

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

10 January 2018

The Mayor: Councillor D.Keogh

The Deputy Mayor: Councillor S.Jones

Councillors: A.R.Aubrey, S.Bamsey, C.Clement-Williams, S. ap Dafydd, A.P.H.Davies, D.W.Davies, O.S.Davies, R.Davies, C.Edwards, J.Evans, S.E.Freeguard, C.Galsworthy, W.F.Griffiths, S.Harris, M.Harvey, N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, C.James, H.N.James, D.Jones, L.Jones, R.G.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.Llewelyn, A.McGrath, J.Miller, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, S.M.Penry, D.M.Peters, M.Protheroe, L.M.Purcell, S.Purseley, S.Rahaman, P.A.Rees, S.H.Reynolds, A.J.Richards, A.J.Taylor, R.L.Taylor, A.L.Thomas, R.Thomas, J.Warman, D.Whitelock, A.Wingrave, R.W.Wood and A.N.Woolcock

Officers in Attendance: A.Evans, A.Jarrett, H.Jenkins, Mrs.K.Jones, A.Manchipp, D.Michael, G.Nutt and S.Phillips

Representatives of the Translation Service: Present

1. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

The Mayor took the opportunity to welcome Mr Andrew Jarrett to his first meeting of Council as the new Director of Social Services Health and Housing

The Mayor also advised Council of the following recipients in the New Year's Honours List:

Members of the Order of the British Empire

- Mrs Susan Hollister, Head teacher at Cefn Hengoed Community School in Swansea for services to Education in Swansea – who is from Neath.
- Mr William T Hopkins for services to the Community particularly children and Maritime Safety, in South Wales – who is from Port Talbot
- Dan McCallum - Co-Founder and Managing Director, Awel Aman Tawe. For services to Community Energy in Wales.

Medallist of the Order of the British Empire

- Mr Gareth Jones for Services to Church Communities in Skewen and Neath – who is from Neath.

2. **MEMBER'S DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

The following Member made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Councillor A. Llewelyn

Re the presentation by the Chief Fire Officer as he is the Authority's representative on the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

3. **PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

The Mayor welcomed the Chief Fire Officer of the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Mr Chris Davies and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mr Rob Quin to their annual meeting with Council.

The Chief Fire Officer then gave Members an overview of the service during which Members noted that for the period 2006/16 the Service had had a 20% cut in funding which equated to £9m. Members were advised that at present there was a UK wide dispute on pay and conditions which was being heard in London and that depending on the outcome, the Chief Fire Officer may approach the Local Authorities within his area to fund the shortfall.

Council noted the work undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Service, including preventative work, for example following a fatality, where Officers would visit the area concerned to provide advice, etc.

In relation to Road Traffic Collisions, the Chief Fire Officer advised that, in light of the increase in numbers, he was asking that a Summit be convened to discuss the reasons behind the increase and perhaps to mitigate them.

It was noted that the number of medical emergencies attended by Fire and Rescue Officers was now almost double the number of attendances at other incidences put together. Members noted that such attendances were at present unfunded – a position which could not be maintained indefinitely, however the benefit to those concerned was significant.

Council was reminded that the cost per person per month was £4 or £48 per annum. The service was the 2nd cheapest per station, which was good value for money.

In relation to changes in service delivery, Members were advised that any further cuts would result in an increase in response times. In the survey carried out on 2015/16, the majority of the public who responded indicated that they would prefer to pay more to maintain the current service. A further survey would be undertaken during the summer of 2018. With regard to the co-location of services, the Chief Fire Officer requested that should the Authority be considering closing facilities, consideration be given to 'sharing' the facility with other public bodies.

There then followed a question and answer session where the following points were raised:-

- Members of the public were not aware of the financial contribution that the Authority made to the Fire and Rescue Service and perhaps this could be addressed.
- The Authority has vast experience in relation to budgetary cuts, how is the Fire and Rescue Service dealing with its budgetary issues. The Chief Fire Officer advised Council that any shortfall would come from the Local Authorities for the area and ultimately from the Council Tax payer. This would need to be taken up with the Welsh Government as the Local Authority was experiencing its own budgetary issues following year on year cuts. It was agreed to re-establish the meetings between

the area's Local Authorities' Treasurers and the Fire and Rescue's own Finance Officer.

Money was in reserves as part of the Transformation Programme and the Service was looking at Digitalisation in order to avoid double handling.

- Members asked that as the reserves at the end of March 2017 totalled £9.7m, including £1.3m for a levy equalisation reserve, how much was being used to assist with the budget for 2018/19? Members were advised that this was a contingency fund and that reserves could only be used once, hence the Authority's reluctance to utilise them in this way. Going forward it was not anticipated using the reserves to underpin the precept contributions.
- Members thanked the Chief Fire Officer for the work that they carry out particularly recently in attending a fatality in the Neath Valley. Concern was expressed that the Young Firefighters Clubs held throughout the County Borough would suffer as a result of the budgetary issues, however it was noted that firefighters volunteered their time for free to hold the Clubs. It was the Chief Fire Officer's aim to hold 58 of these Clubs throughout the area ie the number of Fire Stations.
- Members noted that if the Fire Service got the increase in budget it would not cut services, however a change in business procedure or more economical vehicles would be looked at.
- The Fire Authority was consulting on a budget precept of £46.6m which was £8.6m or 22% more than the funding that Councils receive from the Welsh Government. This was a proposed increase of 2.7% in the precept. The Chief Fire Officer was asked to confirm what discussions had taken place with Welsh Government about this significant shortfall in funding made available through the Local Government settlement. The Chief Fire Officer advised that he had been in discussions with the Welsh Government and that the view was that it was not their responsibility but that of Local Government.
- The Chief Fire Officer was reminded that last year he mentioned that the Fire Service had a new statutory duty to respond to flooding. Members asked what additional funding had been available from Welsh Government in respect of this and any other new statutory duty? The Chief Fire Officer advised that the additional duty had come into force in April 2017. The Welsh Government had provided a grant of £1.4m which was to provide for the additional equipment required to carry out the work, which were strategically located. They also

worked with Natural Resources Wales to undertake preventative work.

- Members asked what services the Chief Fire Officer collaborated with or what services are bought from other public bodies to improve service efficiency? The Chief Fire Officer advised that they worked with the Police, the Ambulance Service and Natural Resources Wales, and also the Joint Arson Group on such things as grass fires. The Fire Service also worked with schools to provide advice and education.
- As the Fire Service visited in the region of 105,000 properties, would it be possible for Fire Officers to 'feedback', to the relevant authorities, any issues around vulnerability of residents. Members were advised that Pathfinder, a multi-agency Team was being trialled, which if successful would provide a one stop shop for those requiring assistance and support and consideration would be given to rolling this out across Wales.
- Members expressed concern at the implications for the service should the 5% pay award increase requested by firefighters be approved and were advised that this increase would need to be funded from Central Government.
- In relation to the possible Ministerial summit on Road Traffic Collisions, Members were advised that 60 Road Traffic Deaths had occurred in the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service area and that the Chief Fire Officer had approached Ministers and the Department of Transport who were supportive of the proposal.
- In relation to the proposed new super prison on Baglan Moors, Port Talbot, Members asked whether the Service would provide assistance , for example during a flood, as the area is on a flood plane? Members also asked where the prisoners would re-located? The Chief Fire Officers advised that there would be consultation before the proposed build and that it would not be the responsibility of the Fire Service, but of the Police and the Ministry of Justice.

The Mayor then thanked the Chief Fire Officer, Mr Chris Davies and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mr Rob Quin for their attendance at today's meeting.

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF COUNCIL**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of Council be confirmed, subject to Councillor R.L.Taylor being marked as present at the meeting held on 29 November 2017.

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 amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 and further amended by The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 (“Uprating Regulations”) These regulations will be further amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (“Uprating Regulations”), be adopted;

2. That there be no change to the 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. ANNUAL REPORT

Members received the report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services on the first part of the Annual Report for 2017/18. The Leader of Council advised the meeting that going forward the relevant Cabinet Member would introduce reports with Officers taking any ensuing questions. He emphasised that Members would be expected to have read the reports prior to attending the meeting.

Members then raised the following:-

- Members extended their gratitude to members of staff who had helped deal with the landslip in Cwmavon, Port Talbot over the Christmas period;
- Members were pleased with the clarity and transparency of the report;
- It was hoped that the work of the Income Generation Working Group would make a positive impact on the budget situation;
- Concern was expressed that the Council Policy was to increase Direct Payments and that this should only be the case if it was in the best interests of the service users;
- In relation to recycling, it was noted that the Authority had achieved the Welsh Government target early, however the target was set to rise further going forward.

RESOLVED: That the first part of the Annual Report for 2017/18, be adopted.

7. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

RESOLVED: That the following changed to Committee Memberships be approved:

- Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee - replace Cllr. Chris Williams with Cllr Anthony John Richards.
- Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee and the Valleys Task and Finish Group - replace Cllr. Anthony John Richards with Cllr. Hugh Jones.

- Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Committee - replace Cllr. Hugh Jones with Cllr. Jo Hale
- Personnel Committee and Staff Council - replace Cllr. Rosalyn Davies with Cllr. Jo Hale.
- Special Appointments Committee - replace Cllr. Linet Purcell with Cllr. Alun Llewelyn
- Democratic Services Committee- replace Cllr. Linet Purcell with Cllr. Alun Llewelyn.

8. **EXECUTIVE DECISIONS OF CABINET AND CABINET BOARDS 2017/18**

RESOLVED: That the undermentioned Minutes be noted:-

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| Cabinet | 8 November 2017 |
| Cabinet | 22 November 2017 |
| Education, Skills and Leisure (Special) | 7 December 2017 |
| Education, Skills and Leisure | 7 December 2017 |
| Regeneration and Sustainable Development | 8 December 2017 |
| Streetscene and Engineering | 1 December 2017 |

CHAIRPERSON