



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

### **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 6 March 2024 at 5.00 pm

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

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

Councillor G Hughes (Chair)

Councillor S Evans	Councillor B Stephens
Councillor L Addiscott	Councillor M Ashford
Councillor J Barton	Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor J Bonetto	Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor J Cook
Councillor A Dennis	Councillor R Davis
Councillor E L Dunning	Councillor J Elliott
Councillor L Ellis	Councillor S Emanuel
Councillor D Evans	Councillor B Harris
Councillor A S Fox	Councillor G Holmes
Councillor S Hickman	Councillor W Hughes
Councillor K Johnson	Councillor G Jones
Councillor G O Jones	Councillor N H Morgan
Councillor W Jones	Councillor R Lewis
Councillor W Lewis	Councillor C Lises
Councillor C Leyshon	Councillor M Maohoub
Councillor S Morgans	Councillor A Morgan
Councillor M Norris	Councillor W Owen
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor S Rees
Councillor C Preedy	Councillor G Stacey
Councillor J Smith	Councillor S Trask
Councillor L Tomkinson	Councillor G L Warren
Councillor W Treeby	Councillor R Williams
Councillor M Webber	Councillor D Wood
Councillor T Williams	Councillor R Yeo

#### **The following Councillors were present online:-**

Councillor R Bevan	Councillor V Dunn
Councillor S Evans	Councillor R Evans
Councillor D Grehan	Councillor P Evans
Councillor G Hopkins	Councillor H Gronow
Councillor D Parkin	Councillor C Middle
Councillor A O Rogers	Councillor A Roberts
Councillor J Turner	Councillor K Webb
Councillor D Williams	Councillor G Williams

### **Officers in attendance**

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

### **Apologies for absence**

Councillor P Binning	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor S J Davies	Councillor J Edwards
Councillor A J Ellis	Councillor K Morgan
Councillor S Powderhill	Councillor M Powell

#### **99 Welcome**

The Presiding Member welcomed Members to the first hybrid Council meeting to be held in Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd.

#### **100 Declaration of Interest**

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

##### **Agenda Item 5 – Members' Questions**

Councillor K Johnson – Personal – “I am an employee for Transport for Wales”

##### **Agenda item 6 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2024/2025**

Councillor Sera Evans – Personal- “My son's school is mentioned in the report”

(Declared later in the meeting Minute No.105 refers) Councillor R Lewis – Personal- “I am Vice Chair of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Joint Committee”

##### **Agenda item 7 – Council Tax Resolution 2024/2025**

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

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

Councillor A Rogers – Personal- “I am a member of the Hirwaun & Penderyn Community Council”

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services explained that a blanket personal declaration for those who are members of a Town or Community Council would be declared in respect of Agenda Item 7 which references the Community /

Town Council Precepts.

Councillor B Harris – Personal- “I am a member of the South Wales Police & Crime Panel”

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

### **Agenda item 8 - Capital Programme 2024-2025-2026-27**

Councillor W. Owen – Personal – “I sit on the Board of Governors for Ponty clun Primary School”

Councillor G Holmes – Personal- “I am a Governor for Penygawsi Primary School”

Councillor S Morgans – Personal- “I am a Governor for Llyn Y Forwyn School”

Councillor J Smith – Personal – “I am a Governor for Llyn Y Forwyn School”

Councillor M Webber – Personal- “I sit on the interim Governing Body for the new Ysgol Awel Taf”

Councillor L Tomkinson – Personal-“I am a interim Governor for Ysgol Afon Taf”

Councillor S Trask – Personal-“ My daughter attends Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School”

Councillor C Lises – Personal- “I am a Chair of Governors for Hawthorn Primary School”

Councillor C Lises – Personal- “I am a member of the Governing Body for Hawthorn High School which will form Ysgol Afon Wen”

Councillor C Preedy -Personal-“I have a family member who is a teacher at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School”

Councillor A Roberts – Personal- “I am a Governor for Hawthorn High School”

Councillor J Bonetto – Personal- “I am a Governor at Hawthorn High School”

Councillor J Bonetto – Personal-“I sit on the interim Governing Body for the new Ysgol Afon Wen”

### **Agenda item 11 – The Council’s Pay Policy Statement 2024/2025**

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services wished to make a declaration on behalf of all Council Officers present in relation to Agenda Item 11:

“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”.

## 101 Minutes

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the virtual Council meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

## 102 Announcements

The following announcements were made:

- Councillor Sera Evans wished to extend her sympathy to the Plaid Cymru Group Leader, Councillor Karen Morgan and her family following the sad passing of her husband, Gareth, to severe and prolonged illness. Councillor Evans wished to extend her deepest condolences to Councillor Morgan, her family and children at this very sad and difficult time.
- Councillor Sheryl Evans paid tribute to the late and former Councillor Linda De Vet who sadly passed away on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Former Cllr De Vet represented the then ward of Aberaman North and was elected as Mayoress for the Municipal Year 2019-2020 . She stood down as Councillor in the 2022 Elections but Councillor Evans spoke fondly of her friendship with her friend Linda De Vet.
- Councillor A Morgan OBE also wished to pay tribute to former Councillor Simon Lloyd who had recently passed away. He was elected to represent the ward of Mountain Ash West in a bi election in 2005 and stood again in both the 2008 and 2012 Local Elections but stood down in 2017. He served as Mayor for RCTCBC in 2010/2011, a position he thoroughly enjoyed and he was also a former member of Mid Glamorgan County Council. The Leader extended his condolences to Simon’s family at this sad time.

The Presiding Member led the Council in a Minute’s silence in memory of the three aforementioned residents.

## 103 Members' Questions

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

“Will the Cabinet Member provide an update on the scheme to upgrade the culvert on the industrial estate in Porth?”

### Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

The Leader advised that the works have now been completed to the culvert at Llwyncelyn Industrial Estate, Porth which was funded through the Welsh Government’s Resilient Roads Fund. He added that the work has involved a complete upgrade to the culvert inlet, with overflow devices built in and with 24/7 CCTV monitoring already in place at the site which is linked to the Council’s emergency control room. Any future storms of yellow or amber magnitude will

mean that the control room will be staffed and monitored.

The Leader commented on the investment which has totalled £150K and how the responses from local businesses to the investment and work have already been positive.

**There was no supplementary question**

**2) Question from County Borough Councillor D. Williams to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:**

“Can the Leader provide an update on the preparations underway in advance of RCT welcoming the Eisteddfod in the summer?”

**Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:**

The Leader commented that work on finalising the Spatial Plan has progressed at pace and proposed locations for park and ride facilities, a caravan park and other camping facilities is being considered by the Council's Eisteddfod Committee next week. The Leader added that an announcement would be made in the coming days with further positive news relating to the Eisteddfod.

The Leader advised that there had been a recent positive meeting with all local Members in the vicinity of Pontypridd which heralded the start of ongoing, proactive engagement and liaison with Members on the Eisteddfod infrastructure arrangements. He added that there is an expectation that in excess of 160,000 visitors will come to the town over the eight day period. The Leader commented that there will be no reason to drive through Pontypridd during the Eisteddfod as Officers continue to work closely with the Eisteddfod Committee and Transport for Wales to develop a Traffic Management plan with enhanced train provision and fleets of buses transporting people and residents as part of the park and ride arrangements.

The Leader explained that there has been significant fundraising so far with continued support for local appeal committees to raise money for the National Eisteddfod. The Leader was keen to stress that the Eisteddfod is open to all residents, and engagement with all young people across the county borough is crucial.

The Leader commented that the benefits of the Eisteddfod will be felt right across the county borough and not just in Pontypridd town and therefore the Town Centre team continue to work with, not only Pontypridd but also Aberdare and Treorchy BIDs to promote the Eisteddfod far and wide amongst visitors and residents.

**There was no supplementary question**

**3) Question from County Borough Councillor R. Davis to the Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care, County Borough Councillor G. Caple:**

“Can the Cabinet Member please outline the next steps for the Extra Care scheme in Porth following the news that a new contractor has been appointed?”

**Response from County Borough Councillor G. Caple:**

Councillor Caple took the opportunity to advise of the Council's £60M investment to modernise the Council's residential care homes to ensure dignity and respect in old age with state of the art extra care homes including provision for more complex needs including Dementia. These facilities will enhance the independence for older people and provide real choice for those most vulnerable in our society against a background of budget cuts and the financial cost of living crisis.

Councillor Caple advised that this specific development has taken longer than initially expected due to both the impact of the pandemic and the selected contractors entering into administration. Despite these difficult challenges Councillor Caple was pleased to say that with a contractor in place, work has recommenced on the site. He added that the Extra Care development will consist of 54x1 bed apartments & 6x2 bed apartments alongside a dining area, hair salon, activity room and day care centre.

Councillor Caple concluded that this investment will be central in supporting individuals with assessed day centre needs to ensure that isolation and loneliness are mitigated and promote people's independence and wellbeing with bariatric and hoist infrastructure across the scheme.

**There was no supplementary question**

Question 4 was not put to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Services and therefore fell.

**5) Question from County Borough Councillor D. Owen-Jones to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:**

“What impact will the announcement from TATA Steel that it plans to progress with the proposals to cut 2,800 jobs have on our communities?”

**Response of Councillor A Morgan OBE**

Councillor Morgan explained that although the concern is of the 2,800 job losses, he reminded Members that there are also three supply chain jobs linked to every steelworker and therefore there could be significant more job losses and more than originally predicted.

The Leader confirmed he had attended a rally in Port Talbot a few weeks ago where it was clear to see the sense of anxiety, uncertainty and anger amongst the workers and their families. He advised that it was also an opportunity to speak with other Council Leaders, community representatives, Unions and Welsh Government.

The Leader explained that key is accessing funding referenced by the UK Government although the details as to how the £100M package is going to be

administered remains unclear at this stage. He added that he was keen to have discussions with Welsh Government following the significant engagement that took place between the DWP and the staff of UK Windows and Doors, when the company went into administration. He added that the Council will seek to provide similar support as it has previously, working with partners to ensure that support and advice is available for those impacted.

The Leader advised that the Trade Unions are very much at the forefront of the fight, supported by local Labour politicians, steelworkers, and the local communities. He added that Labour have committed to a £3bn clean steel fund, and he was hopeful that TATA delay implementing their plans long enough to await the outcome of the next General Election.

The Leader stressed the need to keep the conversations open and he explained that it is imperative that a new Labour Government will re-negotiate a better package of investment that protects jobs and ensures a just transition to greener methods of production. The Leader advised that the situation with TATA Steel is likely to be as impactful as the mine closures were in the 1980s.

**There was no supplementary question**

**6) Question from County Borough Councillor L. Ellis to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:**

“Can the Leader provide an update on the programme of coal tip management across RCT?”

**Response of Councillor A Morgan OBE**

Councillor Morgan reassured Members that coal tip safety is the Council's priority since Storm Dennis and the landslip in Tylorstown. He added that the Council has a team of inspectors in place who carry out regular maintenance and tip inspections. He provided an update on progress relating to the tip in Tylorstown where the former coal tip has been moved and more drainage work has been undertaken with long term monitoring in place. The Leader commented that the work to the Tylorstown tip will be completed this summer, as intended, with further work to the value of £2M.

The Leader advised that there are other tips across the county borough that either require monitoring, maintenance or in some cases, intervention will be required. He explained that the defects are categorized using a BRAG system, Black means that emergency action is required with immediate notification, Red requires short term maintenance where remediation required and should be actioned as soon as reasonably practicable, Amber requires medium term maintenance or remediation is required but with risk mitigation such as site visits, monitoring etc and finally Green requires long term maintenance or remediation required and is currently low risk.

The Leader also explained the category definitions and inspection intervals which as follows: D1 is monthly inspection, D3 is a 3 monthly inspection, C is a 6 monthly inspection, B requires an annual inspection, A2 is a 2 yearly inspection and finally A4 is a 4 yearly inspection (the last two are tips that have been reclaimed or removed yet still require monitoring).

The Leader advised that Council Officers are carrying out work on emergency plans in conjunction with the Emergency Services in the event that any concerns

regarding the category C and D tips are raised. This together with regular planned inspections as well as ad-hoc severe weather inspections, the Council is well placed to keep its tips safe for its residents.

**There was no supplementary question**

**7) Question from County Borough Councillor S. Trask to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:**

“Can the Leader make a statement on the public consultations that have taken place during the past three months?”

The Leader advised that the Council has undertaken six large public consultations over the last three months, and he set out the details of all six within the three month period:

Budget Consultation Phase 1, 6<sup>th</sup> November – 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023 with 653 responses, Breakfast Club, 27<sup>th</sup> November – 8<sup>th</sup> January with 1351 responses Home to School Transport, 27<sup>th</sup> November – 8<sup>th</sup> January (extended 18<sup>th</sup> January – 8<sup>th</sup> February), 2858 responses, Budget Consultation Phase 2, 4<sup>th</sup> January – 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024, 530 responses, the Strategic Equality Plan Engagement, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023 – 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024, 96 responses and the Corporate Plan Engagement, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023 – 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024 with 469 responses.

**Supplementary question from County Borough Councillor S Trask:**

“I am concerned with the weight attached to the public responses, for example for the consultation for the proposed closure of Rhigos Primary School where over 90% of respondents were against was passed and the upcoming RLDP consultation contains complicated forms to suggest new sites but my request to simplify these forms was turned down. How much weight is put on public responses?”

**Response of Councillor A Morgan OBE**

The Leader responded that public responses are important and play a key part in the consultations to ensure that where Members are making decisions; they have all the relevant information possible to hand. He added that the public responses also ensure that the Council takes on board any comments raised by them so where possible, any relevant adjustments can be made and where necessary, officers are asked to provide further information or there may be a need to go back out to consultation with other options. The Leader stressed that consultations are not public referendums.

**There were no further questions due to the lapse of the allotted time.**



Council Work Programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year and as previously advised, the Cwm Taf University Health Board will attend the next Council meeting and also the Leader's Annual Debate, which was originally scheduled for the Council meeting in February, would now also form part of April's Council meeting which will be the last regular meeting of this municipal year.

The Service Director also stated that in addition, at the next meeting, Members would receive the Council's Corporate Plan, the Review of the Community Boundaries and a report on the Political Balance of the Council. In conclusion, the Service Director added that, through the Group Leaders, an update would be provided regarding the demands of council business between now and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) before the updated work programme is published.

## **105 Revenue Budget Strategy 2024/25**

The Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services presented the Cabinet's proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for the next financial year 2024/25 which is now being recommended to Full Council.

The Group Director explained that the initial draft strategy was agreed by Cabinet on the 24<sup>th</sup> January and has been subject to a second phase of consultation which was held between the 24<sup>th</sup> January and the 9<sup>th</sup> February. All feedback from the second phase of consultation has been considered by Cabinet and is attached to the report. The Group Director added that the feedback included the consultation report, the minutes of the meetings of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the School Budget Forum and the Joint Consultative Committee. The Group Director advised that the strategy, which was subsequently agreed by Cabinet on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, is set out in the report.

The Group Director advised that the Council's initial budget gap, as set out in the last Medium Term Financial Plan, was forecast at £36M for next year. Against this position, a number of early budget reduction measures, which have previously been reported and determined have been offset, leaving a remaining gap of £25.9M and it is this position against which the budget strategy has been formulated. He added that the Council has now received the final local government settlement which is also reflected. He added that the final settlement confirmed an increase in funding at an all Wales level of 3.3% and 3% for this Council. The settlement levels across Wales range from 2.3% to 5% with a funding floor in place at the lower level of settlement. He added that there were three transfers into the revenue support grant at final settlement, however, these do not have a net impact on the budget position.

The Group Director advised of the key components of the budget strategy which are set out from section 7 of the report, which deal with the remaining £25.9M budget gap:

- The proposed council tax increase for next year is 4.99% which will provide an additional income of £1.122M over and above the 3.9% which was originally modelled. This equates to an increase of £1.03p per week for a Band A property or £1.55p for a Band D property. An element of the council tax increase has been set aside to support public transport provision across the county borough;

- The Council's schools have been protected for many years with their budgets increasing by 34% over the last ten years, during which other council services have seen increases of only half of that level. School reserves amounted to £15M at the end of the last financial year, which is at a historically high level, compared to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 when school reserves amounted to £2.4M. It is proposed that the council fully funds schools for all pay pressures next year plus provide them with a further £1M of recurring funding plus a further £0.5M of one off funding. This will see the Schools budget increase by £12.4M or 6.6% for next year taking the overall school's budget to £198.5M. This level of increase is over twice the uplift as compared to the councils overall funding increase. The Council awaits confirmation from Central Government regarding funding for increased costs associated with teachers' pension costs from April next year which the Council has been advised is a timing issue.
- Additional efficiencies of £5.2M have been identified by the Senior Leadership Team as measures which can be delivered operationally and without a significant detrimental impact on the council's frontline services. This £5.2M is over and above the £8.2M of early budget reduction measures previously identified and reported in November 2023 and will bring the total of efficiencies measures, which are now built into next year's budget, to over £13M.
- There are also a series of measures, set out in section 10 of the report which are around energy efficiency and base budget adjustments, the impact of the decision to charge for the childcare element of breakfast clubs, the money from which has been recycled back into the Schools budgets, capitalisation and proposals regarding the level of fees and charges for next year.
- The final settlement also confirmed the early notification the council received from Welsh Government on the level of additional resources which the council will now receive as a consequence of the UK Government's announcement in January with an additional £600M of funding for local government in England. This resulted in an extra £25M for Wales and an extra £1.951M for Rhondda Cynon Taf. This additional funding is provided through a combination of additional revenue support grant and the reinstatement of the social care workforce grant to £45M at an all Wales level.
- The aggregate value of the strategy components amounts to £16.457M which with the extra resources at the final settlement leaves a remaining budget gap of £7.502M and this is set out at table 2 (paragraph 10.4). It is proposed that the remaining budget gap is balanced with an allocation from the transition funding reserve which have been set up for this purpose and replenished as the year has progressed.

The Group Director advised that the Council's transition funding and reserves are used sensibly as part of the Council's annual budget setting processes recognising that the use of reserves alone is not a sustainable strategy and he added that he is satisfied that the council has arrangements in place to continue to deliver savings early which serves to replenish this reserve and deliver the needed base budget recurring savings going forward.

The Group Director concluded that in overall terms, this will result in a council net budget for next year of £631.795M. He commented that this year has been a challenging year and financial environment within which the budget options and now Cabinet's recommended budget has been constructed. He stressed that there may be a need to be prepared for further and significant financial constraints but he assured Members that senior officers will continue to do all they can to maximise efficiency and protect the Council's frontline services.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Group Director for his report and acknowledged the diligence of senior officers in managing the budget despite the difficulties faced this year with the high rates of inflation, pay growth and the ever increasing demands on council services. With regards to the proposed level of council tax, the Leader commented on the council tax levels set by other Welsh local authorities, with RCT Council being the second lowest level.

The Leader reminded Members that the Council is doing its utmost to protect and fund schools with this council fully funding the schools teaching and non-teaching pay award with Cabinet recommending an additional one off payment of half a million pounds for schools (as set out in the report). He commented on the importance of producing a balanced budget that is credible and sustainable for the residents of RCT.

Other Group/Deputy Group Leaders took the opportunity to discuss the report in detail whereby the Group Director responded to a number of queries in relation to the Revenue Budget Strategy 2024/25.

In conclusion and following a vote, it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the letter from the Minister for Finance and Local Government (Rebecca Evans MS) and the table on the 2024/25 Final local government settlement, reproduced at Appendix 1;
2. Note the implications for the Council and the remaining budget gap as set out at section 5;
3. Agree a Council Tax increase for 2024/25 of 4.99%;
4. Agree the uplift to the aggregate Schools Budget as detailed at section 8;
5. Agree the budget strategy proposals as set out at paragraphs 10.2 to 10.4;
6. Agree the use of the 'Medium Term Financial Planning & Service Transformation Reserve' as transition funding, totalling £7.502M for 2024/25;
7. Approve Tables 4 and 5 in Section 13 of the report as the basis of allocating resources to the Individual Schools Budget (ISB), to other Council Services and to meet its corporate financing requirements; and
8. Agree the Council's overall budget for 2024/25 at £631.795M, in order to pass the necessary statutory resolutions to set the Council Tax for the forthcoming financial year by the statutory deadline of the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

(**Note:** Councillor R Lewis declared a personal interest-“I am Vice Chair of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Joint Committee”).

## 106 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2024/25

The Group Director Finance, Digital and Frontline Services advised that in line with the agreed Budget Strategy, this report represents the formal and legal requirement for Council to agree the council tax resolution, including details of the council tax to be levied in respect of the Community Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

He reported that the council tax levels for next year, in line with decision made in the Budget strategy, will be £1694.65. The Police & Crime Commissioner has notified the council of their precept rise for next year with a resultant increase in the level of their council tax of 8.69% taking the level of their council tax to £352.67 which will bring the combined effect of the council plus the Police increase to an aggregate increase of 5.61% for those Band D properties who do not also have to pay a community council charge. The Group Director added that the level of the Community & Town Council precept charges have been notified and they have also been set out at Appendix 1 of the report.

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

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

- i) Note the level of the precept from the Police & Crime Commissioner for South Wales;
- ii) Note the level of the Community / Town Council Precepts, as detailed in Appendix 1;
- iii) Pass the formal Council Tax resolutions for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, as contained in Appendix 2; and
- iv) Note my comments upon robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves as detailed at paragraph 9.2.

## 107 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024-25 - 2026-27

The Group Director Finance, Digital & Frontline Services presented the report which set out the Council's proposed three-year Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2026/27 for Council's consideration which amounts to a total of £165.6M over the next three years.

The Group Director commented that this represents a core programme of £42.5M, specific grants of £42M borrowing to support the school investments programme of £13M, over £33M of additional resources already set aside to fund priority investment areas and an additional and further new investment

identified of over £19M (which is set out in section 6 of the report) which is proposed across the areas of highways maintenance, unadopted roads, highways structures, Rhigos Mountain Road rock netting, flood alleviation work, Streetcare bins, park structures, parks and green spaces, country parks investment, play areas, multi-use games areas, Coed Ely Solar Farm, Hawthorn hockey pitch and Leisure fitness equipment, a total of £19.292M of additional investment. The Group Director added that the new programme also includes allocations for next year of £15.9M for regeneration activities, £11.5M for private sector housing, £42M for frontline services, including highways, strategic projects, Storm Dennis recovery work, parks, waste and fleet, £39M of investment across Education & Inclusion Services and £13M in Community & Childrens Services.

The Group Director concluded by adding that notwithstanding the ongoing funding challenges which the Council continues to face with its revenue budget, the Council is able to propose a significant and ambitious capital investment programme which builds upon the current year's investment which is projected at £220M at quarter two.

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

1. Note the detail of the final 2024/25 local government settlement for capital expenditure, reproduced at Appendix 1;
2. Agree to the proposed reallocation of existing resources, and allocation of new resources as detailed in paragraph 5;
3. Agree to allocate the funding identified in the report to the investment priorities as detailed in paragraph 6.2;
4. Agree the proposed 'core' three year programme detailed at Appendix 2;
5. Agree the proposed total three-year Capital Programme, detailed at Appendices 3 (a) to (e), which includes the following non-core capital funding:
  - Prudential borrowing to support Sustainable Communities for Learning Schemes (formerly 21st Century Schools);
  - Capital grants for specific schemes;
  - Third party contributions; and
  - The investment priorities detailed in paragraph 6.2.

## 108 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024/2025

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 agreeing a 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

£287.2M of borrowing at an average interest rate of 3.15% with a borrowing requirement for next year of £19M 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. This being 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 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. During the year, notification was received from Welsh Government that they wished to recall the interest free loan in respect of Transport Infrastructure.

Following discussion of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy, Treasury Indicators, and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy statement as set out in the report.

## 109 CAPITAL STRATEGY REPORT 2024/25

The Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director of Finance, Digital & Frontline Services presented the annual statutory Capital Strategy Report 2024/25 incorporating the Council's prudential indicators. Our agreed capital expenditure and how it is financed is set out at section 6 of the report which includes the Council's capital financing requirements (CFR) which is the underlying need to borrow to fund the Council's historic and current capital spending plans. As referenced previously, the Group Director advised that this shows a significantly under borrowed position, a strategy which the council has adopted over a number of years. This is shown clearly at indicator four.

The Group Director commented that the Council's limits to borrowing activities, including the Council's authorised limit of £588M are also set out along with the general approach to commercialisation and asset management and disposal.

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.

## 110 THE COUNCIL'S PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/25

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 2024/2025 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 4.1-4.10 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 the Director of Human Resources responded to a query regarding the Council's actions to address the gender pay gap. He advised that the Council has introduced a number of measures in recent years such as the introduction of the Real Living Wage and from April 2022 the Council increased the value of the lower grades (Grades 1-5) by introducing a minimum payment of £10 per hour in addition to the current Real Living Wage rate of pay. He added that the last two pay awards in particular have supported those employees on lower grades.

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

**This meeting closed at 7.00 pm**

**Councillor G Hughes  
Chair.**

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