



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 29 March 2023 at 5.10 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 S Evans	Councillor B Stephens
Councillor L Addiscott	Councillor M Ashford
Councillor R Bevan	Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor G Caple
Councillor J Cook	Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor S J Davies	Councillor R Davis
Councillor V Dunn	Councillor E L Dunning
Councillor J Edwards	Councillor J Elliott
Councillor L Ellis	Councillor S Emanuel
Councillor D Evans	Councillor D Grehan
Councillor B Harris	Councillor G Holmes
Councillor K Johnson	Councillor G Jones
Councillor G O Jones	Councillor W Jones
Councillor R Lewis	Councillor W Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon	Councillor C Lises
Councillor C Middle	Councillor A Morgan
Councillor N H Morgan	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor W Owen	Councillor M Powell
Councillor S Rees	Councillor J Smith
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor L A Tomkinson
Councillor S Trask	Councillor W Treeby
Councillor G L Warren	Councillor K Webb
Councillor M Webber	Councillor R Yeo

The following Councillors were present online:-

Councillor P Binning	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor A Dennis	Councillor A J Ellis
Councillor P Evans	Councillor R Evans
Councillor S Evans	Councillor A Fox
Councillor H Gronow	Councillor G Hopkins
Councillor M Maohoub	Councillor K Morgan
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor M Norris
Councillor D Parkin	Councillor C Preedy
Councillor A Roberts	Councillor A O Rogers
Councillor J Turner	Councillor G E Williams
Councillor R Williams	Councillor T Williams
Councillor D Wood	

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 J Barton Councillor S Hickman
Councillor S Powderhill Councillor W Hughes
Councillor D Williams

96 Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors J Barton, S Hickman, W Hughes, S Powderhill and D Williams.

97 Declaration of Interest

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

Mr A Wilkins– Director, Legal Services on behalf of all Council Officers present in relation to Agenda Item 9 - The Council's Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 "The Pay Policy statement for the Council has no effect on existing terms and conditions applying to individual employees and simply sets out the Council's approach to previously adopted policies, therefore Officers will remain in the meeting whilst the item is presented by the Director of Human Resources and during subsequent discussion."

(Note: The following declarations were made later in the meeting (Minute No's 103, 104 and 106 refer)

Councillor K Johnson in relation to Agenda item 7 -Treasury Management Strategy – "I am an employee of Transport for Wales"

Councillor J Brencher in relation to Agenda Item 8 – Capital Strategy Report 2023/24 – " My son is a Director of Transport for Wales"

Councillor K Morgan in relation to Agenda Item 10 - Cwm Taf Well-Being Plan 2023-2028- "I work for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board"

98 Minutes

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 8th March 2023 as an

accurate reflection of the meeting subject to it being noted that Councillor H Gronow was in attendance online.

99 **Announcements**

The following announcements were made:

The Leader of the Council, Councillor A Morgan OBE, donated a cheque for the sum of £2,107.17 raised from the Festival of Remembrance to the Royal British Legion. Mr Richards, Chairman of the Pontypridd Royal British Legion, who was present to accept the cheque and extend his thanks to Council for their support.

Councillor A Roberts MBE congratulated two sisters from the ward of Gilfach Goch, Esme Walters who won the World Cup in a teen dance competition while her sister Verity Walters won the world cup in the dance doubles competition. Councillor Roberts also announced that Tyler Williams has won two World Championships in Kickboxing.

The Leader of the Opposition, County Borough Councillor K Morgan paid tribute to the late former Councillor Rita Moses. She served as a Councillor on the Cynon Valley District Council between 1987-1991 and served as County Borough Councillor for RCT Council between 1995-2004 and again between 2008-2012. She was at the centre of many community groups and as governor for the local schools. In 2000 she was Chairwoman /Mayor of RCT Council with her husband at her side and was very proud of this appointment. Councillor Morgan spoke of her passion for her community and passed her condolences to Rita's family and friends at this difficult time.

100 **Members' Questions**

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communication advised that questions 8 and 9 would fall due to the absence of the Members asking the questions:

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

"Will the Council Leader please provide an update on flood prevention schemes in Cwmaman?"

Response of Councillor A Morgan OBE:

The Leader responded by confirming that Phase 2 (Flood Walling to watercourse upstream of highway bridge) of the Flood Alleviation works at Cwmaman has progressed well in 2022/23 through the detailed design and development phase which is now complete. He added that in December 2022, the Council submitted a bid for approval in principle from the Welsh Government for the construction phase, with a budget of £415k on their major projects pipeline for 2023/24.

The Leader advised that if approved in principle by the Welsh Government, which is expected in early April, the drawdown of this grant will be subject to a

further detailed grant application using an update of the current project business case once the actual costs are known from a tender process. Subject to the detailed grant application for the construction phase being successful, it is envisaged that works will commence on site in Summer of 2023/24.

Supplementary question from County Borough Councillor T Williams:

“What is the Council doing to raise awareness of the flood risk measures?”

Response of Councillor A Morgan OBE:

The Leader commented that a report to Cabinet outlined and agreed funding for an additional member of staff within the flood risk management team with the responsibility of engaging with residents and raising awareness across the communities of RCT. He added that as RCT has the highest proportion of surface water flood risk, 25% of the total risk across Wales, the intention is that all the areas mapped out to receive flood risk schemes will be identified for engagement and raising awareness amongst both local residents and businesses.

Question from County Borough Councillor G. Hopkins to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure, County Borough Councillor B. Harris:

“Could the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the Shared Prosperity Fund Grants scheme for the Third Sector?”

Response of Councillor B Harris:

Councillor B Harris advised that the window for applications opened on 1st February 2023 and closed a little early (24.02.23) rather than 28 February as anticipated as it was fully subscribed. Councillor Harris provided the following updates with regards to the subscriptions:

UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund RCTCBC Community Grant – Final round 1 data:

- 133 applications assessed
- 91 applications approved with the **full £675,000** revenue allocated
- 42 declined

Councillor Harris advised that all 91 invoices received have been processed for payment with monitoring, reporting for the 91 successful applications commences on 31 March 2023.

With regards to RCTCBC - Community Grant – Round 2, Councillor Harris commented that information events have already taken place on 17th and 20th March 2023 in relation to the Medium and Higher Level Awards with approximately 250 online attendees. Eligibility is as it was for round one, with

additional outputs and outcomes added for 2023-25.

Councillor Harris commented that the application window will open on 1st April 2023 and closes 5pm on 12th May 2023 with details posted online on Council's dedicated UK SPF grant webpages. The Capital allocation for 2023-24 is £162,500 and the Revenue allocation for 2023-24 is £1,125,000. He added that all applications, across all levels:

- Lower Level - Applications for between £1,000 and £14,999
- Medium Level - Applications for between £15,000 and £49,999
- Higher Level - Applications for between £50,000 and £200,000

These will be considered in a competitive field during the week commencing 22nd May 2023 with a further application window is planned for early 2024-2025.

There was no supplementary question

3) Question from County Borough Councillor C. Middle to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure, County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings:

"Can the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the Council's programme to improve outdoor play facilities for children?"

Response of Councillor A Crimmings:

Councillor Crimmings advised that there were 13 play area projects in the 2022-23 programme, 12 of which have been completed and the final one is due to start very soon. The Council also had additional funding to develop two MUGA's - one in Councillor Middle's ward of Pen-Y-Graig, and also at Maritime Road in the Graig. She added that both MUGA projects have started, with the Pen-Y-Graig facility being completed very shortly. Both MUGA's will also be colour coated and line marked in the Spring after the new tarmac has settled.

In conclusion Councillor Crimmings advised that going forward, the programme for 2023-24 has been agreed, and a further 2 MUGA's will be developed, along with 10 play area refurbishments.

There was no supplementary question

4) Question from County Borough Councillor D. Grehan to the Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Development, County Borough Councillor M. Norris:

"Yn dilyn y 'problemau' gyda'r system gosod cartrefi yn Nhonyrefail yn ddiweddar, a'r dioddefaint sydd wedi dod yn sgil y system, ac o ystyried anniddigrwydd o bob plaid gyda'r drefn, a fyddai'r Cyngor yn teimlo ei bod yn briodol i drefnu sesiwn ar gyfer yr holl aelodau i drafod y system a'r polisiau sy'n arwain y penderfyniadau gosod eiddo?"

"Following the 'problems' with the housing letting system in Tonyrefail recently, and considering dissatisfaction from all parties with the system, would the Council feel it was appropriate to organize a session for all members to discuss

the system and the policies that guide the decisions?”

Response of Councillor M Norris:

Councillor Norris responded to the question by advising that a report on the Allocations Policy to was taken to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee in January where Members had a very robust discussion and there was challenge from Members of all political Parties. He added that the report also identified areas for the forthcoming review of the Allocations Policy for consideration, and it was agreed by Members that a further Scrutiny opportunity would be available once the revised allocations policy is drafted.

Councillor Norris added that the Head of Democratic Services has recently advised the Community Services Scrutiny Committee that such training will be provided, including a specific focus on the Housing Allocation scheme. This will be open to all Members to attend and Councillor Norris added that he would be encouraging all Labour Group Members to attend.

There was no supplementary question

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

“Could the Leader please make a statement on the recent Ty Pennant/Catherine Street Car Park in relation to the Council taking over its operation”

Response of Councillor A Morgan OBE:

Councillor Morgan advised that the Council officially took over the operation of Catherine Street car park from its reopening on Monday, March 20th In 2022, NCP decided to end its contract for the running of the car park at short notice. He added that since then, the Council has worked with Trivallis to re-open it for visitors to the town - they needed to undertake a thorough cleaning of the facility, along with other maintenance activity. The car park reopened on March 20 and the Leader added that parking prices will be significantly lower than previously charged by NCP with long-stay parking charges are £1 for up to four hours, £2 for longer, in line with the Council’s standard charging for long-stay facilities.

The Leader explained that new ticket machines have been installed in the car park, along with signage showing the updated tariffs with Council car park season tickets (parking permits) are able to be used at this facility which is popular for those working in the town centre.

There was no supplementary question

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

“Could the Cabinet Member please outline what investment is planned to improve Darran Park?”

Response of Councillor A Crimmings:

Councillor Crimmings advised that Darran Park has recently received a set of brand new changing facilities for the sports teams using the pitch through a £225,000 investment. She explained that in addition to the provision of the changing rooms, work has begun to secure a contractor to replace the current sand filled astro turf pitch with a brand new 3G pitch with shock pad to service local teams, and this scheme will be delivered through a further £375,000 investment. The pitch will be partly funded by a Welsh FA grant to top up the significant investment from RCT Council.

Councillor Crimmings added that it is envisaged that this work will commence in May 2023 with a completion date of August 2023. The Leisure, Sport and Parks department will liaise with the local teams and the community regarding the development once the contractor is appointed and a plan of construction is finalised.

There was no supplementary question

7) Question from County Borough Councillor L. A. Tomkinson to the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language, County Borough Councillor R. Lewis:

“Will the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the rollout of free school meals in Rhondda Cynon Taf?”

Response of Councillor R Lewis:

Councillor Lewis confirmed that the school meal services have continued to operate despite issues with staff recruitment and difficulties with the food supply chain. He added that in 2022/23, over 1.6M primary meals and 1.2M secondary meals were served across schools in RCT. Kitchen improvements undertaken in 3 secondary schools and 2 special schools as part of the planned capital programme during 2022/23.

Councillor Lewis advised that the Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) rolled out to eligible learners in nursery and all learners in reception and year 1 in 2022/23, with daily average of 2,571 meals served. In 2022/23, over 200,000 UPFSM's were served across the county borough.

Councillor Lewis commented that Capital works were completed in 38 primary school kitchens in 2022/23 to facilitate the implementation of Universal Free School Meals . Works to be undertaken in a further 63 primary schools in 2023/24. Recently, the Welsh Government also announced £9m of funding to offer eligible pupils free school meals until the end of the May half term holiday, which Councillor Lewis was sure would be welcomed by many families with the cost of living continuing to have an impact on residents.

There was no supplementary question

(Note: As previously indicated questions 8 and 9 would fall due to the absence

of the Members asking the questions)

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

“Can the Leader outline how many businesses in RCT will benefit from the Business Rate Relief Scheme, including through the £500 Local Business Rate Reduction Scheme that the Council is providing?”

Response of Councillor A Morgan OBE:

Councillor Morgan advised that based on the number of successful applications received in 2022/23, it is evident that around 650 businesses will qualify for both the Retail Leisure and Hospitality Relief (which is 75% rates relief) as well as the local rate relief support of up to £500 per business premises. He acknowledged that as some businesses did not make an application for either of these relief schemes in 2022/23 the Council is encouraging all business owners to check their eligibility by visiting the Council’s webpages and reading the information provided with their rates bill.

Councillor Morgan added that it is also the case that some 4,700 businesses will receive rate relief through the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme.

There was no supplementary question

11) Question from County Borough Councillor S. Rees to the Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity, County Borough Councillor M. A. Norris:

“How is this Council supporting businesses across the Cynon Valley and throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf?”

Response of Councillor M Norris:

Councillor Norris commented that as the Leader had already outlined some of the financial support available to businesses in the previous question, he would refrain from repeating that information.

Councillor Norris outlined a couple of notable schemes and developments that have either recently been completed or are ongoing in the Cynon Valley:

- 20 modern small business units have been completed in Robertstown and are already home to 10 tenants with further tenants coming to some of the remaining units shortly. Interest has been high in occupying these units.
- The redevelopment of Guto Square in Mountain Ash was completed last year and this concluded the Regeneration Framework for Mountain Ash. This scheme brought a number of improvements to the town centre area with additional parking and public realm enhancements.

- Developing a draft strategy for Aberdare Town Centre with the informal engagement phase has been completed and the feedback from this will inform the Draft Strategy.
- Continuing to utilise WG Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant money to create new and improve existing high street premises in key town centres.

Councillor Norris added that the redevelopment of the Black Lion in Aberdare is a good example of where this has been successful already and this funding is available for schemes in town centres across the Borough.

Councillor Norris advised that there is lots of redevelopment across the county borough, and the Council is also continuing to administer Enterprise Support funding through its own Enterprise Investment Fund and Town Centre Maintenance Grant to help lever in private investment and develop the local economy.

There was no Supplementary Question

101 The Council Work Programme 2022/23

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications advised that the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Council scheduled for the 24th May 2023 will now take place on the 10th May 2023 at 4pm. He added that the advantage of an earlier AGM allows for the cycle of council business to commence as quickly as possible. The Service Director commented that details of the AGM will be shared with the Group Leaders following discussion with the Presiding Officer.

102 STATE OF THE COUNTY BOROUGH DEBATE

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.2 the Presiding Officer stated that he had allocated 45 minutes for the item and would invite the Leader to address Council following which the Leader would respond to Members' comments on his Annual Report.

The Leader advised that each year his annual summary is delivered to full Council outlining what the Council has achieved over the last year and sets out what it wants to achieve moving forward.

The Leader of the Council advised that last year's debate was framed in the context of pandemic recovery with the Council now encountering austerity mark 2 with the Cost-of-Living crisis presenting challenges for residents and communities, and for the Public Sector. He alluded to the budget pressures with increased demand particularly on social care, energy prices, inflation and pay pressures.

The Leader referred to the Council's ongoing priority of climate change as it continues to take action to achieve the aim of being a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030. He

commented that the Council is making good progress and it continues to purchase 100% of its electrical energy supply from UK-based renewable sources. He added that despite challenges, the Council is still seeing significant levels of investment as it deliver on the manifesto commitments.

The Leader paid credit and thanks to all Council staff who continue to deliver services on a daily basis.

COST OF LIVING

The Leader advised that the Council continues to support residents in need through the seven Community Resilience Hubs, which were established at the beginning of the pandemic with support from partners. Over 500 residents have been supported between 31st Jan 2022 and 1st Feb 2023. Also, there has been a significant referral increase of 62% relating to help with shopping and emergency food support and providing information in relation to money and benefit guidance. He added that the Council has also provided thousands of pounds of food vouchers supporting families in difficulty. The Council continues to support food banks and local food schemes with grants between £500 and £1,500 being made available, and 35 projects have been funded since April 2022. The Leader acknowledged that the four main Trussell foodbanks across the county borough have been supported with £70k cash funding & £10k bulk buying of stock via Council's procurement since April 2022.

The Leader advised that the Council has 80 verified Welcome Centres, plus Libraries, which have been established as 'warm hubs' to support individuals and to date, 56 Winter Hardship Fund applications have been approved with a total of £82,688 paid out.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

The Leader commented that 2022 has been another challenging year with social care under immense pressure across the board. Despite this, the Council and its frontline staff have continued to care and support the thousands of people to the best possible standard. Some initiatives such as the award-winning Stay Well@Home services have seen RCT Council and Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board leading the way and has helped avoid in-patient admission or supported discharge with the focus and aim remains to promote independence and support residents to live in their own home for as long as possible.

The Leader advised that the Council provides 15,000 hours of care and support each week to over 1,300 families. In February, Cabinet agreed projected £60m capital investment in 4 new Extra Care and residential accommodation homes to continue to modernise residential care services and meet people's changing needs. Also retaining 5 Council care homes. Additionally, there has been £30m ongoing investment in the Extra Care housing development programme and currently three schemes provide 140 beds. The Leader outlined the benefits for the Extra Care housing for couples with differing needs.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Leader referred to this area which is also under immense pressure, and which has received 25,412 requests to respond to families' well-being needs in the last year. He highlighted the work and demand on the Resilient Families service which continues to deal with increasing demand, likewise the number engaging with YEPS continues to rise with a 410% increase in 2021-2022 compared to the previous year. The Leader advised that the Council has continued with its pledge to deliver the hub vehicles

which are proving popular with young people as a safe space to engage with those at most risk.

PLAY AREAS

The Leader advised that the Council continues its pledge to improve every play area with 13 play areas having been completed in 2022/23 despite the difficulties in recruiting contractors, with a further £200k allocated for 2 further MUGAs in the new financial year.

LEISURE

The Leader commented that the Council has continued to invest in Leisure Services, and he added that RCT has one of the best in-house leisure offers in Wales and has not outsourced its leisure facilities but has continued invest in facilities by listening to staff and responding to residents' needs. The Council has exceeded its pre-pandemic numbers with over 10,300 members. The Council has delivered its 14th 3G pitch which opened at Baglan Fields in October with the facility in Darran Park 3G to commence shortly. The Leader added that the Council has achieved its commitment to deliver a 3G facility within a 3-mile radius of every household in RCT.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Leader referred to the Council's Biodiversity/Peatlands and how it continues to increase the number of sites left for biodiversity (particularly communal land and bypasses where there are wildflowers).

The Leader outlined some specific schemes such as:

Energy Support

The Council has supported over 60 heating grants which were completed in 2023 so far with a further 200 applications received.

Innovative Schemes

Taff's Well Thermal Spring was completed in the autumn and is the only thermal spring in Wales and is one of only four in the UK. It is now successfully delivering low carbon heating to pavilion and Ffynnon Taf Primary.

Approval Has been provided to undertake more feasibility studies for potential hydro-electric schemes at Treforest Weir and Dare Valley Country Park.

The Council has committed to reducing its footprint since 2009 and has spent over £10.5m on energy conservation projects. This had led to savings of over £2.3m a year for schools, care homes, leisure centres and corporate buildings, and reduced emissions by almost 6,000 tonnes.

Transport

The Council introduced EV Charging Strategy and has rolled out infrastructure across its Council car parks with a further roll out phase going forward shortly with further regional and WG funding to implement a number of fast chargers enable local residents to operate electric vehicles.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Coal Tips, Flood Risk Management, Drainage/Flood Alleviation

The Leader referenced huge investment in flood resilience and repairs from storm damage with £20M invested in damage repair on bridges such as the White Bridge,

the Castle Inn Bridge with bids for further flood investment to upgrading culverts and ensuring as much resilience as possible. He added that the Tylorstown Tip Phase 2 and 3 Receptor Sites are at Planning stage for permanent use, while Phase 4 contract has been awarded and preparations are underway for work to start in Spring.

Capital Programme and Infrastructure

The Leader commented that the capital programme in RCT has been substantial at £172M, a record figure for the Council with a review of its reserves and underspends to draw in any additional funds.

Major Projects & Metro

The Leader referred to the Council's support of the Metro improvements, the A4119 project is underway with the contract awarded, and work is progressing well on-site toward a summer 2024 completion

Strategic Projects

The Leader advised that the former M&S and Dorothy Perkins/Burton's buildings in Pontypridd town have been acquired and funding from WG has been secured to carry out the demolition works. The Muni redevelopment is in the final stages of the detailed design work and discussions are underway with the preferred contractor to enable works to begin on site by the Summer. He commented that the YMCA is also nearing completion shortly.

EDUCATION

Inspections

The Leader advised that there have been 13 core inspections between March – December 2022 with 84.6% of schools requiring no follow-up inspection. Based on published reports, 1 school is in Special Measures and 1 school in Estyn monitoring. The Leader extended his thanks to all school-based staff for their efforts and their continuing support to all young people following the pandemic.

Exam Outcomes

The Leader highlighted the following outcomes:

Key stage 4 outcomes in 2022 showed improvement in comparison to pre-pandemic levels.

A*-C grades - improvement of 5.8 % points across Wales and 7.1 % points increase in RCT.

A*-A grades - increase of 6.7 % points in Wales, and a growth of 7.4 % points in RCT.

Key stage 5 picture for the highest grades, A*-A, is particularly positive across RCT with all schools performing better than 2019 and nearly half performing better than 2021. RCT average is significantly above that of 2019 and slightly below that of 2021.

The Leader commented that in relation to A*-C grades - nearly all schools performed better in 2022 compared to 2019 which demonstrates the improving picture and positive inspection process.

Sustainable Communities for Learning (21st Century Schools) and Other Projects

The Leader advised that the Band B programme is in excess of £272m. In addition, only on Friday last week funding worth £15m was approved by Welsh Government for a new school in Glyncoch which has been championed by the local Member. The Leader commented that the upgrades and investment in schools across the county

borough is evident and clear, with three new schools being built in the south of the county borough.

Each of the Group Leaders proposed questions to the Leader on the following to which the Leader responded.

Councillor K Morgan referred to another difficult past 12 months for the communities of RCT and commented on the council priorities to serve its communities and the importance of listening to the responses of public consultations. Councillor Morgan referred to the mature approach of the co-operative agreement with Plaid Cymru at the Senedd which has supported many of the challenges. She commented that for the Leader's debate it may have been useful to use the remaining Members Questions from the earlier agenda item as a way of widening the debate.

Each of the Group Leaders proposed questions to the Leader some of which are as follows:

The importance of reviewing leisure facilities, especially storage, for the residents of RCT– The Leader responded that the Council is committed to supporting grass roots sports with capital investment in areas such as 3G pitches across the county borough. He added that Cabinet has met with residents to listen and address issues and with significant investment improvements have been made to changing rooms and other sporting facilities.

RCT's two tier education system – The Leader commented that the issue is the take up and insufficient number of students seeking classes with few secondary schools meeting the criteria for 6th Form provision (80 or more pupils). He added that the Council has amalgamated and made the necessary rationalisation of courses across its schools to provide the necessary offer of A Levels subjects.

Traffic issues/congestion within Pontypridd – The Leader advised that the introduction of the Metro will bring 24 trains through Pontypridd every hour which will impact on transportation within the Pontypridd area. Also, the Leader confirmed that proposals concerning bus improvements/council office accommodation would be announced shortly.

Metro (connectivity for rail services along the Church Village Bypass corridor) – The Leader provided assurance that Regional and Welsh Government funding has been made available for the extensions to the Hirwaun and the Northeast Cardiff Metro lines. He added that a number of options are being discussed for the Northeast Cardiff Line as part of the Weltag.

Refuse Collection Update (Replacement of single use plastic recycling bags/smaller food waste bags) – The Leader confirmed that new food recycling bags will be rolled out shortly and when the current stock is used and he added that in the right locations across RCT, the reuse recycling bags will work well and are better for the environment (replacing the single use bags with 'reuse' bags)

The Presiding Officer opened up questions to all Members:

Unadopted Roads Programme £126K – The Leader confirmed that a report regarding the continuation of the unadopted roads programme had recently been considered by Cabinet. The council has an annual programme which is well received.

Local Member involvement in Meithrin accreditation events – The Leader assured Council that all local Members would be invited to any accreditation events/openings in dual Member wards, but he added that any individual concern should be directed to him for a response.

Sports Investment – The Leader advised that the Council has a strong commitment to invest in sport across the county borough for football and rugby such as the 3G pitches with funding secured with the FA for the facility in Darran Park and for changing rooms to compliment the 3G pitches. He added that the Council has a commitment to promote and establish schools of excellence for both Hocky and Netball.

Resilient Families – The Leader acknowledged the individual Member's praise for the Council's Resilient Families programme and the Social Services Members Hotline with which he concurred, and he assured the Member that his positive comments would be relayed.

Social Care Services (Disabled Facilities Grant) – The Leader advised that over £4m of investment (320 grants) has been awarded over the last year.

Changes to Waste Services – The Leader commented that according to National figures 80% of residents' rubbish should be recycled but added that the Council does have mechanisms in place to support families who may struggle with changes to the waste services . He added that the Council also offers a free, weekly nappy collection scheme and food waste scheme for residents and will shortly be rolling out a scheme to recycle residents' small electrical appliances such as irons or toasters from a designated drop off location. The Leader explained that most other local authorities will be moving to a three weekly or in some cases, a four-weekly collection.

Update on the budget pressures – The Leader advised that the current level of budget pressures is relentless with the Council's financial teams who ensure that all available external funding has been accessed. The Leader explained that the level of council tax was raised to 3.9% in view of the developing and additional social care pressures, and it was important to set a balanced budget. He added that discussions with Welsh Government will be ongoing to deliver free school meals in view of the rising food costs. He warned that the pressures will continue for some time and will be challenging to the local authority to tackle overspends.

Community Wardens – The Leader advised that the community wardens are working well within the communities across the county borough but reminded Council that they are not a replacement for South Wales Police officers but will work with them. He reminded Members that the Council will soon have 14 community wardens and 10 PCSO's on the ground working with the Police, tackling anti-social behaviour, issuing fines where appropriate for offences such as dog fouling but generally being a friendly face and a support in the community for residents.

Budget Reserves –The Leader proposed that a presentation would be arranged in the future for all Members to gain an understanding of the Council's reserves. He added that some of the Council's reserves will be used in the budget for the forthcoming year £9.1M, (£5M for energy reserve/£4.1M transitional reserve) £3m provided direct support for families with the cost-of-living payment, some support may be needed to support the third sector with its energy costs. The presentation will explain how the reserves are used, insurance funds, the general reserves fund, the transitional reserves, where the flexibilities are and how the capital programme is funded for

highways, unadopted roads etc.

The new Pontypridd 3-16 School – The Leader invited the Member to correspond with him directly on this issue to address any concerns and he advised that he would shortly be visiting the new site.

Accessibility/Mobility Issues (dropped kerbs)- The Leader advised that the Capital Programme has identified 50 footway schemes where dropped kerbs will be installed where it is needed. He added that £15K is available to address dropped kerbs in town centres and key locations such as GP Surgeries and community centres. Recently in Llanharan, match funding was provided with the community council to expedite this with discussion underway in Tonyrefail.

Pontypridd Town Regeneration – The Leader advised that further proposals would be announced in due course with regards to the regeneration in Pontypridd.

Unadopted Roads – The Leader confirmed that work on the unadopted roads programme was continuing (£300K) and in the Member's ward (Llwydcoed) work would be carried out.

The Presiding Officer thanked the Leader for his debate and responses to Members.

103 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services presented the annual report advising that the Treasury Management borrowing and investment activities are highly regulated and carried out in line with the relevant professional Codes of Practice. He added that carrying out a forward review of the Treasury Management strategy before the beginning of the new financial year is a specific requirement as is a formal mid-year review and a year-end backward review.

The Group Director advised that, as set out in the report, the Council has £297.6m of borrowing at an average interest rate of 3.07% with a borrowing requirement for next year of £19.6M to fund the now agreed capital programme and will supplement this by fixing in longer term debt if the economic environment and interest rate projections dictate and in line with advice from the Council's Treasury Management advisers and in line with the Council's under borrowed position, which the Council has continue to hold for a number of years and from which the council continues to be rewarded with a lower net capital financing cost.

The Group Director advised that in terms of the Council's investment strategy, the Council continues to lend to public sector and Government backed organisations only recognising the priority of security and liquidity over yield.

The Group Director referred Members to paragraph 16 for the Council's Treasury Management indicators and limits and the MRP Policy set out at section 17 which continues to write off the Council's supported borrowing on a straight-line basis over 40 years.

Following discussion of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy, Treasury Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement as set out in the report.
2. Approve the updated Treasury Management Policy Statement (Appendix 1) and Treasury Management Clauses (Appendix 2).

(**Note:** Councillor K Johnson declared an interest (Minute No.97 refers) –“I am a employee of Transport for Wales”)

104 CAPITAL STRATEGY REPORT 2023/24

The Group Director of Finance, Digital & Frontline Services presented the annual statutory Capital Strategy Report 2023/24 which set out a high-level overview of how the capital expenditure, which was agreed at the last Council meeting, is financed, as set out at section 6 of the report. The Group Director added that it includes the Council’s capital financing requirements (CFR) which is the underlying need to borrow to fund the Council’s historic and current spending plans. As referenced previously, the Group Director advised that this shows a significantly under borrowed position in line with the advice of Treasury advisors.

The Group Director advised that both the Treasury Management Strategy and the Capital Strategy statement will be presented to the Governance & Audit Committee for specific review and scrutiny in line with the relevant codes of practice.

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

(**Note:** Councillor J Brencher declared a personal interest (Minute No. 97 refers) – “My son is a Director of Transport for Wales)

105 THE COUNCIL'S PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/24

In accordance with Section 38(1) of the Localism Act, 2011, the Director, Human Resources provided Members with information in respect of the Council’s 2023/24 Pay Policy Statement. The Director referred Members to paragraphs 3.1 to 3.2 which set out the legal context for the need for the pay policy and paragraphs 4.1-4.9 which references the background to the pay policy, the need for Full Council approval and refers to the Pay Policy Statement at Appendix A to the report.

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

106 CWM TAF WELL-BEING PLAN 2023-2028

The Chief Executive presented his report which sought Council’s endorsement of the draft Well-being Plan 2023-2028 for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public

Services Board region. The Public Services Board is required to prepare and publish a local well-being plan which sets out the well-being objectives for the region and the steps it will take to meet those objectives. This is required every five years and the plan is based on the evidence gathered through a comprehensive well-being assessment which is described at section 6 of the report.

The Chief Executive provided details of the development of the plan which involved a comprehensive consultation process with stakeholders and communities and included consideration of the draft plan by the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 20th January 2023 as part of the consultation exercise and a final draft was considered by Cabinet on the 27th March 2023.

The Chief Executive advised that the plan has two main objectives, derived from the wellbeing assessment, the first concerns healthy local neighbourhoods and the second objective is sustainable and resilient local neighbourhoods. He added that the full plan, attached at Appendix A, is a high-level strategic plan with detailed delivery plans that will be developed over the coming months as the two Public Services Boards in the region are merged into a single Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board with a revised delivery structure.

The Chief Executive commented that the Council will reflect on these objectives as it develops its new Corporate Plan for 2024 onwards and he advised that subject to Council endorsing the plan, the next stages would include implementing the new governance arrangements for the new regional Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board, invest in the Board development with its new membership, develop more detailed delivery plan, arrangements around evaluation and outcome measures and ensure there is ongoing engagement and involvement with stakeholders and communities throughout.

Following a detailed discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-Being Plan as outlined within Appendix A of the report.

(**Note:** Councillor K Morgan declared an interest (Minute No.97 refers) –“I work for Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board”)

107 Notice of Motion

11A To consider the under-mentioned Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors D Grehan, A Rogers, K Morgan, S Evans, A Ellis, H Gronow, D Wood, P Evans:

This Council values issues raised in Notices of Motion whereby their main purpose is to influence positive outcomes that are in the wider public interest of our residents but are the responsibility of other organisations.

While the Council has a mechanism for reporting the outcomes of Notices of Motion, which refer the matter to another committee or officers, there is currently no reporting mechanism to inform members of progress of motion adopt representations being made on behalf of the Council.

There have been many examples of this Council resolving, cross party, that the Leader of the Council writes to Ministers at a Welsh and UK Level to make known our concerns on matters that affect our constituents, with no formal mechanism in place to report the progress or outcomes of such actions for the

public record.

Another example is our request that more families who are living in fuel poverty would benefit if the relevant Welsh Minister would widen the eligibility criteria of the NEST programme. In March of 2022 we resolved that the Leader of the Council write to the Social Housing Providers in the County to ask them if they would give additional time of at least 2 weeks following the funeral of a loved one to enable relatives to remove their possessions from their property. There are many other examples as the record will show. What we haven't had, as Full Council, is feedback on any of these matters to assess how effective they have been in achieving the desired outcomes.

This Council therefore resolves to:

Request that the Proper Officer presents a report for consideration by the Constitution Committee in advance of the Council Annual General Meeting, which considers options and mechanism for formally reporting the outcome and effect of the Council's representation made by members following the adoption.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the notice of motion.

11B To consider the under-mentioned Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors D Grehan, S Evans, K Morgan, A Rogers, A Ellis, H Gronow, D Wood, P Evans:

This Council acknowledges that child poverty levels in Rhondda Cynon Taf continue to rise, and are likely to worsen due to the cost of living crisis.

Council further acknowledges the link between child poverty and educational attainment.

Council believes that squeezed Local Government budget settlements are of concern, and risk impacting targeted interventions to tackle both child poverty and educational attainment.

Despite the Welsh Government previously setting targets to eradicate child poverty by 2020, child poverty in Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to increase with some electoral divisions continuously amongst the worse in the UK. Despite the best efforts of teaching staff in RCT there is a clear link between this poverty and educational attainment.

Mitigating the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis, hot on the heels of the covid pandemic and the devastating floods of 2020 across the county borough must now be a priority for the Council, and steps should be taken to address the well evidenced link between poverty and educational attainment. All learners must be given every possible opportunity to receive the excellent education that the Council is eager to deliver going forward.

In order to make early and effective progress on the scourge of increased poverty on our children, the Council resolves to:

- Continue to protect school budgets and ensure they are fully funded for the cost pressures they face and further ensure that children are able to catch up following the impact of the pandemic.

- Continue to work with the Welsh Government to deliver key poverty interventions as outlined in the Cooperation Agreement between Plaid Cymru and Welsh Labour which includes the roll-out of Universal Free School-Meals for all Primary School Pupils.

The Council further requests that a report is presented to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee:

- Which proposes options to develop a Child Poverty Strategy, to be implemented across all relevant services including education
- Ensure Children, Learners, Parents, Teaching Staff, Teaching Unions and relevant others, as well as appropriate Scrutiny Committees, are invited to participate in the development and scrutiny of the Child Poverty Strategy prior to adoption.

At the meeting the Chair announced that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.4.1 the following amendment to the Notice of Motion had been received from County Borough Councillors R Lewis, A Morgan OBE, 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. 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, W. Lewis, C. Leyshon, M. Maohoub, C. Middle, 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, 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.

The amended motion read:

This Council acknowledges that child poverty levels in Rhondda Cynon Taf continue to rise and are likely to worsen due to the cost-of-living crisis.

Council further acknowledges the link between child poverty and educational attainment.

Council believes that squeezed Local Government budget settlements are of concern, and risk impacting targeted interventions to tackle both child poverty and educational attainment.

Despite the Welsh Government previously setting targets to eradicate child poverty by 2020, child poverty in Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to increase with some electoral divisions continuously amongst the worse in the UK. Despite the best efforts of teaching staff in RCT there is a clear link between this poverty and educational attainment.

Mitigating the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis, hot on the heels of the covid pandemic and the devastating floods of 2020 across the county borough must now be a priority for the Council, and steps should be taken to address the well evidenced link between poverty and educational attainment. All learners must be given every possible opportunity to receive the excellent education that the Council is eager to deliver going forward.

In order to make early and effective progress on the scourge of increased poverty on our children, the Council resolves to:

-Note that in the Last 10 years - total schools' budget increased by 28% compared to overall budget increasing by 11%. Equated to an extra £25M provided to schools compared to other Council services

-Note that School budget for 23/24 is £187M (7.9% increase) from 22/23 compared to an increase of 6.6% in Welsh Government settlements for RCT.

-Note that published comparative data demonstrates that RCT's budgeted expenditure per pupil for 2022/23 at £6,867 is higher than the Wales average at £6,773.

-Continue to prioritise school budgets and ensure that children are able to catch up following the impact of the pandemic.

- Continue to work with the Welsh Government to deliver key poverty interventions as outlined in the Cooperation Agreement between Plaid Cymru and Welsh Labour which includes the roll-out of Universal Free School-Meals for all Primary School Pupils.

The Council further requests that a report is presented to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee:

- Which proposes options to develop a Child Poverty Strategy, to be implemented across all relevant services including education
- Ensure Children, Learners, Parents, Teaching Staff, Teaching Unions and relevant others, as well as appropriate Scrutiny Committees, are invited to participate in the development and scrutiny of the Child Poverty Strategy prior to adoption.

In accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure 12.6, a vote was taken in respect of the amendment to the Notice of Motion, and it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the amendment. Following further discussion in respect of the substantive motion, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the motion.

(Note: Councillor K Morgan wished to have it recorded as voting against the amended and substantive notice of motion)

This meeting closed at 8.00 pm

**Councillor G Hughes
Chair.**

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