

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

15 November 2023

The Mayor: **Councillor Chris Williams**

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

Officers in Attendance: L.Beynon, N.Blackmore, P.Chivers, S.Curran,
N.Daniel, T.Davies, C.Griffiths, A.Jarrett,
H.Jones, K.Jones, S.McCluskie, C.Morris,
N.Jones, A.O'Donnell, N.Pearce, C.Plowman,
T.Rees, A.Thomas and A.Thomas

Representatives of the Translation Service: Rhys George

1. **Mayor's Announcements**

It was with sadness that the Mayor announced the recent death of former Councillor Clive Owen, who represented the Taibach Ward.

Council also observed with deep sadness the recent death of their friend and colleague Councillor Marcia Spooner, who represented the Rhos ward.

Members paid tribute to Councillor Spooner and extended their deepest sympathies to her family.

Council observed a minute's silence.

Council was reminded about the upcoming Market Place event which was to be held on 27th November and members' were encouraged to attend.

2. **Leader's Announcements**

There were none.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

The following interests were declared:

Cllr R Mizen as he has sons who work for TATA Steel.

Cllr R Jones as he has a brother who works for TATA Steel.

Cllr J Hurley as he has sons who work for TATA Steel.

Cllr M Crowley as he is a member of the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority.

Cllr D Keogh as he has a first cousin who works for TATA Steel

Cllr S Freeguard as she is a member of the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority and her husband works for TATA Steel.

Cllr C Jordan as he is a member of the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority.

Cllr D Thomas as he is a member of the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority.

Cllr N Jenkins as she has a stepson who works for TATA Steel.

Cllr S Knoyle as his wife works for TATA Steel.

Cllr S Rahaman as he has a nephew who works for TATA Steel.

Cllr A Dacey as he has a stepson who works for TATA Steel.

4. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting/s of Council**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

5. **Public Question Time.**

There were none.

6. **Chief Fire Officer- Annual Presentation to Council**

The Mayor welcomed Chief Fire Officer Roger Thomas, the s151 Officer Sarah Mansbridge and the Chair of the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority Cllr Gwynfor Thomas who gave their annual presentation to Council on the current position of the Fire Authority.

Members praised the work, professionalism and expertise of the Fire Service.

Members highlighted that the Fire Service Levy does not appear as a separate line on a Council Tax bill, in contrast to the South Wales Police precept.

Council were reminded of the ongoing Audit Wales review into Governance of the Fire Authority, and members were encouraged to participate with their views.

Council were pleased to note that the carcinogenic hazard for Fire Fighters is now officially recognised.

Members were given an assurance that the Fire Authority Committee has done everything in its power to consider all savings strategies in an attempt to keep the increase to the levy as low as possible and to minimise the impact on residents and communities. This included the challenge and scrutiny of each budget line and the move to a longer term Community Risk Management Plan with the aim of ensuring maximum robustness.

Members asked for further detail about the work that is carried out with families and communities after fire events. It was explained that the incident is managed and then 'hot strikes' are conducted in communities and families including Home Fire Safety Checks, advice, fitting of smoke detectors and removal of dangerous equipment. Trauma support is also offered as part of a collaborative effort and

safeguarding and signposting vulnerable people to a range of services.

Members heard more about the communication system 'Airwaves' which operates across all Category 1 responders, but which is reaching the end of its usable lifespan. It had been flat line grant funded, but the grant has been removed at a cost of -£600,000 and now is incorporated into the base budget. A UK led replacement project process is underway but costs unknown at this stage. Concern was expressed about the aging technology with no proven replacement as yet.

Council heard that the estimate of purchasing an electric Fire Engine could be almost double that of a standard vehicle which is prohibitive and also that the technology required for running the Fire vehicles is not yet fully developed. Assurance that whole grey fleet are all electric following a significant investment and WG funding.

Council were assured that the Fire Authority will contribute to the Council Tax consultation as key stakeholders, as an Authority and as a Service.

Members were saddened to hear about the attacks to officers across the emergency services, which is an area of concern but is thankfully rare in the Fire Service.

The Mayor thanked the Fire Authority for their attendance, their presentation and their detailed responses to members' questions.

7. **Annual Report of the Governance and Audit Committee 22/23**

The Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, Ms Joanna Jenkins presented Council with the Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report.

Members noted in particular the increase of Lay Members to the Committee, and that the Chair is required to be a Lay Member. They also noted the changes introduced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act to governance and performance requirements and how the Committee has responded to its new roles and responsibilities and how it exercises its functions.

RESOLVED: That members note the Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2022-2023.

8. **Biodiversity Action Plan**

Council received the Biodiversity Duty Plan 2023-2026 as contained within the circulated report.

Members noted the duty to public authorities to promote and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of its functions, and aims to ensure that the consideration of biodiversity becomes an integral part of decisions and actions that the Council takes.

Members noted that the Council has 14 different species of bats and considered that more work could be explored on how to engage and communicate with communities.

RESOLVED: That members endorse and approve the Biodiversity Duty Plan 2023-2026.

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

Two Notices of Motion under Section 10 of Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) of the Council's Constitution were received.

Notice of Motion Israel – Gaza. Proposed by Cllr S Hunt and seconded by Cllr S Rahaman was approved, with two abstentions from Members.

The loss of life we are seeing in our news feeds about the situation in Israel and Gaza is harrowing. We condemn the terrorism of Hamas and mourn the loss of life in civilian populations across the region. We send our deepest condolences to every family who've lost loved ones. We urge leaders in Israel and Palestine and across the world to bring about a ceasefire and to work together to bring about lasting peace.

Notice of Motion Tata Steel. Proposed by: Cllr S Hunt seconded by Cllr S Freeguard was approved:

Neath Port Talbot Council is concerned at the prospect of Tata Steel implementing a transition plan that would lead to the immediate loss of thousands of well-paid and secure jobs in our local economy and more widely. We recognise the need for the steel industry to decarbonise and welcome the news that Tata Steel UK plans to invest in new facilities that will secure steel making in this area into

the future. We believe it is important that these plans secure the existing order book whilst also positioning the company to exploit emerging markets. We call on Tata Steel UK to work with their recognised trade unions and wider partners to mitigate the impact of the planned changes on their workforce, supply chain and the communities of Port Talbot. We also call on the Tata Steel/Port Talbot Transition Board to make a clear commitment to the short, medium and long term regeneration of Port Talbot, securing new and high value jobs that will sustain our economy and communities into the future and deliver a just transition.

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

None received.

11. **Urgent Items**

None received.

CHAIRPERSON