices and diagnostics companies with RCT at the centre, is being taken forward. The Director was unable to comment on the status of the phurnacite due to commercial sensitivity but would provide an update when possible. The Director advised that a lot of investment lays with the UK Government although there is a need to take advantage of any funding that is available to the Cardiff Capital Region whether it be from Welsh Government or UK Government. With regards to Corporate Joint Committees, which is a local issue and one of local determination, the Director pointed out that she had previously advised of some of the benefits if they were adopted.

Councillor M Powell (RCT Independent Group)

Councillor Powell raised concern that some of the local areas in RCT and their respective local issues had been overlooked such as the areas of Ynysybwl and Glyncoch, which would have been suitable for railway halts, and whether some other areas within RCT will be forgotten by the Capital Region.

Electric Vehicles – Councillor Powell raised a query as to where the charging points would be positioned, particularly with terraced houses which are prevalent

within many areas of RCT and as many residents are unable to park directly outside their own homes.

Long Term Empty Properties – RCT has over 3,000 long term empty properties with over 25,000 across the whole of Wales. Would it be a better to invest in the empty properties which could be brought up to current standards in a more efficient and less costly way?

Councillor J James (Conservative Party)

Councillor James stated that the GVA has not risen for a number of years therefore is 5% a realistic goal?

Councillor S Belzak (Independent Member)

Councillor Belzak asked how realistic is it to talk in terms of economic growth with the decline of growth rates globally since 2008, which was caused due to a decline in energy resources?

The Director of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal referred to the RCT Empty Property Scheme which has been scaled up across the Valleys Taskforce areas with some incentives, stressed the importance of developing the industry around Zipworld such as the hospitality, hotel and catering industries to make sure it has an impact and advised of the importance of the aforementioned Masters Project, Graduate and Shared Apprenticeship schemes when addressing the shortage of skills and supply chain issues and the need to respond quickly to the changes in the employability market. The Director confirmed that they have not signed up to the Western Gateway but have engaged as observers, but no investment has been committed. With regards to GVA growth, although the region does have one of the lowest growth productivity rates in the UK, which does need to be addressed, the Director stressed the importance of doing the right thing in the interests of the region as a whole.

A number of other queries were responded to by both the Director of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Chair of the Regional Economic Growth Partnership (REGP) such as the rail line to Treherbert, the wider debate around electric vehicles and hydrogen vehicles, shared priorities- what percentage has been invested in Cardiff compared with RCT and the Levelling Up Fund.

112 Announcements

Announcements

1. The Presiding Officer paid tribute to former County Borough Councillor Mike Diamond who had recently resigned as Councillor for RCT. He described him as a gentleman, a true professional and a worthy champion of his community. The Presiding Officer relayed former Councillor Diamond's gratitude to all Members and staff for the help he received while he was in office.
2. County Borough Councillor P Jarman wished to echo the tribute to former County Borough Councillor Mike Diamond.

Councillor Jarman stated that it is pleasing that the Council has already

made an announcement that 12-year-old Alfie Ford, a Mountain Ash Comprehensive School pupil, has won £1,000 for his chosen charity, Noah's Ark Children's Hospital. His 'First Give' project was gifting little bags of happiness to frontline key workers for all they have done throughout the pandemic. Councillor Jarman also paid tribute to Trudy Fisher, a critical key worker, a Young Carer's Project Co-ordinator who provides support to children between the ages of 5-18 years and has supported the needs of these young carers and their families with food and electricity grants and ensuring the voices of these children are heard. She has been nominated for a St. David Award from the First Minister (with the results being announced on the 24th March 2021). Councillor Jarman requested that a letter from the Mayor be written to both to recognise their achievements and sending best wishes for the future.

113 Council Procedure Rule 15.1

The Deputy Leader moved the suspension of Council Procedure Rule 15.1 which states that a matter would be decided by a simple majority of those Members voting and present in the room at the time the question was put in order to facilitate the smooth running of the virtual meeting.

Following consideration of the matter it was **RESOLVED** to suspend Council Procedure Rule 15.1

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications confirmed the political party numbers present at the meeting as:-

Labour Group – 43

Plaid Cymru Group – 15

RCT Independent Group – 6

Conservative Group – 2

Independent member – 1

114 Minutes

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the virtual Council meetings of the 20th January and 10th February 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meetings subject to it being noted that the Conservative Group abstained from voting on the Notice of Motion as set out in the Minutes of the 20th January 2021 (Minute 94 refers).

115 Audit Wales - Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council: Annual Audit Summary 2020

Mr C Davies, Audit Manager, Audit Wales, presented the annual Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Audit Summary for 2020 which sets out the work completed since the last Annual Improvement Report, issued in September 2019. Council was advised that the audit summary forms part of

the Auditor General for Wales' duties and this year has been presented in a more accessible and succinct format. He added that this would be the last year for him and his colleague Ms J Davies to present the summary for RCT as they were both moving on to other projects.

Following the presentation, the Leader of the Council thanked both Officers for the report and commented that the frank and open relationship between the Council and Audit Wales had been constructive and helpful for the Council to recognise and prioritise those areas where improvements have been necessary.

Following discussion and comments from the Group Leaders it was **RESOLVED** to note the information contained within the report.

116 Statements

The Deputy Leader made a statement in respect of the illumination of prominent key buildings across the county borough on the 23rd March, as a mark of respect to RCT communities and as a thank you to the NHS and all staff to mark the official year date of the Covid lockdown.

117 Members' Questions

From County Borough Councillor J. Bonetto to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

“Can the Leader give an update on the plans for the new Train Station in Treforest Estate?”

Response from the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan:-

The Leader advised that RCT is working with Transport for Wales (TFW) and Welsh Government (WG) on developing the new station which is a priority area on the Valley Lines and will be cited on the opposite side of the river to where the DWP Office buildings are currently located with a new footbridge, active travel compliant from Willowford Road and linking into the Estate. TFW is progressing with stage C design of the development and RCT Council is supporting the land assembly that is required. The Leader stated that programme funding discussions are ongoing and from this current and the next financial year progress with regional funding is progressing and the scheme will be taken forward over the next two years.

There was no supplementary question

From County Borough Councillor M. Powell to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

“Would Councillor Morgan state what the Council's policy or attitude is to

reducing vehicular emissions to improve air quality in residential areas of RCT light of the recent Southwark Coroners ruling, link below.

"On 16 December, Southwark Coroner's Court in London found that air pollution "made a material contribution" to the death of nine-year-old Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah."

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-55352247>

Response from County Borough Councillor A Morgan:-

"The Leader commented that Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah lived near the busy South Circular Road in Lewisham and suffered with a rare type of acute asthma which made her susceptible to toxic gases and particulates. The Coroner confirmed that her death was due to genetic conditions and partly due to the environment. On behalf of the Council, the Leader extended his sympathies to the family and paid tribute to the courageous way they had highlighted the issues.

The Leader confirmed that the Council routinely assess the air quality in RCT and has done so since the late 1990's to gain a better understanding of the complex issues around local air quality and to support evidence-based decision making and the council continues to invest in the long term monitoring of certain air pollutants such as Nitrogen Dioxide. Monitoring shows that the levels of air quality in RCT has dramatically improved since the late 1990's and levels are below the nationally set air quality objectives. Some locations within the county borough are more challenging in terms of poor air quality and associated Nitrogen Dioxide from traffic omissions and these areas have been identified as air quality management areas. By adopting bespoke air quality action plans, the council has identified a number of cost-effective actions relating to managing traffic.

Members were advised that sustainable traffic options are being encouraged such as the Metro, Park and Ride schemes as well as local neighbourhood solutions such as pedestrian routes and walking to school routes. There is also engagement with public transport providers to consider the barriers to using local transport options. The collaboration with partners such as WG is critical going forward, the Leader acknowledged some of the problem areas such as the A470 and further restrictions that have been introduced. The pandemic has disrupted some monitoring due to the reduction in traffic use, although positive for the environment, the longer-term trends will continue to be monitored.

There are a number of papers that have been published such as the Clean Air Wales Bill (white paper) looking at local air quality assessments and the deliverability of options. Clean Air Hubs look at community engagement looking at ways to tackle this long-term problem."

Supplementary Question from Councillor Powell:

"Why is the Leader intent on diverting main road traffic through a residential area to increase air pollution and vehicular movements in a built-up area?"

Response of County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

"The Leader explained that the White Bridge has had a traffic (weight) limit on it for some time before its closure and confirmed that there is no diversion sign in

place to divert traffic in any direction. The Leader confirmed that work has been undertaken at the traffic lights near the junction by the Police Station and advised that extra lane capacity, phasing and road improvements to alleviate some of the traffic pressures has been undertaken. The Council is not diverting traffic through that estate and it is a public bridge, traffic is able to go across the bridge in both directions and he hoped that local residents would be discouraged from using the route as a rat run”

From County Borough Councillor T. Williams to the Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion Services, County Borough Councillor J. Rosser:

“Can the Cabinet Member outline what support the Welsh Government and the Council are providing in terms of Free School Meals?”

Response from County Borough Councillor J Rosser: -

Councillor Rosser advised that support continues to be provided to those eligible for Free School meals (FSM) and in the current arrangement a nutritious hot meal is being provided to pupils attending school. Those pupils not attending school due to shielding or self-isolation as well as remote learners are being supported with a Bacs payment of £3.90 per day.

Councillor Rosser confirmed that as part of the £11m funding last year, WG have committed to supporting FSM pupils through the school holidays and eligible parents will receive a payment of £39.00 per child for the Easter Holiday period. Members were informed that since the start of the pandemic and the end of January 2021 the council has paid out a total of £5.5m in free school meal related payments and the full year is forecast to be £6.3m.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Williams:

“Can the Cabinet please provide information on the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) and what support is available under that scheme?”

Response from County Borough Councillor J Rosser:-

“The PDG provides £125 for school uniform, equipment, sports kits and out of school activities. Welsh Government has extended eligibility to additional school years and the criteria has been extended to cover laptops and/or tablets. Pupils eligible for FSM's can make one claim per year and apply if they are in school years 1,3, ,5 or are aged years 7-11 or are in a Special School, special needs resource based or in the Pupil Referral Units in school years 4,5,7,9 or 11-15 years. Funding for Children Looked After is available in every school year”

From County Borough Councillor H. Boggis to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

“Can the Leader provide an update on discussions with the Welsh Government regarding the timeframe for the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys road now that work has started?”

Response of County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

“The Leader confirmed that work on the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys is progressing well and started before Christmas. It is not just about connectivity from the Midlands to the Valleys but also about safety concerns in respect of sections 5 and 6 in response to a number of incidents and deaths on the road. The current works are scheduled to last three years to completion which will include building a new junction at Cross Fychan and a new link road to the A459 to ensure the link into the Cynon Valley is improved instead of being severed.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Boggis:

“I note the benefit of the connectivity but how much will the project help tourism in the northern area of the Cynon Valley?”

Response of County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

“There are lots of opportunities for tourism such as Zipworld, Penderyn Distillery and Aberdare Country Park, the latter which has received significant funding through the Valleys Taskforce. Improving the travel links, if plans can be taken forward with the metro and rail lines, will enhance the opportunities at the top of the valley for longer stays. It is hoped that the tourist attractions will attract hotel chains to the area so that visitors can stay for a few days and spend money locally which will improve the local economy.”

**From County Borough Councillor A S Fox to the Leader of the Council,
County Borough Councillor A Morgan**

‘Will the Leader make a statement on the recent findings of the report on maternity services at Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB?’

Response of County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

“The first independent report was published on the 25th January 2021 and the Leader confirmed he has a number of meetings with the Chair of the Oversight panel to discuss the recommendations. The Leader advised that the programme of work covers 160 pregnancies between the 1st January 2016 and the 30th September 2018 and is categorised into three areas, ‘Maternal Morbidity and Mortality’, ‘Babies Sadly Stillborn’ and ‘Babies Sadly Died or Needed Specialist Care Immediately After Birth’.

The first report focusses on mothers needing urgent care and needed admission into intensive care with 16 cases in Prince Charles Hospital and 12 cases in the Royal Glamorgan Hospital. The findings mirror the areas of concern previously raised by the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. The Leader explained that in 27 out of the 28 cases, different outcomes would have been reached in the event that different actions were taken by management and staff.

A number of themes have been identified and since been taken forward such as the failure to listen to women, failure to identify and escalate risk, inadequate clinical leadership and inappropriate treatment leading to adverse outcomes which the Leader stressed will need to continue going forward for quite some time.

The Leader confirmed that a significant number of recommendations have partly or wholly put in place, but he recognised that there was still more to be done. The Leader recognised the importance of accountability and the importance of identifying the circumstances that led to some of the outcomes”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Fox:

“The Leader has previously stated that he had no confidence in the Local Health Board, can he confirm if that is still the case?”

Response of County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

“The Leader explained that he had lack of confidence in certain individuals, senior management, but since then the senior management team has changed and four of them have now left the Health Board for different reasons, including the Chief Executive. The close working relationship between the Council and the Health Board, during the pandemic, has strengthened the general approaches and has been constructive. The Leader advised that should he be asked the same question today he would reply that he does have confidence in the Health Board albeit not in every area. In some point in the future at the next presentation to Council, because Council took the same view, he hoped that view could be reversed. He stated he has far more confidence in the senior leadership team now in post.”

118 Council Work Programme 2020/21

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications presented an update regarding the Council Work Programme and announced that there were no amendments or additions to the council work programme 2020/21 as published.

119 Non Attendance by Councillor For Six Months

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented his report in respect of the vacation of Office by a Councillor as a result of non-attendance at meetings. As part of his presentation the Service Director outlined the provisions of Section 85 and 86 of the Local Government Act 1972 (“LGA 1972”), which deal with a vacation of office by a Councillor because of a failure to attend meetings; and information in respect of the non-attendance at meetings by a Member of Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC for over a six-month period, without permission for absence being approved by Council.

Crucially, the Service Director reminded Council that further to the introduction of the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 on the 22nd April 2020, there was a further amendment to section 85 of the LGA 1972 that stated that the period from 22nd April 2020 to the first day on which a meeting is held (and which a Member could attend) was to be disregarded for the purpose of recording a Member’s attendance at meetings and the operation of the six-month rule.

At the time of the introduction to the regulations, the Council re-introduced committee functions incrementally, to allow Members to build experience

operating in a virtual committee environment and for all concerned to gain experience of using the Zoom platform. This approach provided maximum opportunity for all members to engage in training and virtual meetings.

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications explained that despite reasonable efforts to contact Councillor Gavin Williams (for the Penrhiwceiber Electoral ward), the Member had not attended a meeting for a six month period (the last attended meeting of the Council on the 4th March 2020) with no reason for his non-attendance approved by Council within that period.

There followed discussion and opportunity afforded to the individual Group Leaders to ask questions of the Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications in relation to the matter.

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications responded to a number of queries relating to the 'reasonable efforts' to communicate with Councillor Williams since his last attendance on the 4th March 2020. Council was advised that all electronic committee summons and, where requested, hard copies of agendas had been routinely circulated to Members. He added that support to effectively engage in virtual meetings was offered in a number of ways, through open door sessions, open to all members during June, July and August 2020, smaller sessions to support individual needs of members, which all members received an invitation to attend and bespoke sessions for members who required further support from Democratic Services. The Service Director further added that correspondence with Councillor Williams during this time via letter, email and telephone had been undertaken and documented.

The Service Director confirmed that Councillor Williams had not attended any other formal meeting during this period such as Cabinet, Licensing Committee, Planning & Development Committee nor as an LEA Governor which would have meant he had complied with the Regulations. He further confirmed that as the Council's Head of Democratic Services, he was satisfied that all reasonable efforts had been met and sufficient support offered, which had been reflected in his 'Sufficiency of Resources' report to the Democratic Services Committee. At the meeting the positive comments received in respect of the support provided by Democratic Services to Members and specifically the support in relation to virtual meetings had been recorded.

A concern was raised that, as the report states at 4.8 'the six-month rule was therefore recorded from July 2020 when Full Council meetings resumed' there were other members that had not attended meetings within the six month period up until the 31st December 2020.

Following further discussion, at this point in the proceedings and due to the sensitivity of the issue, the motion was put that Members consider the remaining business in camera.

Members **RESOLVED:**

"That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 12 and/or 13

of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to a particular employee, former employee or applicant to become an office holder under the authority and information relating to any consultations with any labour relations matter arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holder under the Authority.”

In his absence, Councillor G William’s representation was presented orally to Council in the form of a letter by the Group Leader for the RCT Independent Group.

(During the discussion Members **RESOLVED** to continue the meeting in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8, to allow consideration of the remaining agenda items and continuation of Council business).

Members further discussed the matter and the following lost motion was moved by County Borough Councillor P. Jarman:

“That this motion be deferred to the Monitoring Officer for the purpose of identifying other Members who failed the 6-month test and it is reported back to the next meeting”

(**Note:** The Plaid Cymru Group, RCT Independent Group, Conservative Group and Councillor Belzak (Independent Member) wished to have it recorded that they voted in favour of the lost motion).

Members **RESOLVED** to open the meeting to the public for the remaining business.

Following further consideration of the matter it was **RESOLVED** to:-

1. Acknowledge the detail provided within the report in respect of the non-attendance at meetings by Councillor G. Williams for over a six-month period without permission for absence being approved by Council; and

2. Agree that in line with Sections 85 and 86 of the Local Government Act 1972 Councillor G. Williams’ office as a Member of Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC (for the Penrhiwceiber Electoral Ward) should now be declared vacant.

(**Note:** The Plaid Cymru Group, RCT Independent Group, Conservative Group and Councillor Belzak (Independent Member) wished to have it recorded that they voted against the motion)

120 Revenue Budget Strategy 2021/22

The Director of Finance and Digital Services referred Members to his report which provided them with information on the final local government settlement for 2021/22 and set out the recommendations of the Cabinet with regard to the Council’s Revenue Budget and the level of Council Tax for the year ending 31st March 2022.

The Director of Finance and Digital Services advised of the “headlines” of the 2021/22 Final Settlement as set out at section 4 of the report and of the settlement for Rhondda Cynon Taf, which amounts to an increase in funding

next year of **3.8%** which is the same as the all Wales average increase. Additional resources in the final costs included £206M to cover supporting costs and income losses due to the pandemic and covers the first 6 months of the new year.

The Director explained that the Council's updated budget requirement for next year was presented to Council on the 20th January 2021 which saw a remaining budget gap of £4.057M. Cabinet have considered their budget strategy options for 2021/22 against this detail, which is set out from paragraph 7 of the report.

The Director advised of a number of areas identified for additional resource and investment such as extending the Non Domestic Local Relief Scheme, additional resources to further the Councils Carbon and Climate reduction activity, to recruit more graduates and expand the wellbeing programmes and a number of fees and charges are to be frozen next year.

In conclusion, the Director referred Members to the summary of the budget strategy proposals set out at table 1 at section 10 of the report with the remaining budget gap of £711,000 which can be balanced by an allocation from the already replenished transition funding, resulting in a proposed balanced budget for next year of £527.903M.

There followed discussion from the Group Leaders who acknowledged the levels of engagement for the consultation process in relation to the Council budget and a number of queries such as the grant relating to sanitary products to schools, Covid related costs which Welsh Government have continued to fund Local Government in Wales for all costs and income losses which at the end of Quarter 3 will rise to £46M estimate for the full year.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the written statement from the Minister for Housing and Local Government (Julie James MS) and the table on the 2021/22 Final local government settlement, reproduced at Appendix 1;
2. Note the implications for the Council and the remaining budget gap as set out at section 5;
3. Agree a Council Tax increase for 2021/22 of 2.65%;
4. Agree the uplift to the aggregate Schools Budget as detailed at section 8;
5. Agree the budget strategy proposals as set out at paragraphs 10.3(a) to 10.3(i);
6. Agree the use of the 'Medium Term Financial Planning & Service Transformation Reserve' as transition funding, totalling £0.711M for 2021/22;
7. Approve Tables 3 and 4 in Section 13 of the report as the basis of allocating resources to the Individual Schools Budget (ISB), to other Council Services, and to meet its corporate financing requirements; and
8. Agree the Council's overall budget for 2021/22 at £527.903M, in order to

pass the necessary statutory resolutions to set the Council Tax for the forthcoming financial year by the statutory deadline of the 11th March 2021.

(**Note:** The Conservative Group abstained from voting on the matter).

121 Council Tax Resolution

In his report the Director of Finance & Digital Services provided Members with details of the calculation of the Authority's Council Tax for the financial year ending 31st March 2022 prior to passing the necessary statutory resolutions.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to:-

1. Note the level of the precept from the Police & Crime Commissioner for South Wales;
2. Note the level of the Community Council Precepts, as detailed in Appendix 1;
3. Pass the formal Council Tax resolutions for the financial year ending 31st March 2022, as contained in Appendix 2; and
4. Note the comments of the Director of Finance & Digital Services upon robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves as detailed at paragraph 9.2.

122 Capital Programme 2021/22 – 2023/24

This report sets out the Council's proposed Capital Programme for 2021/22 to 2023/24, following receipt of the final local government settlement for 2021/22.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to:-

1. Note the detail of the final 2021/22 local government settlement for capital expenditure, reproduced at Appendix 1;
2. Agree to the release of the Earmarked Reserve balances as detailed in paragraph 5.3;
3. Agree to the reallocation of resources as detailed in paragraphs 5.5 – 5.8;
4. Agree to allocate the funding released from Earmarked Reserves and existing core capital funding to the investment priorities as detailed in paragraph 6.2;
5. Agree the proposed 'core' three- year programme detailed at Appendix 2;
6. Agree the proposed total three-year Capital Programme, detailed at Appendices 3 (a) to (d), which includes the following non-core capital funding:

- Prudential borrowing to support 21st Century School Schemes and Highways Improvements schemes;
- Capital grants for specific schemes;
- Third party contributions;
- Additional Council resources previously allocated to support existing schemes and Corporate Plan investment priorities; and
- The investment priorities detailed in paragraph 6.2, which are funded by additional one-off Welsh Government capital funding detailed in paragraph 3.2, the release of Earmarked Reserves as per paragraph 5.3, and reallocation of resource as per paragraphs 5.5 – 5.8.

(Note: The Conservative Group abstained from voting on the matter).

123 Treasury Management Strategy

The Director of Finance & Digital Services presented his report with the purpose of setting out the Council's:-

- Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22;
- Investment Strategy for 2021/22;
- Treasury Indicators for 2020/21 (actuals to date) and 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24; and
- Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy, Treasury Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement as set out in the report.

124 Capital Strategy Report 2021/22

Members were presented with the report of the Director of Finance & Digital Services which set out a high level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of Council services along with an overview of the associated risk, its management and the implications for future financial sustainability.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Capital Strategy report incorporating the Prudential Indicators.

(Note: The Conservative Group abstained from voting on the matter)

125 The Council's Pay Policy Statement 2021/22

In accordance with Section 38(1) of the Localism Act, 2011, the Director, Human Resources provided Members with information in respect of the Council's 2021/22 Pay Policy Statement.

Following discussion and assurance that the Exit Cap has been disapplied,

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Pay Policy Statement as attached at Appendix A of the report.

126 NOTICE OF MOTION

To consider the under-mentioned Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors L. M. Adams, S. Bradwick, D. R. Bevan, H Boggis, J. Bonetto, J Brencher, A Calvert, G. Caple, A. Crimmings, A. Davies-Jones, L De Vet, J. Edwards, J Elliott, S. Evans, M Fidler Jones, M. Forey, A. Fox, E. George, M. Griffiths, J. Harries, G. Holmes, G. Hopkins, G. Jones, R. Lewis, W Lewis, C. Leyshon, A. Morgan, S. Morgans, M. A. Norris, D. Owen Jones, S Pickering, S. Powell, S. Rees, A. Roberts, J. Rosser, G Stacey, M Tegg, G Thomas, W Treeby, R K Turner, M. Webber, D. Williams, T. Williams, C. J. Willis and R. Yeo.

“The COVID-19 global pandemic has been exceptionally difficult for businesses, with many across our nation, the U.K. and beyond having to close as the world looks to control the spread of the virus and keep people safe. This has naturally had a detrimental impact on those who work in the affected sectors, with millions across the U.K. placed on furlough and many others sadly losing their jobs. In light of this unprecedented situation, now is not the time for disputes over pay and conditions.

This Council notes the on-going dispute between British Gas (and their parent company Centrica) and their hardworking employees – who have been threatened with job losses if they do not accept worse pay and conditions.

Due to the strike action supported by the overwhelming majority of staff and engineers, over 100,000 customers have been left waiting for service, and this number is set to grow over the coming weeks throughout the winter.

This dispute is an unnecessary disruption, with Centrica posting a considerable profit of £901m in 2019 (before exceptional items and tax), whilst the profitability of the home heating business in the UK rose by 27% in the first 6 months of 2020 with a considerable proportion working from home due to the pandemic.

This Council **notes**:

- The valuable work undertaken by staff and engineers to keep British homes warm – with workers often having to go to people’s homes during the pandemic to ensure that they have access to warmth and comfortable living.
- The unjustified actions and threats made by Centrica to British Gas employees – particularly given the recent financial position of the company.

This Council therefore **resolves** to:

- Request that the Council Leader writes to Centrica to outline this Council’s support for local British Gas workers.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Notice of Motion.

(**Note:** The Conservative Group abstained from voting on the matter).

This meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Cllr S Powderhill

**Chairman
& Cllr G Hughes
Deputy Chairman**