

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

4 September 2024

The Mayor: Councillor M.Crowley

The Deputy Mayor: Councillor W.Carpenter

Councillors: A.R.Aubrey, T.Bowen, H.C.Clarke, A.Dacey, H.Davies, H.Davies, O.S.Davies, R.Davies, S.E.Freeguard, C.Galsworthy, N.Goldup-John, W.F.Griffiths, S.Grimshaw, J.Hale, S.Harris, M.Harvey, L.Heard, J.Henton, S.K.Hunt, J.Hurley, C.James, N.Jenkins, J.Jones, L.Jones, S.Jones, C.Jordan, D.Keogh, S.A.Knoyle, E.V.Latham, C.Lewis, A.Llewelyn, A.R.Lockyer, A.Lodwig, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, D.M.Peters, C.Phillips, R.Phillips, S.Pursey, 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, R.W.Wood and B.Woolford

Officers in Attendance: S.Curran, N.Daniel, C.Furlow-Harris, C.Griffiths, A.James, A.Jarrett, K.Jones, L.McAndrew, C.Morris, M.Shaw, A.Thomas and J.Woodman-Ralph

Representative of the Wales Audit Office Alison Lewis

Representatives of the Translation Service: Present

1. **Mayor's Announcements**

It was with sadness that the mayor informed Council of the death of former Councillor and Mayor, Councillor Peter Lloyd who served the

Seven Sisters Ward and was Mayor of the County Borough between 2003 and 2004.

Council stood to observe a minute's silence.

2. **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader announced to Council that the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru has published its initial proposals for Wales' 16 new Senedd constituencies yesterday and that the Commission is inviting comments on its proposals by 30th September.

The Commission is required to pair the new Parliamentary Constituencies to arrive at 16 new Senedd constituencies. The Commission must have regard to a number of rules in coming to its proposals.

The new parliamentary constituency of Neath and Swansea East is proposed to be paired with Brecon, Radnor and Cwmtawe. The Aberavon Maesteg constituency is proposed to be paired with Rhondda and Ogmore.

Given the importance of this issue, the Leader said he will be writing to each political group leader inviting them to nominate 2 members to help develop the Council's formal response to the proposal within the consultation window.

The Leader continued to explain to Council that the eighth meeting of the Tata Transition Board took place on 15th August 2024. At that meeting, the Secretary of State for Wales, Jo Stevens, announced the release of £13.5 million to assist businesses with a significant exposure to Tata and also to support employees and contractors at risk of redundancy.

The Leader explained that this announcement was welcome as the Council has been responding to many requests for support through its Business Support and Employability Service for several months. The additional funding will enable agencies who are involved in providing help and support, including the Council, to gear up their own capacity before the company moves into its next phase where we anticipate more businesses and people will be looking for help.

Following the meeting, the Secretary of State also paid tribute to the way Neath Port Talbot businesses and wider community has come

forward. The Leader reminded members that the Council offered guaranteed interviews to steelworkers following the announcement by the company last year and continues to do so. The Leader explained that the Council has reached out to local partners and businesses to ask them if they were in a position to help. A significant number of organisations have come forward offering vacancies, training opportunities and other forms of help. The Council is continuing to develop the network of support, including working with neighbouring authorities. The Leader stated it had been good to see the Secretary of State and First Minister publicly acknowledge the important role of the Council in helping those impacted by the transition process.

The Leader concluded by explaining that the Council is leading discussions on short-medium term job creation opportunities. It is expected that the Transition Board will receive advice this side of Christmas on a number of projects it could consider to bring new jobs to our local economy, whilst also reinforcing the importance of the Welsh and UK governments continuing to support the work we have been doing through the Celtic Freeport and the associated development of the port of Port Talbot.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Council**

The minutes from the 31st July were approved.

5. **Public Question Time.**

There had been one question submitted to Council.

Mr Holroyd was welcomed and asked the following question to Council:

Is Neath Port Talbot aware that even if we stopped all fossil fuel production today, food emissions alone would exceed the 1.5 limit of the Paris Agreement?

Did you know that the majority of food emissions come from meat and dairy, and a recent analysis of UK diets revealed that food emissions could be slashed by 75% with a plant-based diet?

As well as a climate crisis, we also face a biodiversity crisis. In fact, Britain has lost more of its natural biodiversity than almost anywhere else in Western Europe. 83% of farmland worldwide is used for animal agriculture, but it only supplies 18% of global calories. In fact, if every country ate and consumed like the UK, we would need another planet the size of Mercury to feed everyone. A plant-based food system on the other hand would create an opportunity to return three-quarters of agricultural land to nature, absorb carbon dioxide in the process and improve biodiversity.

If we switched to a plant-based food system we could also improve public health. If the UK population swapped meat for their weekday lunches, over 11,000 cases of Type 2 Diabetes could be prevented a year, and 366k fewer people could be living with cardiovascular disease. This council could help make that happen.

Research shows that the public trusts their local council representatives more than national governments, so I believe this council has a mandate to lead this initiative by introducing plant-based menus and defaults to help increase the consumption of plant-based food across Neath Port Talbot.

Several councils, including Edinburgh, Norwich, Lambeth, Exmouth and Belfast have endorsed the Plant Based Treaty and initiated real actions to reduce food emissions such as plant-based catering at meetings and events, carbon labelling in schools and universities, fruit and vegetable vouchers for low income communities, commitments to lower emissions of school plates, plant-based cookery workshops for the community and public education campaigns.

Will Neath Port Talbot show climate action leadership by endorsing the Plant Based Treaty and developing a Plant Based Treaty action plan?

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing thanked Mr Holroyd for his question along with raising the importance of this topic at Council.

The Cabinet member highlighted that Neath Port Talbot was providing clear leadership, and believed it was demonstrating its commitment in addressing the issues of Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Biodiversity.

The Council acknowledged the important role it has in reducing the impact on the climate and nature emergencies by working towards a more prosperous, fairer and greener Neath Port Talbot as detailed within the Corporate Plan.

It was noted that the production of meat and dairy had a significant impact on the climate. The Cabinet Member highlighted that consideration around improved environmental sustainability around both meat production and plant based choices and that we will all need to eat less meat, and consider improved environmental sustainability both within meat production and with alternative plant-based choices. There are important conversations to be had around this issue locally as well as nationally, and that's the purpose of the Local Food Partnership. **

The Cabinet Member stated that although direct responsibility for agriculture lies with the Welsh Government, which has published 'The Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023', introducing the Sustainable Land Management Framework with a focus on sustainable food production, the Neath Port Talbot Food Partnership is bringing together people, businesses and organisations with an interest in the local food sector. It seeks to collaborate, connect and strengthen NPT's food system and local food economy. Together, we are working towards those shared values and priorities, developing projects that promote healthy, local and sustainable food. It's about businesses, organisations and local residents, coming together to try and re-localise our food supply chain and support local small producers in the food system, and he said he would love to hear from anyone who is keen to be involved.

The Cabinet Member went on to explain that underpinning our commitment to addressing Climate Change, the Council published it's 'Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy' in May 2020. Two years later, in September 2022, the Council declared a climate emergency. This focused on key priorities approved by Council that it believed could progress and were within the Council's control. This work has involved reducing carbon emissions across our estate, developing one of the UK's first 'energy positive' commercial office buildings, decarbonising our vehicle fleet, and working towards a prosperous, low-carbon economy for Neath Port Talbot. Neath Port Talbot Council also published its 1st Biodiversity Duty Plan in 2017 demonstrating this council's ongoing commitment to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, and promoting the resilience of our eco-systems. The latest revision to the Plan was in 2023, and it will be considered on a three year cycle, ensuring it remains relevant

and demonstrates our long term vision to reverse the decline in Biodiversity.

At present Neath Port Talbot Council does not have a 'Corporate Food Strategy', and the Cabinet Member stated that this is certainly something the Council will consider. Schools provide over six and a half thousand meals every day, and promote a healthy balanced diet with a wide choice of non-meat and non-dairy produce, including vegetables, salads and fresh fruit. Similar diverse menu options are also available at a number of sites owned by the Council that provide catering for customers, such as Margam Park. The Cabinet Member was keen that we continue to improve and enhance our plant-based offerings, and to encourage people to consider alternative options to meat and dairy products, as part of a balanced healthy diet.

He stated he was aware of the Plant Based Treaty and that research is ongoing to discover best practise within other Local Authorities. He re-iterated the commitment as a Council in addressing Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Biodiversity, and as we review our key delivery plans the Cabinet Member stated he will be asking officers to take into account the important issues raised by the Plant Based Treaty.

Mr Holroyd was thanked for the question and for highlighting this issue.

Mr Holroyd thanked the Cabinet Member for his response and finished with a poem on the Plant Based Treaty.

6. **Audit Wales - Annual Audit Summary 2023**

Council received a presentation from Alison Lewis, Audit Wales setting out the work completed since the last Annual Audit Summary in March 2023.

RESOLVED: that Council notes the content of the Annual Audit Summary 2023.

7. **Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028**

The revised Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) for 2024-2028 was presented to Council following approval at Cabinet on 24th July 2024.

Attention was drawn to a statement in the report stating that NPT has one of the largest Gypsy and Traveller Communities in Wales and more detail around this was sought.

The Officers committed to responding in writing with further detail.

It was noted that feedback from the Scrutiny Committees had been fed into the Plan.

RESOLVED: That Council adopt the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

That the Head of People and Organisational Development be given delegated authority to make such changes as may be needed to the Strategic Equality Plan prior to publication, provided that such changes do not materially alter the content of the document considered by Council.

8. **Gambling Act Policy**

The draft Gambling Act Policy was presented to Council prior to commencing the consultation process.

It was noted that Members were pleased that NPT remains a 'No Casino' town.

RESOLVED: that the draft Gambling Act Policy commence the statutory consultation exercise be APPROVED.

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

None received.

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

The following was asked by Councillor Sonia Reynolds:

"Given that the very well-used, Pontardawe Swimming Pool was closed for good at the end of August, could the Cabinet Member please update Council on the progress of the Feasibility Study, to investigate options for a replacement pool, for which £30,000 has been allocated?"

Cllr Cen Phillips, Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing stated that a written answer would follow.

11. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

CHAIRPERSON