



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 8 March 2023 at 5.00 pm.

This meeting was live streamed, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-

Councillor G Hughes (Chair)

Councillor M Ashford	Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor R Davis
Councillor E L Dunning	Councillor J Edwards
Councillor J Elliott	Councillor S Emanuel
Councillor H Gronow	Councillor B Harris
Councillor S Hickman	Councillor W Hughes
Councillor G O Jones	Councillor W Jones
Councillor R Lewis	Councillor W Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon	Councillor C Lisle
Councillor M Maohoub	Councillor A Morgan OBE
Councillor W Owen	Councillor M Norris
Councillor D Parkin	Councillor M Powell
Councillor C Preedy	Councillor L A Tomkinson
Councillor S Trask	Councillor W Treeby
Councillor M Webber	

The following Councillors were present online:-

Councillor S Evans	Councillor B Stephens
Councillor L Addiscott	Councillor J Barton
Councillor R Bevan	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor S Bradwick	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor J Cook	Councillor S J Davies
Councillor A Dennis	Councillor V Dunn
Councillor A J Ellis	Councillor L Ellis
Councillor D Evans	Councillor P Evans
Councillor R Evans	Councillor A Fox
Councillor D Grehan	Councillor G Holmes
Councillor K Johnson	Councillor G Jones
Councillor C Middle	Councillor K Morgan
Councillor N H Morgan	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor S Rees
Councillor A Roberts MBE	Councillor A O Rogers
Councillor J Smith	Councillor G Stacey
Councillor J Turner	Councillor G L Warren
Councillor K Webb	Councillor D Williams
Councillor G E Williams	Councillor R Williams
Councillor T Williams	Councillor D Wood
Councillor R Yeo	

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Group Director Finance, Digital Services & Frontline Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services

Apologies for absence

Councillor P Binning Councillor S Evans
Councillor G Hopkins Councillor S Powderhill

80 Welcome & Apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors P Binning, Sera Evans, G Hopkins and S Powderhill.

81 Declaration of Interest

Councillor L Tomkinson – “I am a Community Councillor for Pontypridd Town Council.”

Councillor M Powell – “I am a Community Councillor for Pontypridd Town Council”

Councillor S Trask – “I am a Community Councillor for Llantwit Fardre Community Council”

Councillor B Harris – “I am a Member of the South Wales Police & Crime Panel.”

Councillor W Owen – “I am a Community Councillor for Pontyclun Community Council”

Councillor J Brencher – “I am a Community Councillor for Pontypridd Town Council”

Councillor S Bradwick – “I am the Chair of the South Wales Fire & Rescue Service”

Councillor G Holmes – “ I am a Community Councillor for Llantrisant Community Council and a member of South Wales Fire & Rescue Service”

Councillor L Addiscott – Personal – “I am a Member of the South Wales Police & Crime Panel.”

Councillor J Bonetto – “I am a Community Councillor for Taffs Well & Nantgarw Community Council”

Councillor G Stacey – “I am a Community Councillor for Llantwit Fardre Community Council”

Councillor D Wood – “I am a Community Councillor for Pontypridd Town Council”

Councillor D Grehan – “I am a Community Councillor for Tonyrefail Community Council”

Councillor K Johnson – “I am a Community Councillor for Llantwit Fardre Community Council”

Councillor P Evans – “I am a Community Councillor for Ynysybwl & Coed Y Cwm Community Council”

Councillor G Jones – “I have a close relative who is employed by South Wales Police”

Councillor J Turner – “I am a Community Councillor for Llanharan Community Council”

Councillor H Gronow - “I am a Community Councillor for Pontypridd Town Council”

Councillor C Lises - “I am a Community Councillor for Pontypridd Town Council”

Councillor A Ellis - “I am a Community Councillor for Ynysybwl & Coed Y Cwm Community Council”

Councillor D Owen-Jones - “I am a Community Councillor for Tonyrefail Community Council”

Councillor J Smith – “My partner is an employee of South Wales Fire & Rescue Service”

Councillor A Roberts MBE – “I am a member of South Wales Fire & Rescue Service”

Councillor D Evans – “I am a Community Councillor for Llanharan Community Council”

Councillor G Warren – “I am a Community Councillor for Llantwit Fardre Community Council”

Councillor R Bevan – “I have a family member who is employed by South Wales Police”

Councillor B Stephens - “I am a Community Councillor for Llanharan Community Council”

The following declarations were made later in the meeting (Minute No’s 84, 89 and 90B refer)

Agenda item 5 – Members Questions

County Borough Councillor J Edwards - “My employer Interlink is referenced in the response of the Cabinet Member for Development & Prosperity (question 4)”

County Borough Councillor K Johnson – “My employer, Transport for Wales, is

referenced in the supplementary question (question 2, update on the Metro)

Agenda item 9 – Capital Programme

Councillor S Trask – “I am a Governor of Maesybryn Primary School, which is a beneficiary of 21st century schools funding”

Councillor K Johnson - “I am a Governor of Maesybryn Primary School, which is a beneficiary of 21st century schools funding”

Agenda item 10B – Notice of Motion

Councillor M Powell – “I carry out work for agencies who have private rented properties on their books”

Councillor M Powell – “I have a close relative who is a landlord for a private rental property”

Councillor L Addiscott – “ I own private rental properties”

Councillor V Dunn – “I own a private rental property”

Councillor C Middle - “I own a private rental property”

Councillor M Ashford - “I own a private rental property”

Councillor W Hughes - “I own a private rental property”

Councillor A Crimmings - “I own a private rental property”

Councillor R Williams - “I own a private rental property”

82 Minutes

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the hybrid Council meetings held on the 15th December 2022 and 18th January 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meetings.

83 Announcements

The following announcements were made:

- The Deputy Leader, County Borough Councillor M Webber announced that as part of International Women's Day she had attended and addressed an event on behalf of the Local Authority. Councillor Webber referred to the strong representation of women both politically and within the organisation and of the Council's commitment to continue to encourage and support the representation of women.
- The Leader of the Opposition, County Borough Councillor K Morgan paid tribute to the late former Councillor for Ynysybwl, Brian Arnold. He was first elected as Community Councillor in 1986 and then elected as County Borough Councillor in 1999 retaining his seat until he stepped down in 2012. In 2003 he was Chairperson of RCT Council and raised over £30k for

his chosen charities. He was dedicated to his community of Ynysybwl and to the party of Plaid Cymru.

- County Borough Councillor J Brencher extended an invitation to all Members to an event in Pontypridd Town Council on Saturday, 11th March at 12pm to celebrate International Women's Day.

84 Members' Questions

1) Question from County Borough Councillor S. Emanuel to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

"Can the Leader provide an update on the Council's response to winter weather events?"

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor A Morgan OBE:

The Leader advised that Council's winter period extends between October and April each year with the core period between November and March. During this period, additional and evening crews are used and split into two shifts which provides resilience during the out of hours period. In times of 'no shouts' where gritting is not required the crews are used in other areas such as general gulley maintenance or repairing fences at night on main roads when they are quieter.

The Leader explained that the precautionary salting network (PSN) were salting through the night repeatedly from 10pm with a 6am shift change and will continue throughout the day into the night again due to the snowfall. A number of smaller 4 x 4 gritters, some fitted with snow ploughs, are being used to access and salt the side roads. The public car parks and larger school grounds are kept as clear as possible.

The Leader advised that the Council's winter maintenance plan is robust to deal with cold weather however, he stressed that, although crews were doing their best to keep the mountain roads open with repeated salting, the larger vehicles can be dangerous to use when the weather is severe. He commented that the decision was made earlier today during the difficult weather conditions to stop using the ploughs on the mountain to keep staff safe with a review in place tomorrow.

The Leader reminded Members that the Council's winter plan is available to view on the Council's website and he welcomed any queries or questions particularly from newly elected Members who wish to relay information to their residents. He also advised that any queries can be submitted directly to officers should they wish to raise them.

Supplementary question from Councillor S Emanuel

"Can you outline the process for clearing the mountain roads, particularly Rhigos?"

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor A Morgan OBE:

The Leader advised that it is an operational decision and added that the Council always prioritise these strategic routes. There are times in difficult conditions when, by the time the roads are ploughed and salted and the drivers return to the start, the road is completely covered and impassable to regular traffic. In the past when the conditions have been severe, and ploughs have been damaged, the Council will use

JCB's and other machinery to maintain the highways.

The Leader reiterated that should Members need any further, specific information, the depots would be able to provide that to them.

2) Question from County Borough Councillor S. Morgans to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

"Can the Leader please make a statement on the recent free bus travel trial announcement?"

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor A Morgan OBE:

The Leader advised that feedback has been positive, and buses are busier as residents take advantage of the free bus travel. He explained that this is funding secured through the UK Government Levelling up Fund and part of the funding conditions mean it has to be used prior to the end of March 2023. Where the trial has been undertaken in other local authorities and finished, there has been a 30% increase in passenger use, which helps make bus services more sustainable. The Leader added that once the scheme has ended, the impact will be assessed, and feedback considered before looking to do something similar later in the year.

Further funding for next year has been secured to the value of £1.1m and the following financial year for £1.2m, depending on the outcome of this pilot, a similar scheme could possibly be brought forward in December during the Christmas period to support town centres.

The Leader concluded that in addition, this free trial does support residents with the cost-of-living crisis, as well as the environmental aspect to the pilot and it is hoped to encourage residents away from private car usage, where possible to support the bus industry and network.

Supplementary question from Councillor S Morgans

"Can the Leader provide an update on the Metro?"

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor A Morgan OBE:

The Leader confirmed that the Metro is progressing well with the overhead lines in Cynon being installed in July this year with new trains being trialled and operating along the Cynon lines in the late evening to ensure they are running smoothly.

He commented that there is still a huge amount of work to be done on the electrification in the Rhondda and there will undoubtedly be lots of disruption. In view of this, the Leader suggested a briefing session is held with Transport for Wales, open to all Members but particularly relevant to Rhondda Members, to receive updates on how the Metro will be rolled out. In conclusion, the Leader commented that the Metro is much anticipated and very welcome for all residents who use the trains daily.

3) Question from County Borough Councillor J. Edwards to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

"Will the Leader make a statement on current and planned Flood Alleviation Schemes

across the County Borough?”

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor A Morgan OBE:

The Leader advised that the Local Authority has implemented over 100 schemes since Storm Dennis in 2020, which he referred to as the benchmark, as one of the worst flooding events in the County Borough for over 40 years.

The Leader stated that the Council has invested over £20m in upgrading culverts to date and in the coming year the Council has submitted bids worth £7.5m to Welsh Government with the Council matching 15% of the funding. He referred to the Resilient Roads funding which equated to £10m over the last three years which improve highways drainage and subsequently supports properties along the highway which also suffer flooding.

The Leader outlined the specific schemes within Wattstown:

- Heath Terrace – Construction work has been completed (£230k)
- Llanwonno Road - Design and Construction (Construction of inlet upgrade) due for Completion April 2023 (£70k)
- Arfyn Terrace – The Leader advised that there are three schemes underway in this area:
 - Preliminary Design – Due for completion April 2023 (£20k)
 - Detailed Design outline business case and Development (£150k)
- Small flood scheme worth (£175k) subject to the funding being secured this scheme will allow greater resilience and protection to local properties and allows the Local Authority to submit a bid over the next two to three years for a major scheme needed in the future
- Ynyshir Road- Structural Lining & Rehabilitation of an Ordinary Watercourse Culvert Network (£90k)
- Heath Terrace (Central Inlet)
- Design Only - Culvert upgrade to mitigate impact of debris blockage - Channel Scour Rehabilitation £40k

There was no supplementary question

4) Question from County Borough Councillor A.S. Fox to the Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity, County Borough Councillor B. Harris:

“Can the Cabinet Member please make a statement on the new RCT Community Grant scheme?”

Response of Councillor B Harris:

Councillor Harris advised that the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund - RCT Community Grant programme opened for applications on 1st February and information sessions were scheduled via Interlink for organisations interested in applying for

revenue funding of up to £14,999. He added that projects were required to support the “aims” of the SPF in restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.

Councillor Harris provided information on the details of the first round which closed on 24th February (with expected closure on the 28th February - so earlier than expected due to being oversubscribed) with 91 applications approved, resulting in the full £675,000 revenue being of benefit to the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Councillor Harris provided a breakdown of the first round with 133 applications assessed, 91 applications approved - full £675,000 revenue allocated and 42 declined.

Councillor Harris advised that there has been a small amount of capital funding provided to historic Community Asset Transfers during year one which required all revenue and capital funds to be distributed and projects delivered by 31st March 2023. The second round will open for applications on 1st April 2023, with information sessions scheduled to take place online on the 17th and 20th March. The booking links for these are available through Interlink's website. He explained that Year two and Year three will distribute revenue funding predominantly and a small amount of capital.

Councillor Harris stated that information for applying to the next round will be available via the Council's website shortly. By the end of March 2025, the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund - RCT Community Grant will have invested £4.3m to benefit the sustainability of local community groups.

Councillor Harris acknowledged the frustrations around the delays in providing the funding, which he attributed to the turmoil within the Conservative Party and the Government, but he confirmed that the Council is finally able to distribute the funding. He urged those organisations who will have either not had the opportunity to submit their applications or need to strengthen bids they have made that were unsuccessful, to reapply once the next tranches of the scheme are open.

In conclusion, Councillor Harris thanked staff involved for their challenging work in assessing, progressing and processing these allocations.

There was no supplementary question

5) Question from County Borough Councillor L. A. Tomkinson to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure, County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings:

“Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the Council’s Leisure for Life service as we continue to move away from the COVID-19 pandemic?”

Response of Councillor A Crimmings:

Councillor Crimmings advised that following the relaxation of the COVID-19 regulations in May 2021, the Council’s Leisure service saw its membership reduce by 50% to just under 5,000 members compared to pre-COVID. In addition, swimming lessons, club usage, and room bookings were all massively reduced, which demonstrated the impact the COVID restrictions were having on residents.

The Cabinet Member commented that there was a general reluctance to initially return to indoor forms of exercise as people were naturally still cautious of catching the

virus. During this period, however, the Authority invested in outdoor exercise equipment and classes to help try to increase customer confidence and patronage. In addition, in January 2022, two of the large facilities were designated as mass vaccination centres, which naturally impacted on the recovery overall.

Councillor Crimmings reported that since the start of this financial year, however, the return to indoor leisure has been very good with Leisure 4 Life membership now with over 10,000 members which is in excess of the membership in 2019. Additionally, junior swimming lessons have grown greatly with demand being high, with approximately 3,500 children a week being taught to swim through the junior learn to swim programme. Clubs have re-formed and are starting to return, as well as the demand for children's parties and room bookings increasing.

The Cabinet Member commented that according to the "State of The Industry Report" relating to Covid recovery in County Boroughs across Wales, RCT is recovering at a greater speed than many others. She wished to place on record her thanks to the staff within the Leisure Service who have gone above and beyond over the last few years with many assisting in the fight against COVID, and with membership levels as they are, is testament to their hard work and dedication.

In conclusion, Councillor Crimmings outlined the investment of approximately £150k at Hawthorn Leisure Centre to increase the size of its fitness studio and renew the fitness equipment, it has provided two additional exercise spaces for customers by converting two rooms (Wattbike studio and low-impact fitness area) and membership has increased by over one hundred members, which is more than pre-pandemic levels. She added that investment also been made at all facilities to help meet changing needs of customers, with Skiergs; Attack Bikes; Tanks; Wattbikes; skill runs and more free weights.

There was no supplementary question due to the lapse of the allotted time.

(Note: The following declarations of personal interests were declared in respect of agenda item 5 Members Questions as follows:

Councillor J Edwards - "My employer has been referred to in the response of the Cabinet Member for Development & Prosperity (question 4)".

Councillor K Johnson - "My employer, Transport for Wales, is referred to in the supplementary question (question 2)".

85 The Council Work Programme 2022-2023

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented an update regarding the adopted and published Council Work Programme advising that as instructed by Council an extra ordinary Council meeting will be convened on the 29th March at 4pm to receive the Welsh Ambulance Service Chief Executive and Director of Partnerships & Engagement. He added that the Full Council meeting on the 29th March at 5pm will receive the State of the County Borough Debate (otherwise known as the Leader's Debate). The Service Director explained that in line with the Council's Constitution which sets out that the Leader will determine the arrangements for engagement for his debate, details of the meeting will be circulated to all Members in due course.

The Service Director confirmed there is no Council meeting during April ahead of the Council's Annual General meeting in May.

86 Single Transferable Vote (STV)

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented his joint report with the Director of Legal Services which outlined the future local government election arrangements, in response to the newly commenced powers for local authorities to change their voting system for local elections, to the Single Transferable Vote ('STV') and sought Council's instruction in respect of future voting arrangements.

The Service Director advised that this mechanism was introduced as part of the Local Government & Elections (Wales Act 2021) (the 'Act'), for local authorities to change their voting system as part of the Welsh Government's reforming democracy agenda. Councils in Wales will continue to use the simple majority system commonly known as 'first past the post' unless they resolve to change their voting system to the Single Transferable Vote (STV).

The Service Director commented that should Members wish to amend the voting arrangements in the Local Government Elections in May 2027, there is a specific process to follow which involves a significant public engagement and consultation. He added that the guidance has recently been published by Welsh Government. Final determination would require a resolution of Full Council of at least two thirds majority (50 or more Members of this Council). This decision would need to be sought at a specially convened Council meeting with written notice at least 21 days in advance of the meeting and the decision would need to be passed by no later than the 15th November 2024.

The Service Director advised that Councils opting to change to the STV system would be required to use the system for two rounds of ordinary elections before deciding to revert back to their previous voting system, should they wish to. He concluded that there is also a requirement to notify Welsh Ministers and the local Democracy and Boundary Commission should any changes be made to the voting system.

Following a detailed discussion on the option to change the voting system for local elections to the Single Transferable Vote, it was **RESOLVED**, that:

1. Council does not change its voting system for local elections to the Single Transferable Vote (STV) but retains its current 'first past the post' system.

(Note: The following Councillors wished to have it recorded that they voted that the Council does not change its voting system for local elections to the Single Transferable Vote (STV) but retains its current 'first past the post' system:
Councillors C Lises and D Williams

The following Councillors wished to have it recorded that they voted in favour of the option to change the voting system for local elections to the Single Transferable Vote (STV) with a consultation exercise conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, on a proposal to change the Council's voting system to the Single Transferable

Vote : Councillors K Morgan, A Rogers, A Ellis, D Wood, K Johnson, D Grehan, H Gronow, P Evans, M Powell and S Trask).

87 REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2023/24

The Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services presented the Cabinet's recommended Budget Strategy for the forthcoming financial year 2023/24.

The Group Director explained that the strategy itself has been subject to a second phase of consultation which was held between the 24th January and the 6th February. This engagement involved the Older Persons Advisory Group, the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the School Budget Forum and the Joint Consultative Committee, the feedback from the phase two consultation process is attached to the report.

The Group Director advised that, as reported to Council on the 15th December 2022, the strategy is set against a context of a projected current year pressure of over £21m and a budget gap of £38.3m. The final local government settlement received from Welsh Government on the 28th February 2023 included the expected transfer in of the Fire Service pension grant with a further update resulting in an additional £10k as compared with the provisional settlement. He added that the final settlement confirmed an increase in funding for this Council at 6.6% for next year as compared with the 7.9% Wales average. It also provided an indicative all-Wales settlement level for the 2024/25 financial year at 3.1%.

The Group Director advised of the key headlines of the budget strategy:

- A council tax increase of 3.9% which will close the budget gap by £1.8m as compared to that modelled in the medium-term financial plan. This increase equates to a 78p per week increase for a person living in a Band A property or £1.17p for a person living in a Band D property;
- A school budget increase is proposed of £13.7M or 7.9%;
- £16M of budget reduction measures and efficiencies which have little or no impact on our frontline services;
- £7.3M of savings as a result of decisions already made by the Cabinet and Council as appropriate, which relate to waste services, community meals, council run nursery provision, capitalisation and fees and charges with the implication of the introduction of the council tax premium also factored in following the prior agreement by Full Council in January;
- A proposed £5M contribution from reserves to contribute to fund the spike in energy costs which leaves a remaining budget gap of £4.105M which can be balanced from a contribution from the transition funding reserves to deliver a balanced and robust budget for next year.

The Group Director concluded that with the indicative future year settlement level set at 3.1% it is important to maintain the Council's focus across the medium-term planning horizon.

Following discussion and contributions from the Group Leaders and other Members, a vote was undertaken, and it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the letter from the Minister for Finance and Local Government (Rebecca Evans MS) and the table on the 2023/24 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 2023/24 of 3.90%;
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 10.2 to 10.8;
6. Agree the use of the 'Medium Term Financial Planning & Service Transformation Reserve' as transition funding, totalling £4.105M for 2023/24;
7. Approve Tables 4 and 5 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 2023/24 at £609.955M, 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 2023.

88 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2023/24

In line with the budget strategy, the Group Director Finance, Digital and Frontline Services presented the report which represents the formal and legal requirement for Council to agree the council tax resolution. It includes detail of the council tax to be levied in respect of the Community Councils and the Police & Crime Commissioner in respect of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

The Group Director advised that the Council's levels of council tax for next year will be £1,614.11 for a Band D property, which represents an increase of 3.9%. The Police & Crime Commissioner council tax set at £324.47, an increase of 7.4%. He confirmed that the Community Councils have notified the Council of their levels of charge for next year which are set out within Appendix 1 of the report.

In conclusion, the Group Director commented that he has a duty to report to Council on the robustness of the estimates made and on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves which are set out at section 9 of the report.

Following consideration of the report, and in line with the previously agreed Revenue Budget, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- i) Note the level of the precept from the Police & Crime

Commissioner for South Wales;

- ii) Note the level of the Community Council Precepts, as detailed in Appendix 1;
- iii) Pass the formal Council Tax resolutions for the financial year ending 31st March 2024, as contained in Appendix 2; and
- iv) Note the comments of the Group Director Finance, Digital and Frontline Services upon the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves as detailed at paragraph 9.2.

89 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24 - 2025/26

The Group Director Finance, Digital & Frontline Services presented the report which sets out the Council's proposed three-year Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2025/26 for Council's consideration, following receipt of the final local government settlement for 2023/24.

The Group Director commented that this represents an investment programme of £187M over the next three years which includes an additional investment of £7.1M over and above the ongoing programme, £42M core programme, specific grants of £73M and council funding of £31M toward investment priorities. The Group Director referred to the additional targeted investment of £7.1M which is proposed across the areas of highways maintenance, unadopted roads, highways structures, drainage, park structures, parks and green spaces, play areas and multi-use games areas, as set out in paragraph two of the report.

The Group Director concluded by referring Members to the full programme at section 7 of the report with the detail contained within Appendices 3A-3D and the full funding schedule set out at Appendix 3E.

Following discussion whereby the Group Director responded to a number of queries, it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the detail of the final 2023/24 local government settlement for capital expenditure, reproduced at Appendix 1;
2. Agree to the proposed reallocation of existing resources, and allocation of new resources as detailed in paragraph 5;
3. Agree to allocate the funding identified in the report to the investment priorities as detailed in paragraph 6.2;
4. Agree the proposed 'core' three-year programme detailed at Appendix 2;
5. Agree the proposed total three-year Capital Programme, detailed at Appendices 3 (a) to (e), which includes the following non-core capital funding:
 - Prudential borrowing to support Sustainable Communities for

Learning Schemes (formerly 21st Century Schools) and Highways Improvements schemes;

- Capital grants for specific schemes;
- Third party contributions; and
- The investment priorities detailed in paragraph 6.2.

(Note: Prior to consideration of the item, Councillors S Trask and K Johnson declared a personal interest as follows:

Councillor S Trask – “I am a Governor of Maesybryn Primary School, which is a beneficiary of 21st century schools funding”

Councillor K Johnson - “I am a Governor of Maesybryn Primary School, which is a beneficiary of 21st century schools funding”).

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Notice of Motion

A. To consider the under-mentioned Notices of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors J. Edwards, L. A. Tomkinson, L. Addiscott, M. D. Ashford, J. Barton, D. R. Bevan, J. Bonetto, S. Bradwick, J. Brencher, G. Caple, J. Cook, A. Crimmings, S. J. Davies, R. Davis, A. J. Dennis, V. Dunn, E. L. Dunning, J. A. Elliott, L. Ellis, S. Emanuel, R. Evans, A. S. Fox, B. Harris, S. Hickman, G. Holmes, G. Hopkins, W. Hughes, G. Jones, G. O. Jones, R. R. Lewis, W. Lewis, C. Leyshon, M. Maohoub, C. Middle, A. Morgan OBE, N. H. Morgan, S. Morgans, M. A. Norris, D. Owen-Jones, D. Parkin, S. Powderhill, C. Preedy, S. Rees, A. Roberts MBE, J. Smith, G. Stacey, W. Treeby, J. Turner, G. L. Warren, K. Webb, M. Webber, D. Williams, G. E. Williams, R. Williams, T. Williams, R. Yeo.

Climate change continues to be one of the most serious challenges facing communities here in Rhondda Cynon Taf, across Wales and the U.K., and across the world.

Recent years have seen serious and significant weather events occur more frequently and with more profound effects, as highlighted by the devastation caused locally by Storm Dennis in February 2020. Since then, we have seen an increasing number of Yellow, Amber and Red weather warnings issued by the Met Office.

Indeed, the forecaster has recently confirmed that 2022 was the U.K.’s hottest year on record, with an average temperature of over 10°C recorded for the first time. The attribution study also showed that what would have been around a 1-in-500 year annual temperature in a natural climate, where human climate influences are removed, is now likely every three to four years in the current climate. In addition to this, the Met Office forecasts are further suggesting that 2023 will be one of the Earth’s hottest years on record.

In light of this evidence, there can be no doubt of the speed of change required to reduce carbon emissions to protect the planet, or the need for us all to work together more quickly to do so.

This Council has already shown a positive commitment to meet and contribute to global, national and local targets to reduce carbon.

In March 2018, the Council resolved to adopt a Notice of Motion committing to support the UK100 Clean Energy Commitment to transition towards being a fully environmentally Authority by 2050. This was shortly revised to a commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030 in recognition of the pressing need to tackle the impacts of climate change urgently.

Over the last decade or so, the Council has already taken significant steps towards this target, and this work has accelerated over the last five years. As of 2019, the Council had cut its carbon emissions by almost 40% (12,725 tonnes) over the last five years. A recent Carbon Trust report highlighted (based on an accurate calculation at the time) that as a Council, RCT further reduced its overall NET carbon footprint by 29% in 2020/21, compared to data from 2019/20.

Measures to date include:

- Purchasing 100% of the Council's electrical energy supply from renewable energy sources.
- Spent over £9m since 2009 on energy conservation projects that have resulted in annual savings of just over £1.8m per year for schools, care homes, leisure centres and other Council-owned buildings.
- Installed 105 solar panel arrays across schools and corporate buildings – this generates around £120,000 in “cashback” every year for 20 years, in addition to saving on energy costs.
- Completed a number of new, low-carbon, energy efficient school developments and improvements across the County.
- Installed 21 Hydrogen Fuel Cells in leisure centres, schools and offices, along with 8 biomass boilers in use.
- Delivered the innovative Taff's Well Thermal Spring project – the only one in Wales – and this is providing low-carbon heating for the new school extension block at Ffynnon Taf Primary School.
- Working with Housing Associations, the Welsh Government and other partners to put in place more low-carbon housing. The ARBED scheme in Penrhiwceiber helped 113 homes out of fuel poverty with a range of new energy efficient measures.
- Taking forward projects with tree planting and peatbog management across RCT. A £50,000 investment in tree planting was announced in March last year with 200 trees planted in each of the primary constituent areas of the County.
- Delivering a strategy for electric vehicle charging, in conjunction with trialing of EV taxis and buses.

This Council notes:

- The positive progress made by this Council in taking steps to reduce its carbon footprint.

- That more work is required to achieve these ambitions, in line with the Council's Tackling Climate Change Strategy – Think Climate RCT and the Welsh Government's vision of a Net Zero public sector by 2030.

This Council therefore resolves:

- To request for a report to be presented to the Council's Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee, outlining how the Council can reaffirm this commitment to achieving Net Zero in line with the statutory targets.

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

B. To consider the under-mentioned Notices of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors A. Roberts MBE, J. Bonetto, L. Addiscott, M. D. Ashford, J. Barton, D. R. Bevan, S. Bradwick, J. Brencher, G. Caple, J. Cook, A. Crimmings, S. J. Davies, R. Davis, A. J. Dennis, V. Dunn, E. L. Dunning, J. Edwards, J. A. Elliott, L. Ellis, S. Emanuel, R. Evans, A. S. Fox, B. Harris, S. Hickman, G. Holmes, G. Hopkins, W. Hughes, G. Jones, G. O. Jones, R. R. Lewis, W. Lewis, C. Leyshon, M. Maohoub, C. Middle, A. Morgan OBE, N. H. Morgan, S. Morgans, M. A. Norris, D. Owen-Jones, D. Parkin, S. Powderhill, C. Preedy, S. Rees, J. Smith, G. Stacey, L. A. Tomkinson, W. Treeby, J. Turner, G. L. Warren, K. Webb, M. Webber, D. Williams, G. E. Williams, R. Williams, T. Williams, R. Yeo.

Despite Cost of Living support provided in the last year, Nine out of ten private renters in Wales say that the cost of living crisis is making it even harder to pay their rent (Shelter, 2022).

While the UK Government has committed to raising benefits in line with inflation, the 2022 Autumn Statement confirmed that the Government is set to freeze local housing allowance at current cash levels for the third year in a row. This will have an additional impact on benefit recipients in private rented accommodation, who face higher costs than those in social housing.

With respect to levers available to Welsh Government to support renters, this Motion notes that Welsh Government – as part of its cooperation agreement with Plaid Cymru in 2021 – is committed to a White Paper on rent affordability, preceded by a Green Paper. This will include proposals for a right to adequate housing, to establish the role a system of fair rents (rent control) could have in making the private rental market affordable for local people on local incomes, and new approaches to making homes affordable.

There are, of course, a wide range of factors that are affecting rent rises in the private rented sector (PRS) and household incomes at this time, and this Motion does not seek to address all of these.

This Motion does not seek to undermine the measures already being taken by Welsh Government to support PRS renters in Wales, with a series of new housing laws that came into effect from 1 December 2022 as part of the Renting Homes (Amendment) (Wales) Act 2021.

Nor does this Motion seek to pre-empt Welsh Government Green/White Papers on proposals for additional measures such as a rent freeze, or what such additional measures might look like in practice. A Senedd debate on proposals for an emergency rent freeze and eviction moratorium in Wales took place as recently as October 2022. This followed the introduction of a temporary rent freeze in Scotland in September 2022 (set to end in March 2023). In the Senedd debate that took place, a number of risks associated with the Scottish policy were set out for Welsh Members in a briefing from the Homelessness Charity Crisis.

The risks outlined by 'Crisis' included:

1. An immediate flood of notices to quit and letters notifying of rent increases.
2. A wave of rent rises and/or evictions if the termination of a temporary rent freeze and eviction ban is not carefully managed.
3. Challenges enforcing the proposed measures.
4. Danger of residents being left in homes they can't afford with rent arrears accruing.
5. A potentially negative impact on the supply of and access to private rented housing for those at the lowest end of the market.
6. Depletion of supply of affordable housing available to people most at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.
7. People on lower incomes being locked out of the private market altogether in the longer term.
8. Creating the conditions for the emergence of a 'shadow' rental market acting outside of any regulatory regime.

While the briefing provided by 'Crisis' asks for further clarification on how potential risks of an eviction moratorium and rent freeze might be addressed before such measures are adopted in Wales (the review of the Scottish policy and Green/White Papers in Wales should provide some of the clarity called for here), the same briefing supports the demands made in this Motion that "the most effective way of supporting people on low incomes to cover the cost of their rents is by the Westminster Government investing in Local Housing Allowance rates so they cover at least the bottom third of local rents. This is also the most targeted way to get support to those who need it most."

This Motion calls on the Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, Councillor Andrew Morgan OBE, to make representations to Mel Stride MP, the Work and Pensions Secretary, and Michael Gove MP, the Housing Secretary, to work together to meet the following demands made by Shelter Cymru:

- Restore housing benefit to cover at least the bottom 30% of local rents; and,
- Scrap the benefits cap.

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

(Note: The following Members wished to declare a personal interest in the Notice of Motion set out at 10B as follows:

Councillor M Powell – "I carry out work for agencies who have private rented properties in their portfolio"

Councillor M Powell – “ I have a close relative who is a landlord for a private rental property”

Councillor L Addiscott – “ I own private rental properties”

Councillor V Dunn – “I own a private rental property”

Councillor C Middle - “I own a private rental property”

Councillor M Ashford - “I own a private rental property”

Councillor W Hughes - “I own a private rental property”

Councillor A Crimmings - “I own a private rental property”

Councillor R Williams - “I own a private rental property”

91 **Urgent Business**

The Presiding Member advised that in accordance with Procedural Rule 10.5, he had granted permission for Full Council to determine whether this Urgent Motion should be:

- Discussed at the meeting; or
 - Deferred until the next meeting to consider with the benefit of written Officer advice;
- or
- Referred for consideration and decision to the Executive or a Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** to discuss the Urgent Notice of Motion at the meeting.

92 **Urgent Item - Notice of Motion**

To consider the following Urgent Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors S. Emanuel and W. Jones:

Unfortunately, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) last week erected signage on the Pen-Pych woodland path warning hikers that no public access was permitted due to the route being unsafe through “multiple landslips.”

The Treherbert ward is proudly the home to some of the most beautiful landmarks and views in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf, with the Pen-Pych table top mountain being the jewel in the crown.

Pen-Pych is a major tourist attraction and local landmark, attracting thousands of hikers each year, which in turn provides an invaluable boost to our local economy.

The loss of this pathway is devastating to the local economy and the communities that comprise the Treherbert ward, and as local Councillors, we are dismayed that NRW did not seek to engage with us or notify us before taking this action.

Whilst the safety of residents and visitors is paramount, and it is right to warn

hikers not to use unsafe routes, we are disappointed by the absence of communication from NRW in outlining any attempts to make the path safe or their future intentions for the area.

Having already made representations to NRW as local Members, we would urge Council to note the following:

- The significant impact that the loss of Pen-Pych will have to the local economy at the top of the Rhondda Fawr and the rest of the County Borough.
- That our natural assets are there for all to enjoy – they act as a unique selling point for our County Borough.
- That whilst safety is always the foremost consideration, local Members should always be engaged on such matters where possible.

We would ask that Council therefore resolves to:

- Urgently request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales and the relevant Welsh Government Minister to establish the future intentions for the Pen-Pych woodland trail and to make representations on behalf of the residents of the Treherbert ward regarding the importance of the site.

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

This meeting closed at 7.50 pm

**Councillor G Hughes
Chair.**

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh