



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 12 July 2023 at 5.15 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 J Brencher	Councillor R Bevan
Councillor S Bradwick	Councillor G Caple
Councillor J Cook	Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor E Dunning	Councillor R Davis
Councillor S Emanuel	Councillor J Edwards
Councillor G Jones	Councillor L Ellis
Councillor W Jones	Councillor B Harris
Councillor W Lewis	Councillor G Holmes
Councillor C Lises	Councillor W Hughes
Councillor C Middle	Councillor G O Jones
Councillor S Morgans	Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor A Morgan	Councillor M Maohoub
Councillor S Rees	Councillor C Preedy
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor J Smith
Councillor S Trask	Councillor L Tomkinson
Councillor M Webber	Councillor G Warren
	Councillor R Yeo

The following Councillors were present online:-

Councillor J Barton	Councillor P Binning
Councillor A Dennis	Councillor M Ashford
Councillor V Dunn	Councillor S J Davies
Councillor R Evans	Councillor D Evans
Councillor H Gronow	Councillor S Hickman
Councillor R Lewis	Councillor J Elliott
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor Sera Evans
Councillor W Treeby	Councillor D Grehan
Councillor K Webb	Councillor A S Fox
Councillor T Williams	Councillor G Hopkins
Councillor R Williams	Councillor D Parkin
Councillor A Rogers	Councillor A Roberts
Councillor D Wood	Councillor D Williams

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Group Director of Finance, Digital & Frontline Services

Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services

Apologies for absence

Councillor L Addiscott	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor A J Ellis	Councillor P Evans
Councillor K Johnson	Councillor K Morgan
Councillor N H Morgan	Councillor W Owen
Councillor M Norris	Councillor S Powderhill
Councillor G E Williams	Councillor M Powell

26 Welcome

The Presiding Member welcomed Members to the hybrid Council meeting at the later start time of 5.15pm.

27 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations were made pertaining to the agenda and a declaration in relation to agenda item 5 was declared later in the meeting (Minute 31 refers):

Agenda item 7-Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2022 - 2037- Update on National and Regional Planning Matters and Approval for A Delivery Agreement and Timetable Amendment for The Continued Preparation of the RLDP

County Borough Councillor W Lewis declared a personal interest –“My employer Hafod Housing Association is mentioned in the report and also the Scout Association, of which I am a member.”

Agenda Item 10-Urgent Notice of Motion

County Borough Councillor W Hughes declared a personal and prejudicial interest (I will leave the meeting for the duration of this item) -“My wife manages homecare.”

County Borough Councillor G Hughes declared a personal and prejudicial interest (I will leave the meeting for the duration of this item and vacate the Chair for County Borough Councillor B Stephens, the Deputy Presiding Member, to take the item) – “My mother works for the homecare service.”

28 Minutes

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the hybrid Council meeting held on the 14th June 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

29 Announcements

The following announcements were made:

- The Leader announced the sad passing of former Group Director, Mr George Jones. He described Mr Jones as an excellent Officer, polite and friendly and a 'gentle giant.' Sadly, Mr Jones had retired a few years earlier due to ill health. The Leader, on behalf of the Council expressed his sorrow and wished to extend his condolences to the family of Mr George Jones.
- On behalf of Councillor S Morgans, County Borough Councillor J Smith wished to congratulate years 1 and 2 of Maerdy Primary School for their success in winning the 2023 Welsh Heritage Schools Initiative nationwide competition at foundation phase. From 6,000 entries, Years 1 and 2 won the annual heritage project competition with their presentation entitled 'Made and Moulded in Maerdy'.

30 Statements

The Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A Morgan OBE advised that he has requested the Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services, as part of his mid-year review of the Council's position in respect of its underspends and reserves, to bring forward any available packages of funding to support residents and the 3rd sector ahead of the forthcoming winter months. He added that if available, he would like to see the Council bring forward a multi-million package of funding to assist residents and families in any way possible with the cost-of-living crisis and the subsequent impact on child poverty.

31 The Council Work Programme 2023/24

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications confirmed that this would be the last scheduled Council meeting ahead of the summer recess with the next Full Council meeting to be held on the 20th September 2023 at 5pm. He added that as there are a considerable number of business items scheduled at that meeting, there may be a need to reflect on the proposed flow of business items across the council meetings throughout the autumn, which will be done in consultation with the Group Leaders as appropriate.

The Service Director advised that following recent notification of the Members development and training opportunities, the training sessions would be implemented at an opportune time and in response to Members' feedback.

32 Members' Questions

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

"Will the Leader update on the commitment to fund 10 PCSOs in RCT and provide an overview of how the Community Wardens service is benefitting our communities?"

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

The Leader advised that the 10 PCSO's and are working well in with the fourteen community wardens in support of South Wales Police. He added that they will not replace the role of the Police as they provide a visible and

reassuring presence in key locations across the communities such as town centres and parks. Public feedback has been extremely positive to date and reports from businesses and local residents commenting that their presence is having a positive effect on perceptions of community safety.

The Leader commented that they help to uphold the Council's PSPOs, such as helping to secure compliance with the ban on dogs on marked sports pitches and the alcohol related PSPO's in Pontypridd and Aberdare Town Centres. However, their role is one of assurance. Currently there are 14 Wardens in total – including 2 Senior Wardens – and they work up to 7 days a week in shifts with the service running between 14/15 hours per day.

The Leader urged Members to report any issues relating to anti-social behaviour through the usual channels, via the Members Services inbox and the Community Safety teams or via the Police. In conclusion, the Leader commented that it was one of the core manifesto commitments of the RCT Labour Group which has been implemented.

There was no supplementary question

2. Question from County Borough Councillor D. Parkin to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure, County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings:

“Will the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the progress of play area improvements across the County Borough?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings:

Councillor Crimmings was pleased to confirm that the Council's programme of play area upgrades and improvements has picked up from where it left off and continued over the start of the new Council term. She explained that every year since 2015 the Council has delivered significant investment programmes in this area – in recognition of the immense benefits that outdoor play opportunities afford our young people in encouraging their development and imagination.

Councillor Crimmings advised that 166 of the 217 play areas have been invested in over that period - which equates to 76.5% of the stock - so over 3/4s of the play facilities have received improvements through an overall investment programme of £6m. Some of these facilities have had “Phase 2” works undertaken due to partial investments or kit needing to be replaced at later dates, so there have been 186 total projects undertaken.

In conclusion, Councillor Crimmings advised that for this current 2023/24 financial year, 10 projects have been identified for a total of £341,000 of investment to include the Tyn-Y-Bryn play area in Councillor Parkin's ward which is one of those facilities scheduled for improvement.

There was no supplementary question.

3) 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 progress of the South Wales Metro?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

The Leader commented that considerable progress has been made by Transport for Wales over the last 4 months in particular. The Integrated Control Centre in Taff's Well has officially opened and the new Metro vehicle was introduced on the line. He advised that night-time testing on the electric-battery tram-trains, which will be operating on the Treherbert and Aberdare lines, is underway. This testing is prior to the commencement of the training for train operatives and they will operate from the £100m Taff's Well depot.

The Leader explained that the first section of rail between Cardiff and Pontypridd electrified towards the end of May, and track upgrades have taken place at locations across the Core Valley Line to prepare for the new tram-trains. The transformation programme for the Treherbert Line began at the end of April 2023 with the palisade fencing installed and construction of under track crossings throughout the route. At Dinas Rhondda station, a new platform is being constructed as the railway line will be doubled through the station. A new Access for All bridge, with lift and step access to both platforms, is also being installed.

The Leader commented that safety messages have been issued via Facebook from Transport for Wales in respect of the electrification of the lines, in order to keep communities safe.

There was no supplementary question.

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

“What support and signposting services are available to residents in regard to the cost-of-living crisis?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

The Leader advised that there will be further packages of support in the Autumn but to date through the micro grant scheme, there are opportunities for further funding for community groups and a substantial number of applications have been received. He added that the impact of sustained austerity and now the cost-of-living crisis means that unfortunately food banks are necessary to support residents, there is extensive work being undertaken through food pantries, food and fun clubs and through the process of bulk buying of stock through the Council's procurement service.

The Leader commented on the success of the Hubs last winter and the support that is provided to residents via the Councils' libraries and community centres for

those impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. He added that helping residents to socialise and offering them a safe and warm place to meet will be crucial particularly in view of the rising energy and fuel costs. He stressed that the Council would continue to provide as support as necessary, particularly to the 3rd sector.

There was no supplementary question.

5) Question from County Borough Councillor S. Morgans to the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language, County Borough Councillor R. Lewis:

“Following the granting of planning approval, can the Cabinet Member outline the next steps for the development of a brand-new school in Ferndale for YGG Llyn-Y-Forwyn?”

Response from County Borough Councillor R. Lewis:

Councillor Lewis advised that works have already started on site to create a new Welsh Medium Primary School for YGG Llyn y Forwyn. To date, significant remediation works have been completed and the appointed construction contractor, Wynne Construction, are on-site and are progressing with the site clearance and ‘cut and fill’ works. The building structure is targeted to commence in September 2023.

Councillor Lewis commented that targeted completion for the new school (the building itself) is August 2024, in readiness for the new academic year of September 2024. Importantly, Wynne Construction have recently visited the school to give a Health and Safety talk to the pupils around site safety and the dangers of a live construction site. They have also launched a poster competition where pupils from various year groups will design a safety poster, and a selection of these will be displayed around the construction site hoarding.

There was no supplementary question.

6) Question from County Borough Councillor D. R. Bevan to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

“Will the Leader update on the progress of the Tylorstown tip works?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

The Leader advised that due to the prolonged dry spell the Tylorstown Tip works is continuing to progress well since the main earthworks started in April 2023 moving 160,000 tonnes of material by the contractors. He commented that recently he accompanied the First Minister and other Welsh Government officials to the site to see first-hand, the work being undertaken.

He explained that there will be further works over the coming months and work on the site will be completed before the winter period but it will need to be

monitored over the winter months to assess how the rainfall impacts the mountain and if required further additional and modification works will be necessary. Works for completion of the project include finishing the finalised profiles, installing and repairing drainage infrastructure and restoring the site.

The Leader was pleased to announce that since the major landslide in RCT (which was one of the most significant landslips in Welsh history), the site is now safe and subject to completion this year the site can be put to rest. In conclusion, the Leader announced that a significant bid has been submitted to Welsh Government for further tip work, to enable intervention in other sites.

There was no supplementary question.

7) Question from County Borough Councillor W. Lewis to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

“How is the Council working with and supporting local food banks through the effects of the Cost-of-Living crisis?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

The Leader reiterated that the Council has provided direct support to the local foodbanks and through the Council’s purchasing powers over recent years. Through the micro grants, the Leader added that seventy-five projects and community groups have been approved and will commence delivery shortly, some include holiday and other food provision. The well-established Neighbourhood Network Fund delivers grants of up to £1,000 to community organisations and groups. The Leader commented that the SPF – RCTCBC Community Micro Grant, which opens shortly, contains an allocation of circa £40k specifically for sustainable food provision, which was secured by the Council to meet increasing demands.

The Leader acknowledged the small team led by Syd Dennis for their tireless work with the community connectors, through the RCT Together network, which supports residents through difficult times. The Leader hoped that in the future, the economy will improve, there will be a different stance on public spending, negating the need for residents to rely on foodbanks as they move out of poverty.

There was no supplementary question.

8) Question from County Borough Councillor M. Maohoub to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

“Can the Leader provide an update on the preparations that the Council has undertaken in readiness for the Welsh Government’s 20mph rollout?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

The Leader confirmed that a considerable amount of work has been conducted to deliver the Welsh Government priority. In 2021/22 a total of £53,522.62 was spent, undertaking the preparation work and in 2022/23 a further £1.1 million

was spent on reviewing traffic regulations and undertaking design trials and in some areas the 20mph roundels were removed. The manufacturing of approximately 1,268 new signs has been commissioned and teams are on hand to install the new signs and the removal of existing 'gateway' features for whole of RCT has commenced.

The Leader advised that there have been huge challenges to meet the deadline of the 1st September, and this has taken priority over other additional schemes. However, the Leader stressed that, in line with the recent correspondence to all Elected Members, whilst there are no other resources available this year for other traffic regulation orders submitted by Members, any requests will continue to be recorded and cross referenced with Police incident reports to identify urgent matters with other non-urgent, traffic schemes will be reviewed in the future.

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

(Note: County Borough Councillor J Brencher declared a personal interest – “My son works for Transport for Wales”)

33 Annual Treasury Management Review 2022/23

In accordance with the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, the Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services Director of Finance and Digital Services provided Members with information on:

- the Council's Treasury Management activity during 2022/23; and
- the actual Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2022/23.

In advance of setting out the key areas of the report, the Group Director advised that the Council's Treasury Management activities are highly regulated and governed by codes of practice and the Council continues to comply with all relevant requirements in this regard. The Treasury advisers provide the Council with information and advice noting that all decisions are those of the Council.

The Group Director advised that, against a difficult economic backdrop, the Council continues to exercise its low-risk strategy, minimising counterparty exposure and taking maximum advantage of the Council's own cash balances. He added that the Council's net capital charges for the year were delivered within budget with no opportunities to further reduce the cost of borrowing via rescheduling during the year, which is continually reviewed.

The Group Director provided an overview of the Council's borrowing activity -the weighted average interest rate for the year was 2.86% and the Council continues to hold the Welsh Government repayable funding for transport infrastructure. The capital expenditure during last financial year amounted to £135m with the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), which represents the underlying need to borrow, at £503M. The end of year actual borrowing of £294M demonstrates the under-borrowing position which continues to serve the Council well.

In conclusion, the Group Director commented that the Council operated within all its prudential limits during the year and its capital envelope has subsequently been increased by £40.5M to reflect project cost increases. The Group Director confirmed that the report will be subject to review by the Council's Governance and Audit Committee.

Following discussion, whereby the Group Director responded to a number of queries relating to the report, it was confirmed that an update and presentation in relation to the Council's medium term financial plan would be delivered to all Members ahead of the Full Council meeting in September (and individual training available upon request through the Members PDR process).

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the content of the report; and
2. Note the funding arrangements for the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme as set out at section 12.

34 Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2022 - 2037- Update on National and Regional Planning Matters and Approval for a Delivery Agreement and Timetable Amendment for the Continued Preparation of the RLDP.

The Director of Prosperity and Development presented the report which set out the ongoing national and regional planning matters that are having an influence over the preparation of the Revised Local Development Plan 2022 - 2037 (RLDP).

The Director drew Members' attention to section 3 of the report which set out the positive progress to date in the preparation of the RLDP. It also explained the factors contributing to the proposal to extend the agreed timetable for the reparation of the RLDP. The Director proposed that, the strategy is presented to Full Council in November 2023 ahead of the formal 6 weeks Preferred Strategy consultation.

Whilst referencing the matters impacting on the progress of the RLDP, the Director of Prosperity and Development referred to the new version of Technical Advice Note 15 (TAN 15) for Flood risk which creates specific rules for the allocation of land in the RLDP and subsequent planning applications. He alluded to the difficulties in determining growth options to date and the need for clarity from the new version of the TAN due to be published in the New Year, following discussions with Planning Officers and Welsh Government.

In conclusion, the Director of Prosperity and Development drew Members' attention to section 5 of the report which demonstrated the proposed amendments to the timetable. For clarity, the previously agreed dates are shown, and the proposed new dates inserted.

The Chair of the Members RLDP Steering Group, Councillor L Tomkinson, commented on the involvement and engagement of the cross-party Members' Steering Group to date on all stages and content of the plan to ensure there is appropriate consideration. She thanked Members for their positive contributions to this important forum.

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

1. Acknowledge the matters, as set out, that are affecting the preparation of the RLDP in accordance with its approved timetable.
2. Approve a proposed amendment to the RLDP Delivery Agreement timetable to incorporate an extension period for its preparation. This is set out in the following report in section 5 and in the proposed new Delivery Agreement which is attached as Appendix 1.
3. Seek necessary Welsh Government agreement to the Delivery Agreement changes.
4. Authorise the Director of Prosperity & Development to make minor changes to the timetable in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity. To request that the RLDP Steering Group are sighted upon any such amendments made by the Director of Prosperity & Development.

35 Change of Membership

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communication advised of the changes to the Labour Group's nominated representation on the Alliance for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

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

1. The Authority's nominated representative on the Alliance going forward will be County Borough Councillor J Smith; and
2. Correspondence be sent to the Alliance advising them of the change to the Authority's nominated representative.

36 Urgent Business

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications advised that in accordance with Procedural Rule 10.5, the Presiding Member 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.

(Note: The Presiding Member, County Borough Councillor G Hughes and County Borough Councillor W Hughes left the meeting for the duration of the item having both declared a personal and prejudicial interest (Minute No.27 refers).

In the absence of the Presiding Member, the Deputy Presiding Member, County Borough Councillor B Stephens, took the chair for agenda item 10.

37 Urgent Item - Notice of Motion

To consider the following Urgent Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors **A O Rogers; D Wood, K Morgan, S Evans, D Grehan, H Gronow, P Evans and A Ellis:**

Despite the email from the Chief Executive sent to Members at 1326 hrs yesterday, this Council regrets that it had no prior information of plans to discontinue the inhouse provision of the night mobile homecare service. All Members were made aware of this proposal via an email sent two days ago by staff working in the service who were summoned to attend a meeting with officers and unions last week to be told that it was intended to outsource the service to other providers in the private/independent sector.

This flies in the face of the Council's commitment to retain directly provided services where the staff are paid on National Terms and Conditions. It is unforgivable that such a change to a much valued and necessary service, was being considered, until yesterday, by management under an unpublished operational delegated decision.

The Cabinet Work Programme had also been varied, whereby both the Annual Director of Social Services report and the draft Adult Services Strategy which were to be considered in July, are now rescheduled to be considered in October 2023. Should these reports have been considered in July as planned then members would at least have had information about the proposal to discontinue the night service.

The Operational Delegated decision now being published goes some way to answer the concerns of Members about due process, however what it doesn't do is authorise the officer decision in March to not take referrals, thus deliberately running down the service creating the statement in the CEO email that " the current arrangements no longer presents the most effective means of providing this care and support."

Under these circumstances it is important to establish how officers can use operational authority to reduce a service, with the ultimate aim of removing it, without the knowledge and consent of Members.

This Council therefore requests that the CEO make a statement today, before recess, as to:

- Why the service was deliberately run down in March and no delegated decision notice was published announcing that change.
- How the removal of a service is allowed to be defined as an operational decision as opposed to a Cabinet/Full Council decision.

Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Urgent Notice of Motion and the Chief Executive provided the following statement:

"Members will recall the budget strategy agreed by Council on 8th March 2023, at which time the Council agreed a budget strategy that closed an unprecedented budget gap of £38 million. The budget strategy was subject to a comprehensive consultation exercise and in advance of the provisional settlement from Welsh Government, the Council had already started consultation on several key service

changes that had wide ranging implications across our communities, including those to waste services and community meals.

The review of the support at home night mobile service was considered as part of the service efficiencies and operational service reconfiguration savings agreed as part of the budget strategy. In the context of increasing demand and ongoing budget pressures the Council continuously reviews all its services across the Council, including its social care provision in line with the Council's medium term financial planning arrangements and performance management framework.

To provide members with some context, the Council's wider support at home service provides 17,000 hours of care and support at home each week to 1,431 adult residents across Rhondda Cynon Taff through its commissioned and in house services, in discharge of our statutory duties under the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act.

The support at home night mobile service is a small discretionary service that is generally used to reduce the length of time between the last call in the evening and the first call in the morning, with some calls during the night to help with continence care. The service provides up to 145 hours of care per week, supporting forty-six people.

There is no statutory requirement to provide a home care service at night and to the best of our knowledge, this service is not provided by any other Council in Wales. As this discretionary service was subject to review as part of the budget strategy and ongoing medium term financial planning arrangements, pending that review, from April the care and support needs of new clients were met through alternative provision and no additional people were added to the night mobile service so as not to raise expectations and to ensure continuity of care provisions for those adults.

The review of the service was commenced due to the relatively high cost of the service, the limitations of the service due to its small size and its discretionary nature. There has not been any intention to run the service down since March; this inefficiency was already identified based on the service at the time the budget strategy was agreed.

The review has determined that the care and support needs of the individuals receiving this service can be reviewed and reassessed to make alternative care and support arrangements to meet their assessed needs and this provision can be made through existing in-house and commissioned services. We will not be outsourcing the night mobile service.

In terms of the decision, this was made as a delegated operational decision to implement the service efficiencies and operational service reconfiguration savings already agreed as part of the budget strategy. The decision does not require any changes to the Council's policy or strategic direction regarding support at home or social care; it merely responds to the needs of adults receiving care and support in a different way. Therefore, the decision has been properly made by the Interim Director for Social Services in accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation.

I appreciate that this has caused concern to our staff, the trade unions and members are quite rightly concerned about the impact on our valued workforce and of course those people in receipt of this service. I have already dealt with

the arrangements to review and reassess the needs of the adults receiving the service and I can assure members that the Council will work closely with the trade unions to support its staff through this difficult time. No compulsory redundancies will be required, and we will manage this through the Council's management of change policy. Staff will have the options of voluntary redundancy, voluntary early retirement, or redeployment within the service.

Although I am fully satisfied that this decision has been properly made by the Interim Director of Social Services, and that the changes proposed are necessary, I accept that the manner in which the trade unions were consulted in advance and staff notified was not handled as well as we would expect and for that I apologise to the trade unions and staff involved. I also apologise for the concern this has caused to members of this Council. These are areas I will ensure are improved going forward."

The Leader acknowledged the statement delivered by the Chief Executive. He advised Members that officers are charged with making delegated operational decisions on a regular basis but where appropriate, and upon the advice of the proper officer, they are referred to a Cabinet Member, Cabinet or Full Council. The Leader commented that he is clear and content that it was the right course of action for officers to use their delegated authority on this occasion.

The Leader commented on the key points raised by the Chief Executive and he reiterated the point that there is no requirement for compulsory redundancies as the Council will seek to offer voluntary redundancy, voluntary early retirement, or redeployment through existing vacancies in social care services.

Whilst the Leader concluded that there are lessons to be learned in view of how the information was communicated with staff, he asked Members to apply perspective, with delegated operational decisions being made on a daily basis, this is the first time the Chief Executive has been called on to make a statement following Members' concerns.

Councillor A Rogers was invited to comment. He asked where in the Council Constitution would he find the authority for an officer to introduce and implement major changes to a service in March with the ultimate aim of closing down a service without the need for Members to be notified of the decision.

Councillor Rogers also commented that this decision would have benefitted from scrutiny through the most appropriate Committee. He queried whether the decision caused the unit cost to increase, with no new referrals accepted in March, yet staffing costs remained the same and he asked what the new unit cost was prior to March?

Councillor Rogers asked whether the budget had been adjusted accordingly In view of the decision being taken before the new financial year, on the 1st April 2023 with the ultimate aim of closing the service down. He also queried whether Members' attention had subsequently been drawn to this in any Cabinet or Council Budget report. Councillor Rogers further queried whether any concerns had been raised in performance reports. He concluded by asking how were staff summoned via email to a meeting on the 4th July before the delegated decision was made on the 6th July and sought clarity on whether any political clearance had been given to the closure of the service in March and if so, by whom?

The Chief Executive provided responses to those questions not already covered

in his earlier statement:

The Chief Executive advised that the authority derives from Section 3 of the Council's Scheme of Delegation which allows Officers to make Officer Delegated Operational Decisions. He added that the decision not to accept further, new referrals into the service from March, pending the review of the night mobile service, was set out in his earlier statement. He stressed that it was not the intention to run the service down or increase the unit cost but it had been identified as an efficiency that needed to be made through the budget strategy.

The Chief Executive advised that the decision was made during the Budget Strategy which was considered by Council on the 8th March 2023. He commented that it was not a performance issue but an efficiency issue, with the Council using its resources to maintain its central services in the most efficient and effective way. He added that staff were requested to attend a meeting to be notified of the change to their services, a point which he had also addressed in his earlier statement. The Chief Executive apologised for the manner in which the communication had been conducted on this occasion and added that lessons would be learned.

In conclusion, the Chief Executive advised that in terms of political clearance, as he had already specified, this was part of the operational efficiencies considered by Council at its meeting in March this year.

Councillor W Jones thanked the Chief Executive for his frank and honest statement and commented that he was content as long as officers are confident they can maintain the service as previously provided and that the staff are supported.

Councillor S Trask stressed the importance of putting the service users first whilst also remembering the Council's own staff. He was reassured to hear there were no planned compulsory redundancies and he wished to pass on his very best wishes to those seeking retirement and to those seeking redeployment. He hoped they would be provided with suitable employment and they would remain with the council for many years to come.

The Leader also commented on the frank and honest statement delivered by the Chief Executive. Following on from the earlier statement and questions he himself had raised with officers, the Leader confirmed that he was confident that this decision does fall within the remit of a Delegated Operational Decision. The Leader commented that whilst the Council must ensure that clients' needs are met it must also ensure that funding can be prioritised elsewhere, as social care is under huge financial pressure.

The Leader concluded by restating that compulsory redundancies would be avoided through voluntary retirement and redeployment and managed through the Council's management of change policy whilst working closely with Trade Unions and staff.

This meeting closed at 6.34 pm

**Councillor G Hughes
Chair.**

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

