

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

20 March 2024

The Mayor: Councillor Chris Williams

The Deputy Mayor: Councillor Matthew Crowley

Councillors: A.R.Aubrey, T.Bowen, W.Carpenter, H.C.Clarke, M.Crowley, A.Dacey, H.Davies, H.Davies, R.Davies, S.E.Freeguard, C.Galsworthy, N.Goldup-John, W.F.Griffiths, J.Hale, S.Harris, M.Harvey, J.Henton, S.K.Hunt, J.Hurley, C.James, N.Jenkins, R.G.Jones, S.Jones, C.Jordan, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, A.Lodwig, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, D.M.Peters, C.Phillips, R.Phillips, S.Pursesey, S.Rahaman, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds, G.Rice, A.J.Richards, P.D.Richards, P.Rogers, S.Thomas, D.Whitelock, C.Williams, L.Williams and B.Woolford

Officers in Attendance: P.Chivers, S.Curran, M.Daley, N.Daniel, T.Davies, C.Griffiths, A.Hinder, A.Jarrett, H.Jones, S.McCluskie, N.Jones, N.Pearce, C.Plowman, S.Rees, T.Rees, M.Shaw, A.Thomas and A.Thomas

Representatives of the Translation Service: Present

1. **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader of Council referred to the recent announcement by TATA Steel of the immediate closure of the Coke Ovens at the Port Talbot plant. Council were reminded that TATA Steel are currently within a statutory consultation period with trade unions and staff over potential redundancies linked to the transition to low CO2 steel making. It had not been anticipated that such an announcement would be made, but

it was appreciated that the decision had been made on safety reasons which is of paramount importance.

The Leader confirmed the ongoing commitment of the Council to continue to work with the UK and Welsh Governments together with TATA on the transition board.

The Leader went on to inform Council that the UK Government had recently granted Associated British Ports (ABP) permission to move to the due diligence stage with the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme (FLOWMIS.) This has the potential to unlock a projected £1billion investment in Port Talbot and surrounding areas which alongside the Freeport ambitions will encourage thousands of green jobs to the area.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services made reference to Agenda Item 9, Pay Policy Statement 24/25. It was noted that Standards Committee had granted dispensation for all Elected Members, who had family members working within the Authority and Neath Port Talbot schools, to speak and vote on the matter.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services declared an interest on behalf of all Officers in relation to Agenda Item 9, Pay Policy Statement 24/25 and Agenda Item 10, Permission to advertise for the position of Chief Executive; Chief Officers would be withdrawing from the meeting for the duration of the items.

The following interests were declared:

Cllr Mike Harvey- in relation to agenda item 5 as he works for South Wales Police.

Cllr Sian Harris- in relation to agenda item 5 as her son works for South Wales Police

Cllr Chris Williams (Mayor)- in relation to agenda item 5 as his daughter works for South Wales Police.

Cllr Jo Hale- in relation to agenda item 7 declared a prejudicial interest.

3. **Public Question Time.**

No questions were received.

4. **Presentation by the outgoing Police and Crime Commissioner-
Mr Alun Michael**

It was with pleasure that the Mayor invited the outgoing Police and Crime Commissioner Mr Alun Michael to address Council.

Members thanked Mr Michael for his service, commitment and input into South Wales Policing and wished him well on his retirement, presenting him with a gift as a token of appreciation on behalf of the Council.

5. **Scrutiny Audit- Proposals to Changes to the Council's Model of Scrutiny**

Members received detail of the proposed new model of scrutiny for the Council from the scrutiny champion, as circulated in the attached report.

It was noted that Proposal 2 would be amended to include the current Cabinet portfolios.

RESOLVED: That the proposals for the new model of scrutiny be APPROVED, and to take effect from the Annual General Meeting of Council May 2024.

6. **Mayoral Arrangements**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which was to nominate a Mayor elect and Deputy Mayor elect for the civic year 2024/2025. It was explained that each year the Council elected a Mayor and Deputy Mayor to preside over Council proceedings, and discharge the duties of the First Citizen. Members were informed that during its annual meeting in May 2024, formal appointment will take place pursuant to the Council's Constitution; however, to assist in preparation, and following discussions between political group leaders, Full Council were asked to approve that Cllr Matthew Crowley be nominated as Mayor, and that Cllr Wayne Carpenter be nominated as Deputy Mayor for the 2024/2025 civic year. Cllrs Matthew Crowley and Wayne Carpenter gave thanks for

their nomination and looked forward to serving their time as Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Matthew Crowley be nominated Mayor for the civic year 2024/25 pursuant to Section 23(1) of the Local Government Act 1972;

That Councillor Wayne Carpenter be nominated Deputy Mayor for the civic year 2024/25 pursuant to Section 23(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

7. **Proposal to Introduce a Council Tax Premium on Second Homes and Long Term Empty Properties**

Councillor Jo Hale reiterated her prejudicial interest and left the meeting for this item.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice introduced the proposals to introduce a council tax premium on second homes and long term empty properties as contained within the circulated report.

It was reiterated that robust scrutiny had taken place in the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee where this item had been considered, and members requested that the observations around simplifying the exemptions that are offered be taken on board by officers and the Cabinet.

It was agreed that the proposal should have a positive impact on the issues surrounding vacant properties and the pressures on the Council's housing services.

RESOLVED: That the introduction of a Council Tax Premium of 100% on long term empty dwellings and second homes from 1st April 2025 be APPROVED.

That no premium being charged in the following cases be APPROVED:

1. Where an empty property can only be accessed through a business premises and does not have a separate entrance. This category will not apply if the building is altered to remove an existing separate entrance.

2. Where a premium would be payable on a long term empty property that is sold, the new owner will not be charged a premium for up to 6 months from the date of the sale while major building works is being carried out.

3.

8. **School Improvement Team - Constitution of Neath Port Talbot Standing Advisor Council for Religion values and Ethics (SACforRVE)**

The Cabinet Member for Education presented the Constitution of Neath Port Talbot Standing Advisory Council for Religion Values and Ethics as detailed in the circulated report.

RESOLVED: that the Constitution of Neath Port Talbot Standing Advisory Council for Religion Values and Ethics be APPROVED.

9. **Pay Policy Statement**

Officers re-iterated their interest in this item and left the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice introduced the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 as detailed in the circulated report.

It was explained that the Localism Act 2011 required that Local Authorities produce a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year; a Pay Policy Statement was first developed and approved by Neath Port Talbot Council in March 2011. It was highlighted that the statement was reviewed on an annual basis, and brought before Council for approval and publication prior to 31 March each year. The circulated report contained the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/2025, which had been updated to take account of any national or local pay related developments. It was noted that the Localism Act 2011 required that the statement set out the Councils policy in regards to a range of issues relating to the pay of the workforce, particularly focusing on senior staff and how their pay related to the lowest paid within the workforce; the aim of this was to increase accountability, transparency and fairness within Local Government in Wales.

Members were pleased to see that over several years the gap has continued to close, and highlighted the importance of this in regards to promoting fairness within Local Government.

RESOLVED: that the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 be APPROVED and published on the Council's website.

10. **Permission to advertise position of Chief Executive**

The Head of People and Organisational Development introduced the proposal to seek permission to advertise for the position of Chief Executive as contained within the circulated report.

RESOLVED: that permission to advertise for the position of Chief Executive be APPROVED.

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

No Notices of Motion were received.

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

No questions were received.

13. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

CHAIRPERSON