



COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 26TH JANUARY 2022, AT 5.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor C. Andrews - Mayor

Councillors:

M. Adams, Mrs E.M. Aldworth, A.P. Angel, P.J. Bevan, C. Bezzina, C. Bishop, A. Collis, S. Cook, D. Cushing, C. Cuss, W. David, D.T. Davies, M. Davies, K. Dawson, N. Dix, C. Elsbury, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, Mrs C. Forehead, Miss E. Forehead, J.E. Fussell, A. Gair, N. George, C. Gordon, R.W. Gough, L. Harding, D. Havard, A. Hussey, M.P. James, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, Mrs B.A. Jones, S. Kent, G. Kirby, Mrs A. Leonard, Ms P. Leonard, C.P. Mann, P. Marsden, B. Miles, S. Morgan, B. Owen, Mrs T. Parry, Mrs L. Phipps, D.W.R. Preece, J. Pritchard, J. Ridgewell, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Scriven, J. Simmonds, S. Skivens, Mrs E. Stenner, J. Taylor, A. Whitcombe, R. Whiting, L G. Whittle, T. Williams, W. Williams, B. Zaplatynski

Together with:-

C. Harrhy (Chief Executive), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services and Housing), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer), J. Morgan (Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager), L. Morgan (Licensing Manager), D. Beecham (Electoral Services Manager), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

The Mayor welcomed back to Council, the Chief Executive, Mrs Christina Harrhy and the Chief Executive thanked Members and Officers for all the kind messages which meant so much to her and her family. The Chief Executive also placed on record her thanks to Mr Dave Street for so ably stepping in during her absence.

The Mayor, on behalf of Council expressed her deepest condolences to Councillor J. Pritchard whose mother sadly passed away this week.

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Executive reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, D.T. Hardacre, D. Harse, A.G. Higgs, V. James, Mrs G.D. Oliver, D.V. Poole, Mrs D. Price, Mrs M.E. Sargent, J. Stone, G. Simmonds, C. Thomas.

In noting the apologies, the Mayor on behalf of Council wished Deputy Mayor Councillor J. Stone a speedy recovery after her recent fall.

2. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor congratulated Owen Roe a Year 7 pupil at Heolddu School for his outstanding winning design for this year's Mayoral Christmas Card competition and advised Council it had been a very difficult competition to judge as the standard of entries had been so high.

The Mayor expressed her disappointment she had been unable to attend the Christmas Concert by Bedwas Trethomas and Machen Brass Band and the British Empire Medal Presentation and congratulated all those that received a honour, unfortunately having been required to isolate following a contact with COVID 19 she had not been present, but had been able to rely messages of congratulations. She had also been able to send a video message and flowers to a resident Ty Iscoed Residential Home who had celebrated a 100th Birthday.

Finally, the Mayor placed on record her thanks to all those who had organised and contributed to this year's Operation Santa Appeal, which had once again been a tremendous success.

3. STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF COUNCIL

Councillor P. Marsden provided a statement on a number of key issues for the Council.

In relation to the 2022/23 budget proposals, which were agreed by Cabinet last week. Council was advised that the proposed bold and ambitious budget which includes £10 million pounds of investment while protecting frontline services from cuts as the authority recovers from the ongoing pandemic. The draft budget also included a proposed Council Tax increase of 2.5%, which is well below the rate of inflation and the lowest increase for a number of years

The Leader felt that this budget really showed that 'Caerphilly cares' by supporting and protecting the community during these difficult times and she asked Members to encourage as many people as possible to have their say and take part in our ongoing budget consultation.

Council were advised that the Welsh Housing Quality Standard programme had recently been completed. This flagship programme had seen the largest ever single investment made into council owned homes in the county borough and appropriate celebrations were being planned.

It was noted that over £260 million has been invested in total through the programme; including internal and external home refurbishments, adaptations to make sure homes meet the needs of individual tenants', and environmental improvements to enhance our local communities.

Delivering a programme of this scale, across our 10,660 rented properties, had not been without its challenges; particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic and the Leader took this opportunity to place on record her thanks to everyone who has been involved in delivering this

programme and to give recognition to the significant contribution made by Cllr Lisa Phipps, in her former role as Cabinet Member for Housing.

Regarding the current coronavirus situation. Members would be aware that Welsh Government is planning the reintroduction of alert level zero at the end of this week thanks to the improving picture across Wales. In response to these changes, the Leader would continue to work closely with the Chief Executive and the Cabinet to consider the impact on services and agree our next steps. Members were advised that details were still being worked through and further updates would follow but did not anticipate a big surge of staff or members returning to the office in the near future. The approach will be slow and steady, gradually increasing numbers and reviewing the impact regularly.

Members noted that Caerphilly had narrowly missed out on being crowned 'council of the year' at a recent ceremony and Christina Harry was also shortlisted for the prestigious title of Chief Executive of the Year and was highly commended. Cllr Kevin Etheridge also scooped the top title of community champion at the LGIU awards.

In concluding her statement, the Leader made a special appeal to every Elected Member present, as unfortunately, we are seeing an increasing number of Councillors and Candidates being subjected to abuse, threats, and intimidation. As well as being totally unacceptable, this behaviour undermines the principles of free speech, democratic engagement, and debate.

Council was advised that she stood shoulder to shoulder with the other Group Leaders, Councillor Colin Mann, and Councillor Kevin Etheridge to call for an end to abuse, intimidation, and harassment of any kind. This pledge had been widely publicised both locally and nationally and is particularly relevant in the run up to the local government elections in May.

We have pledged to participate in a fair election campaign which is based on positive campaigning and merit, rather than personal attacks and smears against individuals. We encourage all elected members and candidates in the forthcoming election to do the same. In addition, we will publicly 'call out' any such inappropriate behaviour and take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.

Whatever political colour we represent, we all stand united in our shared purpose of representing the people of our county borough. Attacks on political policies and procedures is what we are here to defend, however, personal attacks on individuals are not acceptable and will not be tolerated. This is not how we conduct our political business here in Caerphilly. Whatever, our differences we are all united under the umbrella of "TeamCaerphilly" – working together for the good of all.

In concluding her statement the Leader asked everyone to please join in this movement for positive change.

4. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 28(3)

Councillor R. Saralis presented a petition on behalf of residents of Penmaen Estate to Council asking Council to make highway improvements to ensure safe vehicle egress from Penmaen Estate at the junction of Vancouver Drive and Oakdale Terrace.

The Mayor accepted the petition which would be actioned in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

5. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

The Mayor confirmed that there were two awards to present to Council.

Councillor Kevin Etheridge – Community Champion Award, Local Government Information Unit and Churches, Charities, and Local Authorities 2021 Councillor Awards.

The Leader asked Council to join her in congratulating Councillor Kevin Etheridge, in December last year Councillor Etheridge was awarded the Community Champion Award at the Local Government Information Unit and Churches, Charities and Local Authorities 2021 Councillor Awards. The awards celebrate local councillors across Wales and England and Councillor Etheridge received this prestigious award in recognition of his 'outstanding level of commitment' and 'drive in spearheading successful campaigns'. Receiving 676 nominations for the award from residents across the borough and was the only Welsh Councillor nominated for the Community Champion Award.

Councillor Etheridge was also praised for his work with Bowel Cancer UK raising awareness of Bowel Cancer symptoms and he had become a strong advocate for screening tests, since his own diagnosis in 2019.

Council recognised Councillor Etheridge and congratulated him on his fantastic achievement.

To Recognise Members of Caerphilly County Borough Council on Achieving 40 Years Continuous Service

The Chief Executive recognised those Members of Staff who had achieved 40 years continuous service with Caerphilly County Borough Council and advised Council that they would be awarded a £250 voucher along with an invitation to take Tea with the Mayor once COVID restrictions allowed. The Chief Executive expressed her admiration for the dedication and commitment of these Members of Staff which also included a Member of the Corporate Management Team.

The Leader of Council joined the Chief Executive in congratulating the long serving Members of Staff and thanked them on behalf of Council for their on-going commitment and hard work.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor W. David declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 9 – Notice of Motion – Second Homes in that he is second homeowner and as such would take no part in the debate and decision.

7. MINUTES - COUNCIL – 16TH NOVEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of Council held on 16th November 2021 (minute nos. 1-12) be approved as a correct record.

8. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(4)

Question from Councillor K. Etheridge to the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Property, Councillor J. Pritchard.

To ask the Cabinet Member to confirm the number of school contracts that are currently out to tender and to outline the measures that are in place to deal with vulnerable children specifically regarding taxis to and from schools in and outside the County Borough. Also, I would like the Cabinet Member to advise if any delays are being incurred with their transport?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Property, Councillor. J. Pritchard

There are currently 17 school contracts out to tender. The Council is experiencing a shortfall in available operators that are able to fulfil the number of contracts required, with some contracts being tendered, and subsequently re-tendered multiple times. Indicative information suggests that the biggest reason for this is the number of available drivers within the transport industry – this is for both taxi and bus operations. Where the Council is unable to fulfil the transport requirement, parents are kept up to date on the delays incurred. Alternative travel options are offered where available e.g., a ticket on the public transport network; and in some cases the offer of parental re-imbursment is offered.

Question from Councillor R. Saralis to the Cabinet Member for Social Services and Housing, Councillor S. Cook.

Can the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Housing explain what Caerphilly County Borough Council has done to maximise income for eligible residents throughout COVID?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Social Services and Housing, Councillor S. Cook.

At the start of the pandemic the Council immediately responded, as it quickly recognised the financial difficulties caused by COVID 19.

In April 2020 a crisis telephone line was quickly put in place manned by Housing Rents staff who provided a range of financial support to residents, many of whom had never faced such financial difficulties.

A centralised Foodbank contact, collection and distribution system was put in place by the Caerphilly Cares team to support provision with vouchers, donations, and delivery for residents in financial crisis. A triage system was established to connect the individual to a local voucher distributor and stock was centrally replenished and managed by securing food and monetary donations from the private sector.

Since April 2020 the team has made over 2000 referrals to local foodbanks to receive a food parcel or fuel voucher.

In addition, the Caerphilly Cares team supported, funded, and developed several Fareshare schemes that offer free or low-cost food to their local community members, working with community groups and organisations. Securing £250,00 of funding from Welsh Government to run a small grant scheme to support local food insecurity projects. The team has also advised people on how to get a bank account or credit union account.

Over the coming months it became clear that a reactive approach was insufficient, and Caerphilly needed to put in place a proactive strategy which focussed on income maximisation for residents.

Additional resources were identified as part of Caerphilly Cares and an income maximisation team in Housing Rents was created. A twofold approach was developed:

For “at risk” residents the team reacted to their immediate crisis

A more proactive approach using key datasets from the Council systems to identify residents not claiming their full entitlement to benefits. This model has shown

vulnerable tenants are often unable to fully claim their entitlement to a range of benefits.

Since April 2020 the team has supported eligible residents in gaining additional annual income in excess of £4.5M.

In addition the Council has made 3263 Self Isolation Payments totalling £2,108,500.00, and 5743 Winter Fuel Payments, totalling £573,400. (figures up to 11/01/21)

Council will recognise that the support provided has been life changing for many of our residents. As a result of the support provided by the team one family is now receiving additional annual income of £15,500 and the feedback from the family shows the impact the team is having on our residents' lives.

9. NOTICE OF MOTION – SECOND HOMES

Consideration was given to the Notice of Motion which was received from Councillor John Roberts and supported by Councillors A. Angel, C. Bishop, A. Farina-Childs, R.W. Gough, J. Taylor, C. Mann, L. Whittle, P. Marsden, S. Cook, J. Pritchard, and T. Parry.

It was noted that in accordance with rule of procedure 11(3) of the Constitution, the Mayor had agreed to allow the motion to be dealt with at Council, without first being discussed at an overview and scrutiny committee in order to expedite business.

Councillor Roberts outlined his Notice of Motion and expressed concern as to the growing impact of second homes on communities in Wales and in Caerphilly County Borough. He also expressed concern for the increasing number of empty properties that were falling into dereliction and decay and called on Council to look at all available options, including financial penalties, to help tackle the growing issue of empty properties in Caerphilly and to instruct Officers to bring back a report dealing with options as soon as possible.

In seconding the notice of motion Councillor Cook the Cabinet Member for Social Services and Housing expressed his support for a further report on empty properties and outlined the work already being done by the Empty Properties Team.

At this point Councillor S. Skivens sought advice from the Monitoring Officer about declarations of interest and advised that he owned a second property outside the borough. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that his advice was there was no declaration in this case as the motion related to empty properties within this borough and this would not prevent him from taking part in the debate or vote, but the decision whether to declare would be matter for Councillor Skivens. Councillor Skivens accepted the advice and confirmed he would not make a declaration.

Members expressed their support for the motion and although they agreed that Caerphilly did not share the same levels of second homes as other authorities the increasing number of empty properties and the issues, they create in communities required investigation and felt that bringing those properties back in to use was a vital move forward in terms of the housing shortfall.

A Member sought clarification as to how empty properties could be identified and reported and asked if it would be possible for a webpage/web link to be developed to allow the public to report them to the Council.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing recognised that this could be a very helpful addition to the website and advised that this would be looked into.

Members recognised that this would not be an easy issue to resolve and welcomed the motion as a positive step forward. Clarification was sought on the on the number of empty Council properties and the length of turn around required to bring them back into use. The Corporate Director advised that although he did not have this information to hand, he would circulate details following the meeting. He confirmed that the length of turn around was very much dependent on the condition in which the property was left and the impact of COVID had affected progress.

Clarification was then sought in relation to Council Tax and how this was levied on empty properties. The Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer advised that charges were brought but this was a very complex process, should Council support the motion he would be happy to cover off the subject in any further report for Member's consideration.

Members then queried the number of empty properties previously acquired via the right to buy option and if these could be bought back by the Council for use. The Corporate Director confirmed that he would make further enquiries about numbers and advised that although not done in any quantity there had been previous occasions when the Council had bought properties back and were actively exploring all housing options.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the notice of motion be supported and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation and in noting that there for 55 For and 1 Abstention the motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED that the motion be supported.

10. NOTICE OF MOTION – NATIONAL ENERGY CRISIS

Consideration was given to the notice of motion received from Councillor P. Marsden and supported by Councillors E.M. Aldworth, J. Pritchard, N. George, E. Stenner, A. Whitcombe, R. Whiting, S. Cook, M. Evans, C. Andrews, D. Havard, R. Saralis, W. David, S. Morgan, M. Adams, B. Miles, A. Collis, G. Kirby, A. Higgs, E. Forehead, J. Ridgewell, D. Price, C. Thomas, C. Bezzina, L. Jeremiah, A. Hussey, D. Harse, D. T. Davies, C. Forehead, W. Williams, T. J. Williams, G. Johnston, C. Mann, K. Etheridge. P. Leonard, D. Preece, A. Gair, A. Farina-Childs, C. Thomas, J. Stone, L. Harding, A. Leonard.

Councillor Marsden outlined her Notice of Motion which called on Council to write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer and call for the immediate implementation and action for the following: -

A reduction in VAT for Energy Bills to help families and householders.

An introduction of a new lower price cap on energy bills to protect households from excessive price rises.

The implementation of grants or interest free loans to encourage the take up of renewable energy solutions such as domestic Solar / PV for private homeowners and local businesses.

The Leader detailed her concerns in relation to the financial impact on families of rapidly increasing energy costs and that many working families may well soon be faced with the choice between 'heating and eating'.

In seconding the motion Councillor Mann expressed the support of the Plaid Cymru Group for the motion and shared the concerns raised by the Leader. Particularly when added to rising food costs, increasing in national insurance contributions, and agreed that UK Government must take action to relieve the burden on families.

Members expressed further concerns as to the number of working families facing poverty with increased reliance on food banks and although they accepted that this was a complex issue of supply and demand, steps needed to be taken to protect those struggling financially. Members debated the reliance on fossil fuels particularly gas and how more sustainable forms of energy must be advanced so they become more affordable priced, and the savings passed on to the public.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the notice of motion be supported and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the notice of motion be supported.

11. NOTICE OF MOTION – RECOGNITION OF ST DAVID’S DAY AS AN OFFICIAL BANK HOLIDAY

Consideration was given to the Notice of Motion received from Councillor T. Parry and supported by Councillors C. Mann, J. Roberts and C. Elsbury.

Councillor Parry outlined the notice of motion and confirmed that she would be accepting an amendment to the motion submitted by Councillor P. Marsden.

The Leader confirmed that the amended Notice of Motion to read ‘St David’s Day is an important day in the Welsh year and for our national culture and we welcome the motion’s ambition to celebrate our Patron Saints Day as a Formal Public Holiday however we feel this must be done in the right way, it would not be right or fair for employees of CCBC alone to benefit from a Public Holiday while their family members and neighbours employed elsewhere do not, that is why in the interest of fairness and equity we would like to make representations to Welsh Government and UK Government to request that National Public Holidays are created for Patron Saints of our country’ was then moved and seconded.

Following considered and debate and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation and in noting there were 57 For and 1 Abstention the amended notice of motion was supported by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the notice of motion be supported.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

12. UPDATE ON WELSH GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS TO ESTABLISH CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEES AND RESULTANT CHANGES TO THE CARDIFF CAPITAL JOINT COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to the report with set out the interim governance and delivery model sufficient to implement the statutory requirements for the establishment of the Southeast Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC). The report also set out the ‘twin-track’ approach to operating the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal alongside the ‘bare minimum’ phase of the CJC mobilisation ahead of the SE Wales CJC setting its first statutory budget on the 31st January 2022.

The report also sought to appraise Council of the next phases of progress in line with resolving the current barriers to full implementation of an integrate ‘lift and shift’ approach

which seeks to eventually, bring together the CCR City Deal and CJC into one coherent model of regional economic governance.

Members took the opportunity to reaffirm their concerns regarding the flow of information to back bench members and how this type of organisational structure did not lend itself to engagement with all Members, leaving them excluded from processes.

Clarification was sought as to how the Local Development Plans would fit in with this regional approach and how the CJC would work in conjunction with the various masterplans under development. Particular reference was made to much needed investment opportunities in the north of the borough and assurance was sought that this area would not be overlooked. Members agreed that it would be imperative to secure investment for this area and reference was then made to the Heads of the Valley Masterplan and the Heads of the Valley Road improvements works and how they should be brought to the fore to encourage investment.

Reassurances were given on the development framework and the 3-tier approach that underpinned the various plans ensuring that worked hand in hand and did not contravene each other.

Governance of the CJC was outlined and opportunities for scrutiny were explained, the need for regional working and the opportunities that this provided were detailed. The Chief Executive provided further reassurance on the untapped potential that the CRC would release and how this next step was very much a natural progression that would unlock significant investment opportunities that only a regional footprint would facilitate.

Debate returned to investment opportunities and skills gaps in the north of the borough and how they could be addressed, Members noted that improvements to the Metro and train links would help to facilitate greater access to cities but felt that development that would draw people from the south of the borough to the north must also be explored as a priority. It was noted that there was a medical/life sciences cluster already developing in the Rhymney area with international companies opting to invest there and the Council would be working with companies such as these to secure further opportunities including the upskilling of employees and the release of land for future development opportunities.

Members acknowledged that there was merit to planning on a regional footprint but that the relationship to the authorities own strategic ambitions must be united in a common cause. Concern was expressed that the Heads of the Valley Masterplan came with no money attached and although the development of the Heads of the Valleys Road was very much anticipated works on other north/south links such as the A469 were still unresolved, and reassurances were sought that this was still considered a priority by this Council. The Leader confirmed that Cabinet continued to lobby Welsh Government on the A469 and advised that it remained a key issue and they would continue to fight to see the required improvements were completed.

A Member confirmed that having had previous reservations about the CRC, having listened to the debate and the delivery of investment to the north of the borough felt that this clearly demonstrated more than anything else the real need for a regional approach.

Clarification was sought as to the value of investment made in the north of the borough in comparison to investment in the south. Officers confirmed that although they did not have this information to hand it would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

Having been fully considered it was moved and seconded that subject to an additional recommendation at 3.8 of the Officer's report to read 'once the permanent governance CJC structure is developed a Members Seminar is convened in advance of a further report being presented to Cabinet for approval ' the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be

approved and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation and in noting there were 49 For, 1 Against and 1 Abstention this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The interim governance and delivery model for implementation of the SE Wales Corporate Joint Committee and the 'twin track' arrangements proposed across operation of CCR City Deal, alongside initial enactment of a 'bare minimum' CJC – and until such time the proposed 'lift and shift' approach can occur be noted.
2. The requirement for the CJC to set and approve a budget on or before 31 January 2022 and the steps set out in the report to enable this be noted.
3. The risks and issues set out in the report which require ongoing monitoring, mitigation and management be noted.
4. The request made by CCR of WG to amend the CJC regulations to change the date on which immediate duties commence under the Regulations from 28 February 2022 to 30 June 2022 be noted.
5. The draft Standing Orders at Appendix 1 which set out the initial requirements and operating model for the CJC as well as initial business for the inaugural meeting on 31 January 2022 be noted.
6. The work ongoing by CCR and its constituent Councils to work with WG, Audit Wales and advisors as appropriate, to help inform resolution of the remaining issues wherever possible be noted.
7. The Leader of the Council in her duty to consider and set the first budget of the SE Wales CJC on 31 January 2022 in order to ensure the Council is complying with the legislation as required be supported.
8. Once the permanent governance CJC structure is developed a Members Seminar be convened in advance of a further report being presented to Cabinet for approval.

13. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2022/23

Consideration was given to the report which sought Council approval of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2022/23 financial year.

Members noted that the Council is required to annually adopt a Council Tax Reduction Scheme and local discretions and the report recommended that Council continues to operate a Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2022/23 financial year on the same basis as the scheme used in 2021/22.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2022/23 financial year continue the same basis as the scheme used in 2021/22.

14. GAMBLING ACT 2005 – REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report which sought to inform Council of the result of the consultation carried out to review the Statement of Gambling and Licensing Policy and sought Council approval of the revised Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy as detailed in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the revised Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy as detailed at Appendix 1 of the Officers report be approved.

15. ADVANCE VOTING PILOT – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION MAY 2022

Consideration was given to the report which sought Council approval to participate in the advanced electoral pilots driven by Welsh Government in the forthcoming Local Government and Community Council elections. Advance voting will be held on Saturday 30th April 2022 and Sunday 1st May 2022, and this was in addition to the election taking place on Thursday 5th May 2022.

Members noted the provisor within the report regarding necessary IT systems being in place and sought clarification as to whether this related to the casting of votes electronically or back-office support for the process. The Electoral Services Manager confirmed that this was in relation to behind-the-scenes processes to ensure the integrity of the vote.

Members welcomed the advance pilot and hoped that it might encourage younger first-time voters to take part in the election process. The Officer advised that the opportunity for advance voting would be included on the poll-cards and the Communications Team would support with engagement via social media and the Council website.

In relation to the digital aspect of voting Members queried whether this would be encouraged for future elections. The Chief Executive confirmed that Returning Officers were lobbying Welsh Government to explore the move to electronic voting and Members agreed that this would be a positive step forward.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained in the Officer's report and by way of Microsoft Forms and Verbal Confirmation and in noting there were 43 For and 1 Abstention this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the advance voting pilot take place at Penallta House on Saturday 30th April and Sunday 1st May subject to the necessary IT Systems being in place.

16. THE LAWNS, RHYMNEY – CULVERT ISSUES AND SUBSEQUENT COST OVER RUN

Consideration was given to the report which had been considered as an urgent and exempt item by Cabinet on the 24th November 2021.

The constitution requires that any decision taken as a matter of urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of Council, giving the reason for its urgency. There the report was presented to Council for Members' information.

Members noted the reasons for the urgency and the decision taken by Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 19:25pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2022 they were signed by the Mayor.

MAYOR