



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 24 November 2021 at 5.00pm.

County Borough Councillors - Council Members in attendance:-

Councillor S Powderhill (Chair)

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

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Mr P Nicholls, Service Director Legal Services

81 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors, H Boggis, J Edwards, E George, E Griffiths, G Hughes, J James (MS), R Lewis, M Powell, S M Powell, M Tegg and R Turner.

82 Declaration of Interest

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

Agenda Item 6- Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund 2020/21 Statement of Accounts and External Audit Report

Agenda Item 7 - Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) - Inter Authority Agreement

- Councillor A Crimmings- "I pay into the Local Authority Pension Scheme via my Council allowance and via Coleg y Cymoedd pension scheme"
- Councillor A Roberts – "I am a member of the local authority pension scheme and so is my son who works for the Authority"
- Councillor D Owen-Jones – "I am a member of the local authority pension scheme"
- Councillor S Bradwick – "I am the chairman of South Wales Fire & Rescue Service Pension Board and RCT Council has a service level agreement with SWFRS to provide this service for our firefighters pensions"
- Councillor S Bradwick- "I have a pension from RCT and I pay now into the pension scheme as an Elected Member "
- Councillor L Jones – "I am a member of the local authority pension scheme"
- Councillor G Caple – "I am in receipt of a pension from the LGPS and I am also a Member of the Pension Fund Committee"
- Councillor D R Bevan – "I have two family members, one in receipt of a council pension and one is a member of the Pension Scheme. I am a member of the local authority Pension Scheme"

Agenda item 11B – Notice of Motion

- Councillor L M Adams – "Four members of my family are serving in the Armed Forces"

83 Announcements

- Councillor A S Fox (on behalf of ward member Councillor R Williams) announced that two groups in Penrhiwceiber have been awarded the High Sheriff of Glamorgan award, Lee Gardens Paddling Pool and St.

Winifred's Church. Both have been recognised for their community and outreach work and projects they have undertaken (especially during covid) which have made lives a little better for many families. Some of the projects include, tackling holiday hunger, tackling period poverty, supporting new mothers' groups and holding weekly arts and crafts sessions for children. They have supported over 50 families each week with food essentials during covid which has been invaluable. Councillor Fox requested that a letter of congratulations is sent on behalf of the Mayor to the groups.

- Councillor W Jones wished to congratulate Blaencwm Chapel on achieving a Green Flag from Keep Wales Tidy for their community garden. They also run a Foodbank from the Church and the 'Pay as You Feel' café where residents can pay as little as they like if they are struggling to afford food. Councillor Jones also wished to congratulate Councillor G Davies and his wife who run the café.
- Councillor G R Davies announced that 'Welcome to Our Woods' weekly Woodland Therapy sessions have received the British, NHS Forest Award 2021 for Pioneering Use Of Green Spaces by Healthcare Professionals. Woodland Therapy was born 3yrs ago as part of the 'Be Active RCT' and the National Lottery Funded, 'Create Your Space' project. It's gone from strength to strength and become sustainable with many participants now volunteers and welcoming in new people. The main component of the sessions is relaxation through mindfulness in nature. Councillor G R Davies asked if a letter can be sent from the Mayor to congratulate the group on its achievements.

84 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 20th October 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

85 Statements

The Leader of the Council advised that following a decision taken by Cabinet the Real Living Wage has been extended to adult independent sector social care providers to provide older people residential and nursing care, supported living, extra care and home care and personal assistants providing care and support through direct payments. He added that the Council has already taken steps to introduce the Real Living Wage for home care provided by the independent sector through the Council's framework contract arrangements as well as to its own in-house staff.

With the Real Living Wage being implemented from the 1st December 2021 no employee working within social care for RCT Council will earn less than £9.50 per hour which will increase to £9.90 per hour from the 1st April 2022. The Leader confirmed that the Council is looking to bring that increased hourly rate forward and a further update will be reported to Cabinet and Council in the New Year to confirm the implementation date.

The Leader advised that discussions are ongoing with Welsh Government regarding the Real Living Wage, to ensure a sustainable workforce for care and support at home and in residential and nursing care. The introduction of the Real

Living Wage across this workforce will assist with the recruitment and retention challenges currently being faced within the local authority as with many others across Wales.

86 Members' Questions

Question from County Borough Councillor R. Williams to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, County Borough Councillor C Leyshon:

"Will the Cabinet Member please make a statement on this year's Santa Appeal and outline what role Members can play in supporting the initiative?"

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

Councillor C Leyshon advised that the Santa Appeal, organised by the Council, is a long-standing appeal that supports families who are known to Children's services who are not looked after. Where the Council works specifically with one child in a family and there are other siblings in the household, they will also be supported. Councillor Leyshon added that the success of the Appeal is reliant on the generosity of the public, local businesses, as well as the Elected Members and Council staff.

Councillor Leyshon acknowledged that this year has been particularly challenging for families with the Universal Credit uplift ending along with increasing costs of energy and fuel. She thanked Members for their help to ensure that hundreds of children are able to have a gift on Christmas Day. Councillor Leyshon advised that Members can assist by promoting the appeal within their wards via their own social media accounts and to encourage local residents and businesses to become involved in the appeal by pledging to purchase a gift for a child or young person.

There was no supplementary question

Question from County Borough Councillor M Forey to the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Housing, County Borough Councillor D R Bevan:

"How is the Council supporting our town centres to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, both in the immediate future and over the longer term?"

Response from County Borough Councillor D R Bevan:

Councillor D R Bevan announced that a range of initiatives and measures already introduced will continue and develop in the future such as the £460,000 of direct grant support to help businesses adapt to new trading conditions, such as outdoor spaces, with support from WG. More than 80 businesses have received this support, including smaller town centres such as Abercynon and Treherbert.

Councillor D R Bevan advised that the Council's own Enterprise Investment Fund has been repurposed to make it more flexible and for businesses to be able to take advantage of the fund during the Covid recovery period. A new

£35m business grant support scheme for post Covid recovery launched across Wales yesterday and will be delivered by the Council. He added that work with the RCT BIDs and Chambers of Trade, including a 'Shop Local' marketing campaign, has allowed each of the key towns, Pontypridd, Treorchy and Aberdare to help market themselves.

Councillor Bevan explained that a healthy pipeline of projects for town centre properties is coming forward for development including initiatives to increase footfall and local spend in towns, taking advantage of new sources of funding such as the UK Levelling Up Fund. Councillor Bevan referred to the Porth Transport Hub which will allow greater access into the town using bus and the new Metro services.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Housing advised that the total support amounts to more than £75 million with a significant amount directed at town centre businesses.

There was no supplementary question

Question from County Borough Councillor D. Williams to the Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion Services, County Borough Councillor J. Rosser:

"Are you able to provide more information on the recent announcement that the Cabinet has approved further funding for 21st Century Schools improvements, specifically relating to the proposal for Glyncoch?"

Response from County Borough Councillor J Rosser:

Councillor Rosser advised that subject to Cabinet approval a statutory school organisation consultation process will commence in the New Year to create a brand-new primary school for Glyncoch. She added that not all of the other projects within the 21st Century investment programme require a statutory consultation.

Councillor Rosser advised that further updates will be provided as projects are developed and timescales are confirmed, and she anticipated that local residents within the community will be eagerly watching this progress.

Supplementary question from Councillor D Williams:

Councillor Williams welcomed the progress and he added that the community will certainly be looking forward to this. He asked what engagement the Council will be undertaken with staff and pupils in terms of the colour schemes and internal decorations?

Response from County Borough Councillor J Rosser:

Councillor Rosser advised that the development of the proposals involves a number of engagement stages such as:

- Development meetings with the headteacher to discuss room locations, overall site layout and the wider staff will also have the opportunity to

contribute to room layouts and furniture;

- Pupils on the school council will have the opportunity to put forward their views on colour proposals, whilst the contractor for the scheme will also engage with pupils during the design and construction phases;

In conclusion, Councillor Rosser added that all these events are subject to Cabinet approval for a statutory consultation. Business case approval will also be sought to finalise funding arrangements.

Question from County Borough Councillor S. Pickering to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Heritage Services, County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings:

“Can the Cabinet Member of Environment, Leisure and Heritage Services provide an update on the investment in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park outline any future schemes that are planned?”

Councillor Crimmings confirmed that works have progressed throughout 2021 to deliver a £1.2m package of improvements funded from the Council and Welsh Government via the Valleys Regional Park initiative. Improvements have included a full refurbishment of all the main footways, the installation of upgraded LED streetlighting and a new changing facility at the National Lido of Wales, Lido Ponty.

Councillor Crimmings advised of a further £1.9m which has been secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Welsh Government for the design and restoration of the sunken garden, bandstand area, rock outcrop area and the provision of a new training/activity centre. Completion of this element of the project is scheduled for early 2023.

There was no supplementary question

Question from County Borough Councillor P Howe to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure & Heritage Services, County Borough Councillor A Crimmings:

“Could you please give an update on the changing rooms at Ferndale Darren Park?”

Response from Councillor A Crimmings:

Councillor Crimmings confirmed that the replacement of the changing rooms that serve the Astro-turf in Darren Park were approved as part of the 20/21 Parks Capital programme. She added that due to the pandemic, the project has seen a number of setbacks, primarily due to restricted access to the site.

Councillor Crimmings advised that this has culminated in the recent cancellation of the order for a de-mountable which was due for imminent delivery to site and the decision to proceed with a brick building as a replacement. Officers are in the process of finalising designs in readiness for submitting an application for planning permission as soon as possible, hopefully as early as next month.

Supplementary question from Councillor P Howe:

Councillor Howe advised that his supplementary question had already been responded to by the Cabinet Member.

Question from County Borough Councillor P Jarman to County Borough Councillor L Hooper, Chair of the Democratic Services Committee:

“Please will you make a statement on diversity in Public Life?”

Response from Councillor L Hooper:

Councillor Hooper advised that diversity in public life is vital to ensuring the democratic process is representative of those that Members seek to represent and is in everyone’s interest. Greater diversity results in better decision making and greater engagement with those residents. He added that since becoming Chair of the Democratic Services Committee, much work has gone into making the role of a Councillor more attractive through a variety of ways such as through hybrid meetings to ensure meetings are as accessible as possible for Members and making the care support for Members more accessible regardless of their individual care needs.

Councillor Hooper referred to the IRP report which set out proposals for the remuneration of Council, to which he had responded as Chair of the Democratic Services Committee. He advised of the greater improvements to the Council website to make information more available and engaging and a greater presence on social media. In conclusion, Councillor Hooper stressed that there is always more to achieve in this area, through the Democratic Services Committee, for Elected Members and for all Political Groups.

Supplementary question from Councillor P Jarman:

Councillor Jarman referred to the Council website, which she stated should be a reliable source of public information and lists on the basis of equality and diversity the names and details of all 75 Members who represent this council regardless of their gender or political affiliations. Councillor Jarman advised that however, on the council pages listing the Elected MP’s and MS’s, although it only shows the 3 Labour constituency Members in each case. Councillor Jarman pointed out that it discriminates against those that have been democratically elected as none of the 4 Plaid Cymru or 4 Conservative Senedd Regional Members for South Wales Central or South Wales West are represented, despite two being members of this Council. Other omissions include constituency members are Huw Irranca-Davies, Labour MS for Ogmore and Chris Elmore, Labour MP for Ogmore and who also represents part of RCT. Councillor Jarman asked Councillor Hooper what he will do to rectify the situation.

Response from Councillor L Hooper:

Councillor Hooper reminded Council of his pledge as Chair of the Democratic Services Committee, that Members were welcome to contact him regarding any democratic related query. He added that he would look to update the relevant webpages and request a report to the next Democratic Services Committee.

Question from County Borough Councillor J. Brencher to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

“Can the Council Leader update on the completion and subsequent marketing of Llys Cadwyn in Pontypridd?”

The Leader advised that the project was completed in 2020, in accordance with the agreed programme and since completion numerous tenants have already taken occupation and the development has contributed to an increased footfall within the Town. He explained that a marketing strategy had proved very successful to date and has already resulted in 3 separate organisations taking occupation of 3 Llys Cadwyn, those being Transport for Wales, Bradleys Coffee and Lounges who are all located in the largest of the three buildings. The Council used 1 Llys Cadwyn as a hub during the pandemic and more recently the gym, library and ‘one for all’ service have been operating successfully. Heads of Terms have been agreed for a prospective tenant for the occupation of the ground floor and first floor of 2 Llys Cadwyn and both parties have appointed their legal advisers. In conclusion, the Leader reported that early discussions are underway with prospective tenants for the small retail unit that fronts onto Taff Street.

87 Council Work Programme 2020/21

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications advised that the next Council meeting to be held on the 15th December would be undertaken through a hybrid approach. He added that training will be available to all Members through an ‘open door session’ should they wish to drop in and attend the sessions in the Council Chamber. Two items will be considered at the next Full Council meeting:

- The RCT draft Diversity Pledge
- Two Annual Reports 2020/21 (Democratic Services Committee and Audit Committee)

88 Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund 2020/21 Statement of Accounts and External Audit Report

Mr M Jones, Audit Wales presented Members with the report on the Statement of Accounts for the Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund 2020-21 commenting that the full report and associated appendices are attached for Members’ information. Further, Mr Jones wished to acknowledge that there is little to report and no amendments to bring to Members’ attention, adding that is testimony to the efficiency of the Finance Service within RCT Council.

The Director of Finance & Digital Services advised that the accounts were duly prepared by early July 2021 and passed through the audit process, all financial statements are unaffected and the fund value of just under £4.5 billion. The Director assured Council in its role as the administering authority to the fund that robust governance arrangements are in place, including the Pension Fund Committee and RCT Pension Board.

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

- (a) Approve and note the Statement of Accounts for the Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund (Appendix 1), and associated Letter of

Representation (Appendix 2); and

- (b) Note the outcome of the 12th July 2021 Governance and Audit Committee meeting as required by the Local Government Measure (paragraph 8.2).

89 Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) - Inter Authority Agreement

In presenting his report, the Director of Finance & Digital Services set out the details of proposed amendments to the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) Inter Authority Agreement (IAA).

The Director advised that in 2017 Council agreed to the establishment of the Wales Pension Partnership Investment Pooling Arrangements which was governed by an Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) and decision making within a Joint Governance Committee (JGC). He added that all eight Pension Funds in Wales are part of this collaboration which was in response to UK Government mandated pooling requirements for pension fund investments. Since establishing the pension partnership, 68% of the Wales Pension Fund aggregate investments have transferred into the WPP sub funds to the value of £14.6 billion.

The Director explained that it is proposed that the inter authority agreement is now Updated to allow further tranches of investment asset classes and to enable a non-voting co-opted scheme member representative be appointed to the JGC, in addition to other minor updates to reflect operational working arrangements.

Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** to note and agree the proposed amendments as set out at paragraph 5 within the report and at Appendix 1.

90 2021-22 Mid-Year Treasury Management Stewardship Report

In accordance with the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management the Director of Finance and Digital Services provided Members with information on the Council's Treasury Management activity during the first six months of 2021/22 and Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the same period.

The Director advised that there has been an increase in the borrowing requirement this year albeit no long- term borrowing has been taken in the first half of the year. Capital charges are estimated to be on budget at the mid-year point. The Council remains under borrowed as compared to its underlying need to borrow or capital financing requirements by £150M and are well within the operational boundary and authorised limit. He reported that average cash balances for the first half of the year were just over £20M with a very low return on short term investments emphasising the current strategy of minimising cash balances and maintaining an under-borrowing position.

In conclusion, the Director of Finance and Digital Services advised that the Council has been compliant with all indicators and limits.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the content of the report.

91 Nominations for Freedom of the County Borough

The Service Director presented his report to advise and seek Members' approval in respect of the recommendations of the Freedom of the Borough Working Group, chaired by the Mayor which met on the 10th May 2021 and 11th October 2021.

The Service Director advised that the recommendations of the Freedom of the Borough Working Group include awarding the accolade of Freedom of the County Borough to Mr Neil Jenkins in recognition of his outstanding contribution to rugby and the National team and to key workers in recognition of their efforts during the pandemic. With regards to the second recommendation, the Service Director advised that the Working Group (comprising of the Mayor, Deputy Leader and Leaders of the Political Groups) propose that the honour is awarded by way of a free public event, subject to agreement by Full Council, the arrangements to progress in the Summer of 2022 and for the event to be as accessible as possible.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to support the recommendations of the Freedom of the Borough Working Group in awarding the accolade of Freedom of the County Borough to:

1. Neil Jenkins (before the end of the Municipal Year 2021/22)
2. Key Workers (the free and accessible event to be organised in the next Municipal Year 2022/23)

92 Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Principles (Local Policy) 2022 - 2025

The Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services presented her report which outlined the revised Statement of Principles, under the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005 (i.e. the local policy statement for the management of gambling activity within the boundary of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council), for the period 2022 – 2025 in accordance with statutory requirements.

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

1. Approve the revisions to the policy, which had been considered and endorsed by both the Licensing Committee on [14th September 2021](#) and subsequently by Cabinet on [18th October 2021](#); and
2. Adopt the revised Statement of Principles in line with statutory requirements.

93 Notices of Motion

The following Notice of Motion was received standing in the names of Councillors L Hooper, S Trask and J James:

“The aspiration of home ownership is a natural instinct for many individuals and families across Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, and it is an aspiration this Council endeavours to support.

For many individuals and families, the aspiration of owning their own home looks increasingly difficult to achieve due to rising house prices and a shortage of properties. One major contributor to this is the increasing tendency of housing developers to engage in a practice which is commonly referred to as ‘land-banking’, whereby the developer succeeds in securing planning

permission but does not deliver upon the proposed development.

This is an issue that affects the whole United Kingdom and in this County Borough alone could explain as many as 4,517 properties that were granted between 2012/13 and 2019/20 but have yet to be built.

Though there are a multitude of factors that can explain why a successful housing application isn't delivered upon, it is clear that a great many of these are as a result of the practice of 'land-banking'.

As well as preventing many of our residents in making the first step on to the housing ladder, it can also erode the trust of residents in the planning system when 'brownfield' sites are being 'land-banked' by developers - putting pressure on the Local Development Plan to propose new sites for housing allocations that may be less suitable for such development.

Therefore, this Council resolves:

-That the Leader of the Council writes to the Welsh Minister for Climate Change (whose portfolio includes housing) asking that Local Authorities in Wales are given the power to levy council tax charges on incomplete applications that have failed to materialise after an agreed timeframe set by the local authorities.

-To ask council officers to bring forward a report to Full Council in the New Year, setting out what actions can be taken in the short-term to reduce the impact of this harmful practice”.

Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** not to adopt the Notice of Motion.

(**Note:** The following Members of the Conservative Group County Borough Councillors L Hooper and S Trask as well as the Independent Member County Borough Councillor S Belzak wished to have it recorded as voting in favour of the Notice of Motion).

The following Notice of Motion was received standing in the names of Councillors G. Davies, P Jarman, E. Webster, D. Grehan, E. Stephens, L. Jones, J. Williams, A. Cox, S. Evans, A. Chapman, S. Rees-Owen, M. Weaver, J. Davies, J. Cullwick, K. Morgan, H. Fychan and E. Griffiths.

“This Council expresses concern at the policy of the UK government to recruit 16-year-olds into the army. The UK government is the only country in NATO or Europe to do this.

This policy has adverse consequences for recruits of 16 and 17 years of age. Evidence shows that: -

- 1) They are twice as likely to be killed in active service than older recruits.
- 2) They are more likely to suffer mental health problem such as PTSD, and depression.
- 3) They are more likely to have alcohol and drug related addictions
- 4) They are more likely to commit suicide.
- 5) 28% fail to complete the basic training.

The policy has been opposed by the Children's Commissioner for Wales on

the ground that it conflicts with the United Nation's Convention on the Rights for the Child.

Council resolves to write to the UK Prime Minister requesting that the policy be changed as a matter of urgency. A copy of the letter will also be sent to the Welsh First Minister”.

Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** not to adopt the Notice of Motion.

(Note: The following members of the Plaid Cymru Group present, County Borough Councillors A Chapman, A Cox, J Cullwick, G Davies, J Davies, S Evans, H Fychan, D Grehan, P Jarman, L Jones, K Morgan, S Rees-Owen, E Stephens, M Weaver, E Webster and J Williams and the Independent Member County Borough Councillor S Belzak wished to have it recorded as voting in favour of the Notice of Motion

The following members of the RCT Independent Group present, County Borough Councillors P Howe, K Jones, W Jones, W Owen and L Walker and the Conservative Group present County Borough Councillors L Hooper and S Trask wished to have it recorded as voting against the Notice of Motion).

This meeting closed at 6.40 pm

**Cllr S Powderhill
Chairman.**