



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 19 October 2022 at 5.00 pm

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

Councillor G Hughes (Chair)

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|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Councillor L Addiscott | Councillor M Ashford |
| Councillor J Brencher | Councillor G Caple |
| Councillor J Cook | Councillor A Crimmings |
| Councillor S J Davies | Councillor R Davis |
| Councillor J Edwards | Councillor E L Dunning |
| Councillor S Evans | Councillor S Emanuel |
| Councillor S Hickman | Councillor B Harris |
| Councillor W Hughes | Councillor G Holmes |
| Councillor G O Jones | Councillor K Johnson |
| Councillor R Lewis | Councillor W Jones |
| Councillor C Leyshon | Councillor W Lewis |
| Councillor M Maohoub | Councillor C Middle |
| Councillor A Morgan | Councillor N H Morgan |
| Councillor S Morgans | Councillor L A Tomkinson |
| Councillor S Trask | Councillor M Webber |
| Councillor J Turner | Councillor R Williams |
| Councillor R Yeo | Councillor T Williams |

The following Councillors were present online:-

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|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Councillor R Bevan | Councillor P Binning |
| Councillor J Bonetto | Councillor S Bradwick |
| Councillor J Elliott | Councillor V Dunn |
| Councillor L Ellis | Councillor A J Ellis |
| Councillor R Evans | Councillor D Evans |
| Councillor D Grehan | Councillor P Evans |
| Councillor G Jones | Councillor Sera Evans |
| Councillor A Fox | Councillor C Lises |
| Councillor M Norris | Councillor W Owen |
| Councillor M Powell | Councillor D Parkin |
| Councillor S Rees | Councillor C Preedy |
| Councillor A O Rogers | Councillor A Roberts |
| Councillor G Stacey | Councillor J Smith |
| Councillor G Warren | Councillor B Stephens |
| Councillor G E Williams | Councillor K Webb |
| | Councillor D Wood |

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services

34 Welcome & Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed attendees to the hybrid meeting of the Council and apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors J Barton, H Gronow, G Hopkins, K Morgan, D Owen-Jones, S Powderhill, W Treeby and D Williams.

35 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

36 Minutes

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th September 2022 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

37 Announcements

The following announcements were made:

The Presiding Officer announced that since the last meeting, County Borough Councillor M Rees-Jones had resigned from her position as County Borough Councillor for RCT due to personal reasons. He also welcomed the new Member for Ynysybwl, County Borough Councillor Paula Evans to her first meeting of Full Council.

Councillor A Crimmings announced that former Councillor John Evans had sadly passed away and she had attended his funeral earlier in the day. Cllr Crimmings added that Cllr John Evans was formerly the Local Member for Aberdare West and a member of Cynon Valley Borough Council.

Councillor A Morgan announced that former Councillor Edward Hopkins had also passed away, he was formerly the Local Member for Llwynypia, and Ex-Mayor of the Rhondda Borough and the Leader of the Council led a minute's silence in memory of both former Councillors.

Tributes were paid by the Leader of the Council to Mr Chris Bradshaw who was due to retire from his position as Chief Executive. This was to be Mr Bradshaw's

last meeting of Full Council and he was praised for his 21 years' service to the Council and messages of thanks were paid to him by all the Group Leaders for his dedication and commitment to the Council during his service and his 'can do' attitude. The Leader also welcomed Mr Paul Mee as the new, incoming Chief Executive.

Councillor S Bradwick announced that County Borough Councillor Gareth Jones had been appointed as Vice Chair of the Alliance and he wished him well with his new position.

Councillor S Bradwick also paid tribute to one of his residents, Mr Roger Davies who has been litter picking at St. John's Church for over 30 years and only now, due to ill health, is giving up this task. Councillor Bradwick asked if a letter could be sent from the Mayor to Mr Davies in honour of his dedication to the community.

The Presiding Officer led a minute's silence in memory of the 116 children and 28 adults who lost their lives in the Aberfan disaster 56 years ago. The Leader of the Council led the tributes to those who had lost their lives and the Opposition Deputy Leader and other Group Leaders also paid their condolences to mark the anniversary.

38 Statements

- The Deputy Leader made a statement in relation to Rhondda Cynon Taf Council successfully retaining its Armed Forces Covenant Gold Employer recognition award for its continued support of the Armed Forces community, and their families. The Deputy Leader advised that the highly prestigious Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award has been revalidated as the local authority continues to encourage employers and employees to support the Armed Forces and its community and inspire others to do the same. She acknowledged the work carried out by Jamie Island, the Armed Forces Liaison Officer who also works with other local authorities.
- The Leader made a statement in respect of the Council's financial position and ongoing work for this and next year. He referred to an earlier meeting he held with Group Leaders, the Finance Director and Deputy Leader to discuss information which he intended on sharing with all Members today. As outlined in the recent report, the Medium-Term Financial Plan, to Full Council he advised that the local authority was facing a potential £21M overspend this year due to pay pressures, pay awards and the demands on inflation and the increase in energy costs. This is in line with other Local Authorities of a similar size and Local Government in Wales could face an overspend of £257M.

The Leader advised that next year could be a very difficult period of time for the local authority and it was likely that the financial gap outlined in the medium-term financial plan report to Council of £36m would be between £45-47M which is an unprecedented figure even compared to the years of austerity previously experienced. The Leader feared that the medium-term fiscal plan to be announced on the 31st October would

mean spending cuts and the RSG, originally considered based on the local government provisional settlement, would likely fall. A 2% reduction in RSG (a 1 ½% uplift) will add approximately £9M to the financial gap.

The Leader commented that approximately 80% of the Council's budget is spent on staff, and therefore it is inevitable that the staffing levels across the local authority would have to reduce. He added that the Council does have a good working relationship with the Trade Unions who are involved in discussions regarding any service changes and meetings with the local Branch representative would be undertaken to discuss the current situation. The Leader commented that this situation is not unique to RCT council or to other local authorities as other public bodies will also be facing the same difficulties and pressures.

The Leader reminded Council that it does have a statutory responsibility to set a legally balanced budget and in agreement with his Cabinet, the intention is to continue to update cross party and to bring regular updates to Cabinet and Full Council.

In conclusion, the Leader attributed the recent challenges to the UK Government, the continued u turns on tax cuts, the course of the Government together with recent resignations has added to the chaos. He added that tough decisions will have to be made over the coming months, but he gave assurance that the commitments to the public and those promises set out in the Labour Group manifesto will be delivered (and good progress has already been made) to improve the lives of the local residents.

39 Members' Questions

1) Question from County Borough Councillor D. Parkin to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

“Can the Council Leader provide an update on the implementation of the Real Living Wage to the social care sector in RCT?”

Response of the Leader, Councillor A Morgan:

The Leader advised that good progress is being made agreeing contract prices across Adult Services social care contracts and rates have been reviewed and uplifted for independent providers to enable them to pay staff the Real Living Wage and the £10 per hour RCT rate agreed by Cabinet.

The Leader added that of the 40 providers operating within RCT, only five external providers are paying the Real Living Wage rate of £9.90 rather than the requested Council commitment of £10 per hour. In the main, these providers are national organisations where internal pay structures are set but the Council is in discussions with them and is of the view that all the external providers should provide the Real Living Wage.

The Leader advised that with regards to Children's Services, the Council is currently engaging with External Residential Care providers to assess impact of

service costs and the current pay and grading information. He emphasised that anyone working in the Local Authority already receives the Real Living Wage plus 10p per hour more which equates to an additional half a million pounds. The Council is not yet accredited as a Real Living Wage employer although steps are being made to achieve this accreditation in the future.

There was no supplementary question

2) Question from County Borough Councillor V. Dunn to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

“The U.K. Government are continuing to provide minimal support as millions are starting to feel the true effects of the Cost-of-Living crisis. With further energy rises forecast for the autumn, can the Leader outline what discussions or measures this Council is taking to help protect residents?”

Response of the Leader, Councillor A Morgan:

The Leader advised that the Council is doing what it can to deal with the cost-of living crisis although he referred to the need for the UK Government to provide the financial interventions necessary and was pleased to hear that the triple lock on pensions had been recently confirmed.

The Leader expressed his concern for families on Universal Credit. He added that the council has recently announced a £2.89m local supplementary cost of living support scheme to further support families and residents likely to be affected by the crisis. The Leader outlined 4 specific areas of support such as £75 payment to families with one child or more of compulsory school age (per family); a £50,000 support package provided to local food banks and for food support schemes; a £125 payment to support lower paid Council staff such as litter collectors, School cooks and refuse collectors and a £250,000 discretionary fund for residents who demonstrate extreme financial hardship as a direct result of the Cost-of-Living crisis.

The Leader confirmed that Welsh Government has recently announced a series of funds and package of measures and funding is working its way to the local authority, further measures will be announced over the coming weeks. He added that there are a number of small steps the Council can make such as providing phone chargers into Libraries to support residents.

There was no supplementary question

3) Question from County Borough Councillor L. A. Tomkinson to the Cabinet Member for Public Health & Communities, County Borough Councillor B. Harris:

“Will the Cabinet Member please make a statement on the Council’s work with Voluntary and Third Sector organisations in Rhondda Cynon Taf?”

Response of County Borough Councillor B. Harris:

Councillor Harris responded that the Arts, Culture and Libraries Service Department consists of RCT Theatres, Libraries, One4All, Gartholwg Lifelong Learning Centre and the Community Development Team, along with the Community Resilience Hubs.

Councillor Harris added that the Department undertakes a considerable amount of work with the Voluntary & 3rd sector organisations, including:

- Establishing a Community Support Steering Group - partnership meeting for voluntary & 3rd sector groups, including Interlink, the County's CVC, which developed out of Covid to ensure on-going engagement and to include a broader focus on all issues relating to resident support.
- Community Resilience Hubs and Neighbourhood Networks - bringing together a range of services, including those provided by the public sector, private/voluntary organisations and community groups. Community Resilience Hubs serve to support the 7 Neighbourhood Networks to actively influence developments and support communities and residents.
- CAT – supporting local groups and organisations through the process of 'taking over' the responsibility of managing Council buildings or land.
- Provision of the Neighbourhood Network Fund and other financial support, including the Food Support Fund, Age friendly grant, Period dignity grant, and Loneliness and Social Isolation Grant
- Coordination of resident support: Central phone number, e-form, requests passed on to Community Coordinators who refer to the relevant service/partner for support, including the voluntary and 3rd sector.
- Support for community groups to undertake consultations. Examples recently include supporting Cwm Clydach Country Park Action Group to develop an online survey
- Co-ordination of Climate change and Food partnerships, and of Older Persons Support partnerships.
- Working in partnership with voluntary & 3rd sector organisations to deliver a programme of events, activities and courses within Gartholwg Lifelong Learning Centre.
- Upskilling staff and programme development through support from voluntary & 3rd sector organisations with RCT, such as: provision of facilities across Community Resilience Hubs, Libraries, Theatres and Gartholwg Lifelong Learning Centre for voluntary & 3rd sector groups to meet and share their work.
- Libraries regularly work in partnership with voluntary & 3rd sector organisations to provide free access to community spaces to develop and provide services to local communities.
- Libraries form partnerships with 3rd sector organisations such as the Reading Agency and Booktrust Cymru to deliver national literacy programmes such as the Summer Reading Challenge - instrumental in

developing reading skills in young people.

There was no supplementary question

4) Question from County Borough Councillor R. Evans to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

“Can the Council Leader provide an update on what flood alleviation schemes are expected to be carried out this year?”

Response of the Leader, Councillor A Morgan:

The Leader advised that the current 2022/23 Flood Risk Management programme consists of 64 projects and stages of major projects and the current anticipated investment will be approximately £5m for 2022/23.

He added that over 12 major Flood Risk Management projects are under development in funding business case stages which are programmed over a number of years, but in terms of schemes with works completed this year the Leader outlined the following; Treorchy flood alleviation scheme – Phase 1 – Culvert repairs, inlet rebuild and scour repairs (£600k), Upper Bronallt Terrace flood alleviation scheme – flow attenuation and storage basin and debris control - (£720k). Work has also commenced on the Glenboi Pump Station upgrade with completion due in May 2023 (£1.4m).

The Leader announced that seven NRW/WG Small scale schemes works (£1m), and Resilient Roads Fund works funding of £440k have been secured (these are primarily road drainage schemes) and 5 NRW/RCT core funded small scale schemes – (£300k).

The Leader referred to the ongoing close working partnership between the Local Authority, Welsh Government, NRW and Welsh Water with regular meetings to discuss ongoing and future schemes through a joint approach.

There was no supplementary question

5) Question from County Borough Councillor D. Grehan to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

“Can the appropriate member of Cabinet inform the Council if there are any plans to create accessible communities for all by implementing a program to install low curbs? At the moment it is very difficult for users of wheelchairs and mobility scooters to travel from one place to another safely in a large number of our villages, including my ward in Tonyrefail”.

Response of the Leader, Councillor A Morgan:

Councillor Morgan stated that the Council has committed to making the highways more accessible for all users as well as improvements which are carried out as part of wider maintenance schemes, in the last 2 financial years over £300,000 has been invested in specific schemes to improve access.

The Leader added that while a high priority, the scale of the task is enormous

with thousands of junctions across the County requiring improvements, which are, therefore, targeted at the busier routes or those which provide a wider community benefit in order to assist the most people.

The Leader commented that within the core capital programme each year, £45K is included to improve the highways programme (to include drop curbs).

The Leader advised that in the past 2 financial years specific access improvement schemes have been carried out in Blaenllechau, Beddau, Gilfach Goch, Hawthorn, Brynna and Groesfaen with further schemes programmed in Ynyswen, Church Village, Llantwit Fardre and Blaenrhondda. In addition, Councillor Morgan added that localised improvements are also carried out in conjunction with Community Councils and WG or other funding to carry out these improvements.

Supplementary question:

“Will the Council be willing to work with Tonyrefail Community Council as it has developed a programme of work for dropped curbs?”

Response of the Leader, Councillor A Morgan:

The Leader responded that the Council would, he understood that Councillor Grehan and his fellow ward member have had discussions with officers in relation to the Tonyrefail area, and a potential scheme that could incorporate joint working with the Community Council is being explored for future Capital investment.

6) Question from County Borough Councillor W. Hughes to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure, County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings:

“Will the Cabinet Member make a statement on the Council’s investment in outdoor leisure facilities?”

Response of the County Borough Councillor A Crimmings:

Councillor Crimmings advised that the Council has committed substantial investment into improving outdoor leisure facilities over recent years, most visibly in ensuring Rhondda, Cynon and Taf residents have access to the athletics facilities in Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School in Beddau; the Ron Jones Stadium in Aberdare; and, King George V in nearby Tonypany/Clydach Vale. In addition, the Council has supplemented this with an outdoor fitness class programme at a number of its leisure facilities. These operated for a number of years prior to the pandemic, and they were very well received when the regulations provided for their resumption during the various lockdown periods.

Councillor Crimmings added that recently the Council had utilised funding from Sport Wales to purchase 2 outdoor exercise rigs which are mobile and are currently based in Ynysangharad and Dare Valley Country Park. This year the Council has already developed 2 outdoor balance bike tracks at Abercynon and Dare Valley Country Park, with a third being developed at Wattstown alongside a re-purposed MUGA. Additional funding is being sought to expand the outdoor rig options and additional balance bike tracks, but this will be dependent on

available funds and grants applications.

Councillor Crimmings advised that at Cabinet on 17th October, the new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27 was presented for consideration and formal adoption which will guide the leadership and management of the service ensuring that it can continue to provide a diverse range of sport and leisure opportunities, that good quality indoor and outdoor facilities are maintained, that the Council can respond positively to a volatile and challenging trading environment and we continue to meet the needs of customers and the residents of RCT.

In conclusion Councillor Crimmings added that the new strategy identifies 8 key areas for focus in the next 5 years and these will make a positive contribution to the Corporate Priorities of People and Place, for example, ensuring participation in sport and physical activity is accessible and inclusive for all by maintaining low cost, high value provision and giving residents access to health and wellbeing information and activities through the GP referral schemes, and other health and wellbeing intervention programmes.

There was no supplementary question

40 Council Work Programme 2022/23 - For information

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented the Council Work Programme for the 2022/23 Municipal Year and advised that the draft Corporate Performance report for 2022/23 will be reported to Full Council in the new year. He also advised that there may be a need to convene a special Council meeting in December once the details of the Local Government Settlement are known, as previously outlined by the Leader of the Council.

The Service Director advised that there will be a special Council meeting at 3.30pm next month to receive representatives from the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. In conclusion, it was reported that the consultation responses for the Boundary Review are required by the 15th November therefore the opportunity to formulate the substantive Council response will be sought through the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to which all Members of the Council will be invited to attend.

41 Council Tax Discounts

The Director of Finance & Digital Services presented his report in respect of Council Tax Discounts – Prescribed Class of Dwellings and advised that the report satisfies the requirement for Council to annually confirm the application of discounts for classes of dwellings, namely second homes and long-term empty properties. The Director stated that the Council does not currently award discounts to the full amount of council tax payable in respect of second homes neither does it award any discounts in respect of empty properties beyond the statutory 6-month period of exemption.

The Director proposed that the Council continues with the existing arrangements for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to agree the continuation of no Council Tax discount in respect of Class A, B and C

properties.

42 Urgent Executive Decisions

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 17.2(a), the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communications presented an overview of the Urgent Decisions taken forward by the Cabinet Committee and Urgent Key Officer Delegated Decisions taken forward outside of the Cabinet Committee during the period June-September 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the information contained within the report.

43 Changes to Membership

Changes to Membership

It was agreed to consider the membership reports set out at agenda item 8 and the urgent report set out at agenda item 11 at this juncture. The Service Director Democratic Services & Communication advised of the changes to the Labour representation on both the Pension Fund Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Committee and he sought nominations for the role of Vice-Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year. The Service Director also advised of the change to the Plaid Cymru Group's representation on both the Governance & Audit Committee and the Democratic Services Committee.

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

1. County Borough Councillor Gareth Jones is to be nominated in place of County Borough Councillor R. Evans on the Pension Fund Committee;
2. County Borough Councillor Martin Ashford is to be nominated in place of former County Borough Councillor Marcia Rees- Jones on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee;
3. To appoint County Borough Councillor J Brencher as Vice Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year;
4. County Borough Councillor Paula Evans is to be nominated for appointment to the Governance & Audit Committee; and
5. County Borough Councillor Paula Evans is to be nominated for appointment to the Democratic Services Committee.

44 Standards Committee -Appointment of Independent and Community Council Member

The Director of Legal Services presented his report in respect of the outcome of the process which had been undertaken to fill vacancies that have arisen on the Council's Standards Committee, specifically an Independent (lay) Member and Community Council representative member (plus reserve).

The Director advised that on the 30th September 2022 the Appointments Panel met to interview for the appointment of an Independent Member of the Standards Committee for a term of six years and a Community Council Member (Plus, reserve) for a term until the next ordinary elections (in 2027).

Following ratification from the Chair of the Appointments Panel, it was **RESOLVED** to :

1. Approve the recommendation of the Appointments Panel to appoint Mrs. Helen John as an Independent Member of the Standards Committee for a term of six years commencing 20th October 2022;
2. Approve the recommendation of the Appointments Panel to appoint Community Councillor Lynwen Law (Hirwaun & Penderyn Community Council) as the Community Council Member of the Standards Committee for a term until the next ordinary Local Government elections; and
3. Approve the recommendation of the Appointments Panel to appoint Community Councillor Carl Thomas (Pontypridd Town Council) as a reserve Community Council Member of the Standards Committee for a term until the next ordinary Local Government elections.

This meeting closed at 6.05 pm

**Councillor G Hughes
Chair.**