



ANNUAL COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 5.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor J. Simmonds - Mayor
Councillor C. Andrews - Deputy Mayor

Councillors:

M. Adams, Mrs E.M. Aldworth, P.J. Bevan, C. Bezzina, L.J. Binding, 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, Ms J. Gale, N. George, C. Gordon, R.W. Gough, L. Harding, D. Havard, A.G. Higgs, A. Hussey, M.P. James, V. James, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, S. Kent, G. Kirby, Ms P. Leonard, C.P. Mann, P. Marsden, B. Miles, S. Morgan, Mrs T. Parry, Mrs L. Phipps, D.V. Poole, D.W.R. Preece, Mrs D. Price, J. Pritchard, J. Ridgewell, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, Mrs M.E. Sargent, J. Scriven, G. 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 (Interim Corporate Director of Communities), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), S. Harris (Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer) L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Executive reminded those present that although the meeting would not be live streamed it would be recorded and uploaded to the Caerphilly County Borough Council Website following the meeting. Votes would be taken via Microsoft Teams and Members would be directed to its use by the Monitoring Officer. It was noted that should Members lose connection during the meeting they should make every effort to reconnect however the meeting would continue as long as it remained quorate.

1. WELCOME AND MINUTE SILENCE

The Mayor welcomed Councillors to the first digital Annual Meeting of Council and asked all Members and Officers present to join him in a minute silence as a sign of respect to all those who have lost their lives as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Angel, J. Bevan, D. Hardacre, D. Harse, B. Jones, A. Leonard, G. Oliver, B. Owen, and C. Thomas and from D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services).

It was noted that Cllr A. Collis would be connecting to the meeting via telephone.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

4. RETIRING MAYOR'S REMARKS

The retiring Mayor, Councillor J. Simmonds paid tribute to all those that had work so hard during the Coronavirus Pandemic to support local communities and individuals and thanked them for all their effects during these unprecedented times.

Councillors Simmonds thanked his wife for acting as his consort and spoke of the privilege it had been meeting the truly inspirational residents and talented young people of the borough during his mayoral year. He referenced in particular the visit of HRH Prince Charles to New Tredegar and the wonderful reception that they had all received there. Particular thanks were paid to the support provided by the Deputy Mayor Councillor Carol Andrews and to the Civic Office Team for their patience and hard work. In concluding his address Councillor Simmonds paid thanks to all those who supported and contributed to his charity appeal.

5. TO ELECT A MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR OF COUNCIL UNTIL THE ANNUAL MEETING IN MAY 2022 AND NOTE THE CIVIC SALARY PAYMENTS

It was moved and seconded that Councillor C. Andrews be elected as Mayor of Caerphilly County Borough Council and Councillor G. Gale be elected as Deputy Mayor of Caerphilly County Borough Council. In noting there was 3 against and 4 abstentions this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that Councillor C. Andrews be elected as Mayor of Caerphilly County Borough Council and Councillor J. Gale be elected as Deputy Mayor of Caerphilly County Borough Council until the Annual Meeting in May 2022 and that the payment of the civic salaries be noted.

Councillor A. Collis wished it noted that as he was attending the meeting by telephone he would be abstaining from voting.

Councillor C. Andrews and Councillor J. Gale thanked Members for the honour bestowed upon them. Councillor Andrews confirmed that her consort would be her daughter Megan Andrews and Councillor Gale confirmed that her consort would be her partner Mr Roger Stone.

The Chief Executive expressed her regret that there could be no ceremonial hand over of the Chains of Office or the usual invitation to friends and family that would normally accompany the annual meeting but would look to organise some form of ceremonial function as soon as restrictions would allow.

6. MAYOR'S REMARKS

The new Mayor of Caerphilly County Borough Council, Councillor Carol Andrews, thanked Councillor Simmonds the retiring Mayor for his support, she thanked the Members in the Chamber for their confidence in her and expressed her pride in being able to represent the County Borough. As much as she was looking forward to her time in office, Councillor Andrews paid tribute to her mother, who had acted as her consort during her time as Deputy Mayor but sadly, had recently passed away, she told Members how much her mother had been looking forward to acting as her consort again, however her daughter Megan would now take on this role in remembrance of a wonderful mother and devoted grandmother. Councillor Andrews confirmed that her charities would be the Alzheimer's Association, Valley's Daffodils and Friends of Bargoed Ward, Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr not only for very personal reason but also because they provided vital support in the community.

Following the Mayor's statement, a Member queried the difference between the number of Members present within the meeting as detailed in the 'participants list' and the number of votes cast with regard to Agenda Item No. 5. The Monitoring Officer explained that the 'Show Participants List' detailed the total number of people within the meeting, not just the number of elected members present, and explained that some Members may not have voted for a number of reasons. A Member expressed his concern with regard to this method of voting and requested that this be monitored going forward in order to ensure that Members were not being disenfranchised due to variances in technical abilities. It was confirmed that further training would be offered to all Members with regard to this voting method and the use of Teams.

7. TO NOTE THE APPOINTMENT OF A LEADER OF COUNCIL AND NOTE THE PAYMENT OF A SENIOR SALARY

RESOLVED that the appointment of Councillor P. Marsden as Leader of Caerphilly County Borough Council and the receipt of a senior salary payment be noted.

8. TO NOTE THE APPOINTMENT OF A DEPUTY LEADER AND THE PAYMENT OF A SENIOR SALARY

RESOLVED that the appointment of Councillor S. Morgan as Deputy Leader of Caerphilly County Borough Council and the receipt of a senior salary payment be noted.

9. TO NOTE THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS TO BE APPOINTED TO THE CABINET, THE NAMES THE LEADER HAS CHOSEN TO BECOME MEMBERS OF THE CABINET AND THEIR PORTFOLIOS AND THE PAYMENT OF SENIOR SALARIES

RESOLVED that the appointments of 9 Cabinet Members by the Leader of Council their portfolios and their receipt of a senior salary payment be noted: -

Leader of Council – Councillor Philippa Marsden

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise – Councillor Sean Morgan

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services – Councillor Colin Gordon

Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Customer Services – Councillor Eluned Stenner

Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement – Councillor Ross Whiting

Cabinet Member for Social Care – Councillor Carl Cuss

Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure – Councillor John Ridgewell

Cabinet Member for Housing and Property – Councillor Lisa Phipps

Cabinet Member for Waste and Public Protection – Councillor Nigel George

Following the appointment of the Cabinet a Member requested that a list of portfolio responsibilities be made available to Members, the Leader agreed that this would be circulated.

10. TO NOTE THE APPOINTMENT OF A LEADER OF THE MAIN OPPOSITION GROUP AND THE PAYMENT OF A SENIOR SALARY

RESOLVED that the appointment of Councillor C. Mann as Leader of the Main Opposition Group and the award of a senior salary payment be noted.

11. LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader of Council, Councillor Philippa Marsden congratulated Councillor Andrews and Councillor Gale on their appointments and thanked Councillor Simmonds the outgoing Mayor for all his efforts.

The Leader acknowledged that she would normally be delivering her speech standing in the Council Chamber amongst colleagues, so it does seem strange be using this virtual forum. However, these were unprecedented times and we need to adapt the way we do things accordingly. This had been a key feature of our lives over the past 5 months as the authority has been required to reshape and reconfigure in order to respond to the pressures of the global coronavirus pandemic.

First and foremost, the Leader expressed her deepest sympathy to all those who have been affected by this terrible virus, especially to those who have lost loved ones. Coronavirus has taken a terrible toll on our society and her heart goes out to you all.

An AGM provides an opportune time to pause and reflect on the events of recent months, but it is also an opportunity to recognise the amazing achievements of staff across the organisation throughout the pandemic. The coronavirus outbreak has brought the very best out of Team Caerphilly and she expressed her pride in each and every one of our employees who have worked so hard to support residents and protect our community.

The way in which staff were mobilised in a very short timeframe to provide a co-ordinated community response was explained and how this army of people ensured that the most vulnerable in our society were supported during very uncertain and worrying times. Going above and beyond over recent months, the caring staff of Caerphilly Council are a credit to us all. They delivered essential supplies to the doorstep of shielding residents, they collected prescriptions, they became buddies providing much needed social interaction, they delivered free school meals to families and let's not forget that they also continued to deliver the hundreds of services that our residents rely on 24/7.

The Leader emphasised the importance of acknowledging that coronavirus has not gone away and unfortunately it was likely that we may see a second spike in the autumn, but assured Members that Team Caerphilly was ready and had confidence in this authority's

proven track record of care, support, dedication and professionalism that was second to none in her view.

Whilst coronavirus has dominated our lives over recent months, it was also important that we did not let it overshadow the many achievements and success stories that we have delivered over the past 12 months. The Leader outlined some of the key highlights of the past year including the unveiling of ambitious plans to increase the supply of council housing in the Caerphilly County Borough. The plans were included in a report entitled 'Building Together' which has been proudly endorsed by Cabinet.

The launching of the ambitious 'Team Caerphilly – Better Together' transformation programme that will completely reshape and re-energise the way we do things in the future. Together with the official launch of the 'Caerphilly Keys' scheme, the first of its kind in Wales.

We received a Gold Award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme which recognises this council as one of the best organisations in the UK for the support it offers to the Armed Forces community. Welcomed His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to New Tredegar to celebrate our healthy schools programme.

This year also saw outline planning consent being granted for a flagship housing development in Pontllanfraith. Chartist Garden Village is an exciting collaboration between the Council and the Pobl Group which will result in an attractive development comprising of up to 125 homes – of these, approximately two thirds will be affordable.

An investment boost of £1.2million was agreed for social services that will bring significant benefits to a range of projects across the county borough and free feminine hygiene products are being provided in all schools and community settings, along with the launch of two short films, as part of our excellent Period Dignity initiative.

£2.4million investment was announced to improve local roads through our widescale resurfacing programme and Caerphilly joined other Gwent local authorities to encourage green transport and deliver new electric vehicle charge points in council owned car parks across the region. £1.5million investment for three tourism venues as part of Welsh Government's Valleys Regional Park Discovery Gateway grant programme, using Valleys Taskforce funding.

This year also saw the launch of a new website, to coincide with the publication of A Level results, to help young people in the county borough plan their next steps. The excellent Caerphilly Pathways website has been developed to show the full range of opportunities available to our young people. Libraries have adapted their way of working to enable residents to continue accessing services during the pandemic. The LibraryLink home delivery service has been expanded and a brand new 'Order and Collect' service launched. Investment in our schools continues and the first phase of a £78 million school improvement programme through Band B of the 21st Century Schools project was recently agreed.

Members were also asked to note that over the past year the Tenancy Support Service generated over £1 million additional income for Council tenants.

Welsh Government endorsed our plans to improve air quality at Hafodyrynys. Work is now progressing to complete the compulsory purchase and demolition of the affected properties.

We battled the effects of Storm Dennis and Storm Ciara when residents across the county borough were impacted by flooding and high winds. Once again staff went that extra mile in atrocious conditions to support our community.

Finally, in addition to my appointment as Leader, we also appointed our permanent Chief Executive to bring much needed stability and confidence to the organisation after a long period of instability and uncertainty.

The Leader hoped that this gave Members a flavour of what has happened over the past 12 months and acknowledged that there were many more positive examples that she could provide, but it would be impossible to cover everything in such a short period of time.

Looking ahead, Councillor Marsden emphasised the need to transition into a recovery phase whilst still being prepared to respond to further waves of the virus. This recovery phase would begin with the imminent re-opening of schools and re-introduction of key services. Members were advised that this would all have to be managed very carefully, with public health and the safety of our community at the forefront. The Leader reiterated that our key priority continue to be protecting our people and protecting our place at all times. Members were advised that the recovery process will need to have overarching strategic aims so that we can reassure our communities and steady our economy to enable us to create a positive and vibrant future. In order to do this, we need to reshape the organisation to proactively respond to social, economic and environmental needs.

As we move forward, the significant economic impact of coronavirus is becoming clearer. We are now starting to see the full picture in terms of lost income and additional costs associated with the outbreak. We are also now heading into the autumn when our focus traditionally shifts to finalising next year's budget and, as you will appreciate, our strategic budget response is going to be vital this year. Working within the wider national context of Brexit, Climate Change, economic challenges, as well as the ongoing pandemic, we need to carefully consider what can realistically be achieved over the next few years and this will be influenced by an ambitious 'place shaping plan' that we are currently developing. We are also undertaking a number of key corporate reviews which will help reshape the way we operate as a Council and how we will deliver many of our services in future.

The Leader confirmed that it was clear that this fast-moving agenda would bring significant pressures to this administration and that was why she decided to bring the Cabinet back up to its full complement. We need the right people in the right roles in order to ensure that we can steer this authority through the challenging times that lie ahead. Councillor Marsden took the opportunity to thank Cllr Barbara Jones for her service and dedication to the Cabinet over recent years and expressed to Council how much her companionship, knowledge, experience and commitment to her portfolio would be missed and wished her well for the future

In conclusion the Leader acknowledged how tough the last few months and been and she was well aware that we were not out of the woods yet, but she expressed her sincere thanks to all Members for the way they have collectively supported and responded to these unprecedented pressures. Members support for and commitment to the local community is something they should all be proud of and emphasised how very proud she was to be the Leader of this fantastic organisation.

The Mayor thanked the Leader for her statement and called on the Group Leaders for comment first.

The Leader of the Plaid Cymru Group, Councillor Colin Mann thanked the Leader for her statement and added his support for the many staff that worked incredibly hard to ensure service provision during the pandemic. He praised all those that had worked to provide the school meals service which was vital to the wellbeing of children and young people. Councillor Mann also expressed his concern that the virus was still, very much with us and urged the people of the borough to continue to be vigilant and maintain restrictions. Having experienced the loss of a neighbour and friend at the start of the pandemic he understood the

devastating effect that this has had on families and emphasised the need for continuing safety precautions.

The Leader of the Independents Group, Councillor Graham Simmonds thanked the Leader for her statements and requested a written copy to allow him to fully respond to the points raised. He shared the Leader's hope that we could press the reset button and move forward. He hoped that this reset would mean a more costed approach to service delivery. He shared the comments raised in relation to refuse collection during the pandemic and congratulated the staff there on a first class job during difficult times.

The Mayor thanked the Group Leaders for their comments and Members comments were invited.

A Member raised concern in relation to difficulties experienced when making telephone contact during the pandemic, with Residents and Councillors on hold for long periods of time or being disconnected and hoped that this could be improved.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the authority has and would continue to invest in telephony provision and confirmed that a further report on this would be presented to Cabinet in due course. However, she urged any Members experiencing difficulties to contact herself or one of the Corporate Directors and they would address concerns raised.

A Member expressed his congratulations to Councillor Andrews and Councillor Gale on their appointments and thanked the Leader for her statement and the Chief Executive for her hard work over the past months. He confirmed that he had always been able to contact the authority when needed and felt that Members had been kept well informed throughout the crisis.

The Mayor thanked all Members for the comments and confirmed the Leaders Statement as noted.

12. TO APPOINT THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR AND MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THE FOLLOWING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES UNTIL THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING (IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE POLITICAL BALANCE, AS LIST ATTACHED) AND TO NOTE THE SENIOR SALARY PAYMENT TO THE CHAIRS

It was moved and seconded that Members be appointed as the names provided to Committee Services and presented at the meeting and in noting there were 1 against and 0 abstentions this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the following Members be appointed and the payment of a senior salary to the Chair be noted: -

Education Scrutiny Committee	Councillor T. Parry (Chair) Councillor C. Andrews (Vice Chair)
Social Services Scrutiny Committee	Councillor L. Binding (Chair) Councillor C. Bezzina (Vice Chair)
Policy and Resources/Partnerships Scrutiny Committee	Councillor J. Pritchard (Chair) Councillor G. Kirby (Vice Chair)
Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee	Councillor D.T. Davies (Chair) Councillor A. Hussey (Vice Chair)
Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	Councillor A. Whitcombe (Chair) Councillor C. Forehead (Vice Chair)

13. TO APPOINT THE CHAIR AND/OR VICE CHAIR AND MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES UNTIL THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING AND TO NOTE THE SENIOR SALARY PAYMENT TO THE CHAIRS MARKED WITH * (IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE POLITICAL BALANCE, AS LISTS ATTACHED)

It was moved and seconded that Members be appointed to the Appeals Panel, Appointments Committee, Audit Committee, Democratic Services Committee, Investigating and Disciplinary Committee, Licensing and Gambling Committee/Taxi and General Committee, Planning Committee and Standards Committee as the names provided to Committee Services and presented at the meeting and in noting there were 2 abstentions this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that Members be appointed as the names provided to Committee Services and presented at the meeting and the payment of a senior salary to the following Chairs be noted: -

Audit Committee
Licensing and Gambling Committee/Taxi and General Committee
Planning Committee

14. TO NOTE THAT THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE WILL BE APPOINTED AT THE FIRST MEETING FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

It was noted that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee will be appointed at the first meeting of the Audit Committee following the Annual Meeting of Council and that a senior salary payment will be made to the Chair.

15. TO CONSTITUTE SUB COMMITTEES/WORKING PARTIES/PANELS/BOARDS AND MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THEM AND TO APPOINT/NOMINATE REPRESENTATIVES TO SERVE ON OUTSIDE BODIES WHERE REQUIRED

It was moved and seconded that Sub Committees, Working Parties, Panels and Boards be constituted and Members appointed, and Outside Body Representatives be nominated or appointed as the names provided to Committee Services and presented at the meeting and this was unanimously agreed.

RESOVLED that Sub Committees, Working Parties, Panels and Boards be constituted, and Members appointed, and Outside Body Representatives be nominated or appointed as the names provided to Committee Services and presented at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 6:15pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2020 they were signed by the Mayor.

MAYOR