

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

26 May 2021

The Mayor: Councillor J.Warman

The Deputy Mayor: Councillor J.D.Morgan

Councillors: A.R.Aubrey, S.Bamsey, D.Cawsey, H.C.Clarke, C.Clement-Williams, M.Crowley, A.P.H.Davies, N.J.E.Davies, O.S.Davies, C.Edwards, S.E.Freeguard, C.Galsworthy, W.F.Griffiths, J.Hale, S.Harris, N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, J.Hurley, H.N.James, C.J.Jones, D.Jones, J.Jones, L.Jones, S.Jones, D.Keogh, S.A.Knoyle, E.V.Latham, A.Llewelyn, A.R.Lockyer, S.Lynch, A.McGrath, J.Miller, S.Miller, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, S.M.Penry, D.M.Peters, R.Phillips, M.Protheroe, L.M.Purcell, S.Purse, S.Rahaman, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, A.J.Richards, P.D.Richards, M.Spooner, A.J.Taylor, R.L.Taylor, D.Whitelock, C.Williams, R.W.Wood and A.N.Woolcock

Officers in Attendance: K. Jones, A.D.Thomas, H.Jenkins, N.Pearce, A.J.Thomas, C.Griffiths, M.Shaw, S.Curran and J.Woodman-Ralph

Representative of the Wales Audit Office C.Davies, N.Jenkins, G.Gillett and J. Morgan

1. **Mayor's Announcements**

It was very great sadness that the Mayor advised Council of the death of former Councillor Mark Jones, who represented the Aberavon Ward.

As a mark of respect Members observed a minute's silence.

It was with great pleasure that the Mayor announced that Mrs Joanna Jenkins MBE, JP, DL, has been appointed High Sheriff of West Glamorgan for 2021 – 2022. Mrs Jenkins attends the Councils' Audit and Governance Committee as a Lay Member.

Council also welcomed its newest Member, Councillor Stephanie Lynch to her first meeting of Council. Cllr Lynch represents the Aberavon Ward.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were received.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting/s of Council (Civic Year 2020/21)**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 9th and 24th March 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record of those meetings.

4. **Audit Wales - Annual Summary 2020**

K.Jones, Chief Executive, introduced the representatives from Audit Wales and explained that the Council's external auditors attend Council on an annual basis to outline the studies they had undertaken and the conclusions drawn. This also gives Members the opportunity to ask questions directly to the auditors.

Members noted that Mr.C.Davies who was currently the lead auditor with Audit Wales would be superseded by Ms. N. Jenkins.

Mr C.Davies highlighted that the Audit Summary combines the Annual Audit Letter and the Annual Improvement Report that were previously produced as separate documents in order to provide a single summary of the findings of performance and financial audit work undertaken by Audit Wales as well as planned future audit work.

Council heard that the authority had met its legal duties for improvement planning and annual reporting statutory duties place on it by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. In addition, the Council was in a strong financial position which enabled the Council

to be well placed to manage its financial sustainability over the medium term.

It was highlighted that there were opportunities for the Council to strengthen corporate arrangements for safeguarding and in applying the sustainable development principles, a requirement of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2014. There were also opportunities to use the new Corporate Performance Management System to improve the way information is used to drive business planning.

Mrs.N.Jenkins, Wales Audit Office addressed Council outlining the forward programme and looked forward to working with members and officers of Neath Port Talbot.

Members raised the following points:

Members queried whether any work had been undertaken looking at deprivation across the 22 authorities in Wales. It was explained that Audit Wales work on local projects with authorities but highlight any national studies that have a local impact. Where possible comparisons are undertaken.

A discussion took place on the availability of comparative information in regard to Council reserves and areas of deprivation. It was explained that the information is available in the public domain. In addition the latest Financial Sustainability report will be considered by Members in due course which does contain some of the information requested.

Further discussion took place on the desirability of examining levels of deprivation and economic inactivity across Wales to identify good practice. The auditors confirmed that deprivation was one of the key strands of their work and would be happy to work across authorities in future and happy to discuss further.

RESOLVED: That the work undertaken by Audit Wales as contained in the Annual Summary 2020 be noted.

5. **Corporate Plan 2021/2023**

Cllr. E.V.Latham, Leader of Council introduced the Corporate Plan 2021/2023 which had been commended to Council from Cabinet on the 12th May for approval.

The Leader addressed Council. It was explained that the Corporate Plan presented reflected the significant challenges presented by COVID-19 and also the Skewen Blowout. Council recorded their appreciation for all the work undertaken by staff, residents and partners.

Council then reflected on the many lives lost and the impact of the pandemic on many others.

Work was ongoing to continue to support residents in recovering from these emergencies.

Members noted that an important element of the future work of the Council would be to support people and businesses as they opened up and to prepare a longer term recovery plan.

In addition, an engagement exercise that will take place over the summer with staff, residents, businesses and partners giving them the opportunity to shape the way the Council moves forward. A report detailing the feedback from this exercise would be available for consideration by Members in the Autumn.

Concern was expressed by some Members that the Cefn Coed Museum and the Valleys Strategy had not achieved fruition.

Members queried what the statutory powers the Council has in regard to pollution and how the Council uses these power and what engagement was undertaken with partners to use these powers to address particular issues for example the Store Gas Fired Power Station .

Officers explained that the regulator responsible for these permits was Natural Resources Wales (NRW) who works closely with Council officers. Meetings have been arranged in regard to this specific query, looking at the rationale and thresholds with NRW permitting officer in regard to the areas in question and a report will be brought back to members in due course.

It was highlighted that Neath Port Talbot was the lead authority as part of City Deal looking at areas of supporting innovation and low carbon growth. Part of that project was looking at air quality. Shortly new monitoring equipment would be rolled out which would assist in measuring air quality.

In answer to Members queries, it was explained that Pontardawe Arts Centre cinema project was one of the initiatives for Pontardawe and an update report would be brought for Members' consideration in the near future.

Further questions were raised in regard to the Valleys Strategy. Members were advised that an update report on the Valleys Strategy could be provided if required.

RESOLVED: Having given due regard to the Integrated Impact Assessment:

1. The Corporate Plan for the period 2021 – 2023 be adopted.
2. That the Head of Human & Organisational Development be authorised to add the additional performance data to the Plan when available.

6. **Members Induction and Diversity in Democracy**

Head of Legal Services introduced the Member Induction 2022 and Diversity in Democracy as detailed in the circulated report.

Members asked that Officers keep in mind when considering staggering start times of meetings, Employment Rights Act, which allows for elected members, who are employees, to have time of work to attend Council meetings.

RESOLVED: 1. That Democratic Services Committee be tasked to undertake and contribute to a review of the Member Induction Programme for 2022.

2. That Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council becomes a “Diverse Council” pursuant to the Welsh Local Government Association Diversity and Democracy Programme as set out in paragraph 7 of this report.
3. That Democratic Services undertake a review of the Diversity in Democracy Programme as part of its review of the Member Induction Programme for 2022.
4. That a report be brought back to Council with updates on the Member Induction Programme and the Diversity in Democracy Programme in November 2021.

7. **Appointment of Director of Finance and Strategic Programmes**

The Head of Legal Services introduced the Appointment of Director of Finance and Strategic Programmes as detailed in the circulated report.

RESOLVED: That the arrangements to recruit a Director of Finance and Strategic Programmes as detailed in the circulated report be approved.

8. **New Scrutiny Chair and Membership Changes**

The Head of Legal Services introduced the New Scrutiny Chair and Membership Changes as detailed in the circulated report.

RESOLVED: 1. That Councillor Saifur Rahaman be appointed Chair and Councillor Sharon Freeguard appointed as Vice Chair of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee.

2. That the vacancy on Cabinet Scrutiny Committee created by Councillor Sharon Freeguard be filled by Councillor Rachel Taylor.
3. That Councillor Stephanie Lynch replaces Councillor Chris Jones on Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Committee.
4. That Councillor Stephanie Lynch replace Councillor Chris Jones on Planning Committee.
5. That Councillor Caroline Edwards replace Councillor J.D. Morgan on the Coronavirus Member Panel.
6. That Councillor Saifur Rahaman replace Councillor Mike Harvey on the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee.

CHAIRPERSON