

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

27 January, 2016

The Mayor: Councillor **A.P.H.Davies**

The Deputy Mayor: Councillor **Mrs.S.M.Penry**

Councillors: H.M.Bebell, A.Carter, Mrs.A.Chaves, D.W.Davies, Mrs.R.Davies, Mrs.J.Dudley, M.Ellis, M.Harvey, S.K.Hunt, H.N.James, Mrs.L.H.James, M.L.James, R.James, A.Jenkins, E.E.Jones, M.Jones, Mrs.D.Jones, R.G.Jones, D.Keogh, E.V.Latham, D.Lewis, Mrs.K.Lloyd, A.R.Lockyer, J.Miller, Mrs.S.Miller, C.Morgan, J.D.Morgan, Mrs.S.Paddison, Mrs.K.Pearson, D.M.Peters, M.Protheroe, L.M.Purcell, S.Rahaman, P.A.Rees, P.D.Richards, J.Rogers, A.Taylor, A.J.Taylor, A.H.Thomas, R.Thomas, J.Warman, D.Whitelock, I.D.Williams, Mrs.L.G.Williams and A.N.Woolcock

Officers in Attendance: H.Jenkins, A.Evans, G.Nutt, N. Jarman, Mrs.N.Pearce, D.Michael, Mrs.K.Jones, C.Morris, R.George and Mrs.A.Manchipp

Representatives of the Translation Service: Present

1. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

It was with great sadness that the Mayor announced the recent death of the mother of Councillor Alun Llewelyn and the brother in law of Councillor Kristine Lloyd.

As a mark of respect, Members stood for a minute's silence.

The Mayor advised Members that Councillor Rebeca Phillips had given birth to a son, Macsen Lewis Phillips.

In addition the Mayor announced the following recipients in the New Year's Honours:-

Mr Stephen Thomas Richard Absalom, Chairman of Dyffryn Clydach Volunteers, from Neath Abbey - Member of the Order of the British Empire for Services to the Community and to the Environment:

Jane Elizabeth Ailwen Phillips, better known as Sian Phillips, Actor, who is from Gwaun Cae Gurwen – CBE for Services to Drama.

Council extended its congratulations.

2. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Members made declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting:-

Councillor Mrs.R.Davies	Re: Minute No 3 of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board of 3 December as it relates to the Ystalyfera Development Trust as she is Chairman of the Trust.
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Councillor M.Harvey	Re: Presentation by the Chief Constable, Mr Peter Vaughan, as he is employed by the South Wales Police Force.
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3. **PRESENTATION FROM MR ALUN MICHAEL, THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER, AND MR. PETER VAUGHAN, THE CHIEF CONSTABLE**

The Mayor welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr.Alun Michael and the Chief Constable, Mr Peter Vaughan to the meeting, together with the Deputy Commissioner Ms.E.Warren and Chief Superintendent J.Ruddy.

The Commissioner advised Council that the Police and Crime Plan would shortly be available on the website and a copy would be made available to Members.

He reinforced the need for effective partnership working between the Authority, Police, Health and the Voluntary Sector in making communities safer and was pleased that the focus was on protecting the vulnerable. The introduction of a joint helpline with health had, in particular, reduced the number of ambulance journeys by around 1,000.

Mr. Michael also introduced Ms.Emily Warren the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, who was on secondment following Ms.Sophie Howe's appointment as the Chief Executive of Future Generation for Wales. Ms Warren would be dealing with both Neath Port Talbot and Swansea areas.

The Chief Constable, Mr Peter Vaughan, then gave Members an overview of the current position within the force. Members were advised that the South Wales Police area was 7th largest and 7th busiest of the 43 forces. Since the austerity measures there had been cuts of £42m with some 444 fewer police officers. Mr Vaughan gave Council an assurance that PCSO's would be retained by the force.

The level of anti-social behaviour is dropping while victim satisfaction has improved with the force being regularly in the top 5.

Following the presentations Members raised the following issues:-

In relation to the CCTV, Members expressed disappointment that whilst partnership working was seen as the way forward, the Police had not contributed financially towards the service which was seen as value for money. In response the Commissioner advised that they had been experiencing cuts in funding for 5 years and that the responsibility to prevent crime also lay with other public bodies such as the Welsh Government and the Home Office.

Members questioned the validity of the figures reported and whether they reflected the actual number of incidences. In some areas PACT meetings were not working as well and were not well attended. Mr Michael advised that he had confidence in the figures presented and that the levels of crime and of Anti Social behaviour were falling. In relation to the PACT meetings, some meetings were seen as successful whilst others were not as successful.

Members questioned the work being undertaken in relation to sexual exploitation and were advised that work was ongoing, with the Local

Authorities, to put in place a standard Plan on an all Wales basis to protect those who were vulnerable. As a result of this work, a summit had been held, on a South Wales basis, to discuss this issue. Following a recent inspection, the Police had developed an action plan and child advocates were now employed to assist in questioning young people.

Members questioned the reduction in the number of marked police patrols on the motorway and were advised that this was one area which had seen a significant cut in funding. This decision had been undertaken in order to maintain the police presence in communities.

Concern was expressed that the Police were relying on PCSO's and were not training Police Constables and were advised that other police forces were considering stopping using PCSO's. In some instances Members noted, PCSO's went on to become Police Officers. The use of volunteers was not seen as an issue going forward as the area already had a vibrant volunteer scheme.

The issue of possibly devolving policing to the Welsh Assembly was also raised, which was supported by the Commissioner, although there would still need to be connectivity with London on some issues.

Members noted that the Commissioner was not in favour of giving the powers of arrest to PCSO's.

Members asked whether the Commissioner was able to give the Council details of its precept for 2017, however the Commissioner confirmed that this would be announced following the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel to be held on 1 February 2016.

Members requested details of the joint call centre in Bridgend, and noted that this was a successful service run with the Fire Authority.

The number of black, minority and ethnic police officers was discussed, wherein it was acknowledged that the number was disappointing and that work had been undertaken to ascertain the reasons.

Council was pleased to note that there had been no negative impact as a result of the closure of Port Talbot Police Station.

The Leader then thanked the Mr. Michael, Mr Vaughan, Ms. Warren and Mr Ruddy for their attendance today and they withdrew from the meeting.

4. **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2015/16**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the following meeting of Council be confirmed:-

Council

25.11.15

5. **COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 as amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 further amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016, be adopted:
 2. that there be no change to the following existing discretionary elements in relation to the Prescribed Scheme:
 - (a) That no increase in the backdate period for all claimants be applied from the standard 3 months contained in the Prescribed Scheme;
 - (b) That no increase in the extended reduction period for all claimants be applied from the standard 4 weeks currently contained within the Prescribed Scheme;
 - (c) Apply a 100% disregard for War Disablement Pensions, War Widows Pensions and War Widower's Pensions for all claimants.

6. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Council received an overview of the extensive work that had been undertaken in developing the LDP.

At this point in the meeting the Cabinet Member for Environment advised Members of the work done by the operatives within the Directorate to mitigate the effects of the recent bad weather. Council commended the work of the staff involved.

Members of Council then welcomed the development of the LDP and were advised that the Plan would be monitored on an annual basis, with a review being undertaken every 4 years. A review of the Plan could be undertaken earlier should there be an issue.

Members were pleased that the Plan allowed for affordable private housing in addition to social housing.

In relation to new housing developments, as identified in the Plan, Members asked what would be the procedure should there be a problem with an access point. It was noted that each application would be looked at at the detailed planning application stage.

In relation to preserving green areas within the County Borough, Members were advised that it was important to promote sustainable growth in the right place whilst also maintaining green spaces.

In relation to AH2 the local Member requested the details of the extension to the current settlement boundary and was advised that it was to a maximum of 9 units.

- RESOLVED:**
1. that the findings of the Inspectors' Report as set out in Appendix 1 to the circulated report, be noted;
 2. that the adoption version of the Neath Port Talbot LDP (2011-2026), as amended by the Inspectors' Report and the final elements of the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Appraisal be approved;
 3. that the LDP Adoption Statement, as set out in Appendix 2 to the circulated report, be approved;

4. that the adoption and publication procedures as set out in the circulated report be implemented.

7. **THE SYRIAN RESETTLEMENT SCHEME**

Council received an update in relation to the Council's resettlement of Syrian refugees.

RESOLVED: that the above report, be noted.

8. **EXECUTIVE DECISIONS OF THE CABINET AND CABINET BOARDS**

RESOLVED: that the following Executive Decisions of Cabinet and Cabinet Boards, be noted:-

Cabinet	2 December, 2015
Cabinet	16 December, 2015
Children, Young People and Education	22 October , 2015
Children, Young People and Education	3 December, 2015
Economic and Community Regeneration	4 December, 2015
Environment and Highways	17 December, 2015
Environment and Highways (Special)	18 January, 2016
Social Care, Health and Housing	26 November, 2015
Social Care, Health and Housing	17 December, 2015
Policy and Resources	19 November, 2015
Policy and Resources	3 December, 2015

9. **QUESTION UNDER RULE 9.2**

Councillor L.Purcell put the following question in accordance with Rule 9.2 of the Council's Procedure Rules:-

“Re Home to school Transport to Welsh Medium schools

My concern is not with the rights and wrongs of the decision made or pending but with the democratic process surrounding it, views shared with me by back benchers from all parties.

In its simplest analysis and as far as I understand it;

- On 22nd Sept 2014 CYPE scrutiny board rejected the Officer's report recommending that pupils attending Welsh medium primary schools should be charged if wishing to continue their education at an English medium secondary school.
- However, some such Year 7 pupils attempting to travel to Cwmtawe that September 2014 WERE CHARGED.

Thus, despite the Cabinet member for Education's statement in written reply (Nov15) to Cllr David Lewis that

“ Nobody has been disadvantaged in the meantime”

Children were ,in fact ,disadvantaged and parents justifiably upset, which is borne out by the Ombudsman upholding a complaint against the Council , telling Council to apologise for the way in which it handled the matter and awarding £ 300 to the complainant.”

The Cabinet Member for Education then responded as follows:-

“The current Home to School Travel Policy was approved by Members on 27th March 2013.

The Learner Travel Measure broadly requires local authorities to provide free school transport within certain distance and safety criteria to the nearest suitable school. The practice had been adopted of classifying Ystalyfera as the nearest suitable school for all children who had undergone the first stage of their education through the medium of Welsh.

The practice was considered by CYPE in September 2014 and was not supported by members. Officers have subsequently been reviewing this practice.

The review included seeking the advice of Welsh Government in addressing inconsistency in certain critical components of the

Measure when compared with the Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance.

Members will be interested to know that this lack of consistency is acknowledged by the Welsh Government in a letter we have very recently received and it has committed to amend the guidance as soon as practicable.

Following the expression of concerns about the practice it was suspended and an undertaking was given to families that transport and reimbursements would be provided. Therefore no one is presently disadvantaged”.

The Cabinet Member then made reference to the reply received by the Ombudsman.

In accordance with the Council’s Constitution Councillor Purcell then put the following supplementary question:-

“Can the Cabinet Member or Director please tell us when approval was given by Members for this Policy which thus affected certain Cwmtawe pupils in Sept 2014 ?

Would the Cabinet Member agree that the way in which this has been handled has brought the Council into disrepute and can he specify to Council the steps that will be taken to avoid this happening in future?”

The Cabinet Member for Education then responded as follows:-

“I would not agree with Councillor Purcell that the way in which this matter has been handled has brought the Council into disrepute.

We acknowledge that whilst managing a complex aspect of our provision, we were not timely and clear enough in our response to one party. This has now been addressed and all transport decision letters contain information on how the recipient may request a review or complain.

A complaint to the Ombudsman has been settled and this will be reported to CYPE Cabinet Board on 11th February.

We interpreted the Policy, it was challenged, we reviewed and amended practice, sought advice from Welsh Government and acted accordingly and properly”.

CHAIRPERSON