

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

6 July, 2016

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

The Deputy Mayor: **Councillor Mrs.J.Dudley**

Councillors: Mrs.P.Bebell, Mrs.A.Chaves, Ms.C.Clement-Williams, M.Crowley, A.P.H.Davies, D.W.Davies, Mrs.R.Davies, I.B.James, H.N.James, Mrs.L.H.James, M.L.James, A.Jenkins, E.E.Jones, Mrs.D.Jones, R.G.Jones, Mrs.K.Lloyd, A.R.Lockyer, J.Miller, Mrs.S.Miller, J.D.Morgan, Ms.C.Morgans, Mrs.S.Paddison, Mrs.K.Pearson, D.M.Peters, R.Phillips, M.Protheroe, L.M.Purcell, S.Rahaman, P.A.Rees, A.J.Taylor, A.H.Thomas, J.Warman, D.Whitelock, Mrs.L.G.Williams and A.N.Woolcock

Officers in Attendance: S.Phillips, A.Evans, H.Jenkins, G.Nutt, D.Michael, R.George, Mrs.J.Woodman-Ralph and Ms.L.Steel.

Representatives of the Translation Service: Present

1. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

It was with deep regret that the Mayor advised Council of the death of Mr.D.Matthews who was a former Councillor of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and was current Vice Chair of the Older Persons' Council.

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

The Mayor extended Council's congratulations to Mrs.B.Clegg from Neath Port Talbot who has been awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to the elderly.

2. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2016

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the following meetings of Council be confirmed:

Council	11 May 2016
Council	20 May 2016
Council	25 May 2016

Council received an update in regard to the progress on the Cefn Coed Museum as highlighted in the Minutes of Council of the 11 May 2016. Work was ongoing to move the Head Gear and to re-open the site as soon as possible and discussions were taking place with the Welsh Government advising of the Council's intention to re-open the site.

3. ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT

Members received a presentation from Mr. Steve Barry, Audit Manager, Wales Audit Office, on the Wales Audit Office's Annual Improvement Report 2015-16, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the circulated report.

Members were advised that the Auditor General had concluded that the Council had continued to improve in its priority areas, financial management was sound and its arrangements were likely to support future progress.

Mr. Barry also confirmed that the Authority's financial management and governance arrangements were sound but that savings plans for the medium term needed to be developed and more fully integrated with the corporate planning process.

Also, in regard to performance in Education the rate of improvement in younger children's education was below the Welsh average whilst results for those in secondary schools were much higher than in similar authorities. School attendance was now in line with the Welsh average.

Members also noted that the Authority had made positive changes to its scrutiny arrangements and is continuing in a positive direction. Performance Management Training had taken place with Members by Mr. Barry. Evaluation/Feedback reports on the training would be submitted to Members for consideration.

It was also highlighted that work had continued to improve the implementation of the Authority's Risk Management Policy and the development of a risk register. Members would receive further update reports in the future.

Following the presentation Members raised the following points:-

- Members asked if the Authority had put in place any measures to understand the impact that the Discretionary Housing Payments was having on families affected by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and how it affected the Council wide Policy. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services explained that additional monies had been made available in 14/15 and 15/16 budgets to mitigate the impact on families most affected by "bedroom tax". In addition work was taking place with the Department of Work and Pensions, NPT Homes a number of Housing Associations, Welsh Government and the 3rd Sector to provide support to families affected by the Act. Reports would be brought to future meetings of Council to keep Members updated;
- Members also asked whether the Authority had put in place a dedicated post to answer the Welsh Language switchboard Line? The Chief Executive said that a report detailing our assessment on the Welsh Language Standards was being considered by the Policy and Resource Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board on the 14 July 2016 prior to the Authority's response being submitted to the Commissioner by the 15th July 2016. Our assessment highlights that some of the proposals were not practicable and that in the current economic climate financial resources were not available and in Neath Port Talbot the demand was very low. Members also noted that the new Welsh Language Centre in Pontardawe hub formally opens on the 7 July 2016;
- Members felt that although the statistics showed that only a small number of users selected access to the welsh speaking option on the telephone, this would increase if more people knew it was available and it would encourage users to speak in the medium of Welsh;
- Members highlighted that the Performance Management Training had been very well received by Members and asked

whether any other authorities were using report cards and the effectiveness of them. Mr. Barry explained that Neath Port Talbot were further advanced than other local authorities and that the report cards implementation was very positive, with the next stage linking them to financial aspects;

- Members asked that officers give assurances that measures had been put in place to ensure senior managers would discharge their responsibilities effectively in regard to the new Corporate Risk Management Policy. The Chief Executive confirmed that the issues identified in the Auditor's report had been addressed;
- Members asked whether name/role cards had been rolled out to all Committees? Officers would confirm.

The Chief Executive then summed up and stressed that this report was very important and demonstrated the Authority's strengths and weaknesses. It also highlighted that since the report was written there had been many changes and impacts on the Authority and the scale of the financial challenges ahead needed to align with policies and strategies.

The Mayor then thanked Mr. Barry for his presentation and attendance at today's meeting.

4. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE - DOWNGRADING OF UK SOVEREIGN RATING**

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services advised Members that since the European Referendum on the 23 June 2016, the three main credit rating agencies had taken a decision to downgrade the credit rating of the UK from AA+ to AA which had possible implications to the Authority's investments. At present the situation was being monitored and that a further report would be presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board and Audit Committee as part of the monitoring process.

Members then raised the following points:-

- Concern at the additional challenges that Authority faced in the current situation. Also, the implications if the European Union

Funding ceased and the importance of raising this with the Welsh Government and Central Government.

The Deputy Leader expressed concern at emails being received by Council Members in regard to hate crimes and the incidences that had taken place in other local authority areas. It was confirmed that Neath Port Talbot had had no reported incidences of hate crimes and would not tolerate any. In addition the Authority had a number of policies in place regarding discrimination and harassment which were available on the website to Members of the Public.

Members were also referred to the recent press release issued by the Welsh Local Government Association on the 1 July which stated:

“Welsh Councils are proud to celebrate the diversity of all our communities from Butetown to Bangor. We also have an historic tradition of tolerance which has been at the heart of Welsh civil society based on our firm foundation as a bi-lingual nation”.

“Councils have been at the forefront of welcoming asylum seekers and refugees from all parts of the world for many years. We value the contribution they have made and continue to make to society and we are proud of how Welsh communities have welcomed those who have been driven from their homes in situations of unimaginable crisis. Indeed, council workforces, especially in areas like social care, have been enriched by the presence of people from countries across the EU providing essential support to our communities.”

“Whilst it is pleasing to report from the police that despite a few isolated incidents there has been no noticeable spike in reports of hate crime across Wales, the National Police Chiefs’ Council has said 331 hate crime incidents have been reported to a national online reporting site. It is therefore important that we continue to monitor the situation in Wales and ready ourselves against any rise in hate crimes or abuse by those who might use last week’s referendum as cover to seek to divide our communities. Welsh councils, working with all our public sector colleagues, remain fully committed to supporting integration and promoting tolerance among and within our communities across Wales”.

5. **OUTSIDE BODY REPRESENTATION**

RESOLVED: that Councillor P.A.Rees be removed as the Authority's representatives on the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) Dysgu Cymru Management Group as Council's representation thereon was no longer required.

6. **EXECUTIVE DECISIONS OF CABINET AND CABINET BOARDS 2016 (FOR INFORMATION)**

RESOLVED: that the undermentioned Minutes be noted:-

Cabinet	27.04.2016
Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Board	28.04.2016
Social Care, Health and Housing Cabinet Board	12.05.2016
Policy and Resources Cabinet Board	19.05.2016

CHAIRPERSON