

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

1 February 2023

The Mayor: **Councillor Robert Wood**

Councillors: A.R.Aubrey, T.Bowen, W.Carpenter, H.C.Clarke, C.Clement-Williams, M.Crowley, H.Davies, O.S.Davies, R.Davies, S.E.Freeguard, C.Galsworthy, N.Goldup-John, W.F.Griffiths, S.Grimshaw, J.Hale, S.Harris, M.Harvey, J.Henton, S.K.Hunt, J.Hurley, C.James, C.James, N.Jenkins, J.Jones, L.Jones, R.G.Jones, S.Jones, C.Jordan, D.Keogh, S.A.Knoyle, E.V.Latham, C.Lewis, D.Lewis, A.Llewelyn, A.R.Lockyer, R.Mizen, K.Morris, S.Paddison, S.M.Penry, D.M.Peters, C.Phillips, S.Purseley, S.Rahaman, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds, P.D.Richards, P.Rogers, M.Spooner, D.Thomas, S.Thomas, D.Whitelock, L.Williams and R.W.Wood

Officers in Attendance: S.Curran, C.Griffiths, K.Jones, M.Shaw, A.Thomas, A.Thomas, A. Thomas, R.Turner. S.Ferrell, H.Jones and J.Woodman-Ralph

Representatives of the Translation Service: N. Hurford

1. **Mayor's Announcements**

It was with great sadness that the Mayor announced the recent death of Clare Drakeford, wife of Wales' First Minister Mark Drakeford. As a mark of respect Council observed a minute's silence.

The Mayor invited the Leader of Council to make a statement. The Leader stated that the Council had been successful in its bid for £17.7 million from the UK Government's Levelling Up fund. He explained how the funding would allow the Vale of Neath to be established as a major heritage and natural environment led visitor

destination. Staff were congratulated on the work that had been put into the successful bid.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Declarations received:

Cllr M Crowley: Personal Interest on agenda item 7 (Director of Social Services Annual Report) as he is employed by Swansea University Health Board.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Council**

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Public Question Time.**

No questions were received.

5. **Standards Committee - Appointment of Independent Members**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which was to authorise the appointment of the Independent Member to the Standards Committee as detailed in the circulated report.

RESOLVED: That the appointment of the Independent Member to the Standards Committee as detailed in the circulated report be approved.

6. **Changes to Committee Membership**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which was to authorise changes to the allocation of seats on council committees and outside bodies to the political groups as detailed in the circulated report.

RESOLVED: That the changes to the membership of committees as detailed in the circulated report be approved.

7. **Social Services Directors Annual Report**

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety and the Head of Adult Services introduced the report in lieu of the Director of Social Services.

Members noted that the report was looking back and that the position of the service currently is somewhat different to the positions described within the report in that there is a current crisis situation in social care.

Members commented on the excellent work that taken place throughout the pandemic, as alternative 'out of the box' thinking had delivered some real improvements in some service areas.

Members queried the Crisis Intervention for Mental Health referenced on Page 31 and the ongoing work in relation to the 'referral checklist' as it is apparent that this is becoming a default position for those accessing the service. Issues around the mental health 'front door' arrangements were explained, as the single point of access is a medical model and is a work in progress to make it more fit for purpose.

It was stated that the Council are seeing increased demand for mental health referrals from the community which is causing a significant resource and budget pressure which will be reported back to Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny and Cabinet Board in due course.

Members raised concern that cuts to hospital services are impacting on the Council directly and expressed the strong need to impress on the Health Board the urgent requirement to improve on services in relation to mental health as well as wider health and social care services.

RESOLVED: That the Director of Social Services Annual Report be noted.

8. **Notice of Motion under Section 10 of Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) the Council's Constitution**

No notices of motion were received.

9. **Questions from Members, with Notice, under Rule 9.2 of the Council's Procedure Rules**

The Mayor invited Councillor Clement Williams to ask a question, which had been submitted under Rule 9.2 of the Council's Procedure Rules.

Cllr Clement Williams asked:

“Our Labour Group believe that the Budget Proposals currently out for Consultation does not present a balanced Budget. There are no income and expenditure tables and we are concerned that the Budget documentation is very basic and lacks in-depth details.

During the Cabinet Scrutiny meeting the Labour Group raised concerns about the lack of detail and we were assured by Officers that more information would be added and would be sent out with the consultation document. This has not happened.

We therefore ask as a question: As the consultation has already started and ends on 10th February that this information be provided and released by the Council by the end of this week so that residents responding to the consultation get the chance to have their say on what this Budget actually means to their Services”.

Cllr Simon Knoyle (Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice) responded and stated that a budget ‘explainer video’ had been produced and uploaded to the Council website and had been promoted via social media channels as well as a hard copy being produced and distributed.

He stated that face to face and hybrid budget briefings are still ongoing as part of the communications plan and have been shared with the scrutiny committee members. The Cabinet report of the 19th January 2023 showed a balanced budget as the Council is required to produce by law, which forms the basis of the consultation document, together with a detailed analysis of the risks associated with the proposed budget strategy. These documents have also been presented to each scrutiny committee to allow for as much member involvement as possible.

Councillor Clement Williams responded with concerns surrounding budget specifics of subsidies and fees and charges which she felt were not included in detail in the budget consultation documentation.

She reiterated the concern of the lack of detail and how the budget documentation refers to delegated decisions in relation to fees and charges.

The Mayor clarified the process in asking a question under rule 9.2 and drew the question to a close.

10. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

CHAIRPERSON