

## COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

**Members Present:**

**8 January 2025**

**The Mayor:** Councillor M.Crowley

**The Deputy Mayor:** Councillor W.Carpenter

**Councillors:** A.R.Aubrey, T.Bowen, H.C.Clarke, C.Clement-Williams, A.Dacey, H.Davies, O.S.Davies, R.Davies, C.Galsworthy, N.Goldup-John, W.F.Griffiths, S.Grimshaw, J.Hale, S.Harris, M.Harvey, J.Henton, S.K.Hunt, J.Hurley, C.James, N.Jenkins, J.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.Purseley, 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.Griffiths, H.Jones, N.Pearce, M.Shaw, A.Thomas and A.Thomas

**Representatives of the Translation Service:** Present

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### 1. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished all a Happy New Year for 2025.

It was with sadness that the Mayor informed Council of the unfortunate passing of Council Colleague Shafi Hasan, along with the death of former Councillor Audrey Chaves of the Sandfields West Ward from 2012 to 2017 and former Councillor and Leader Thomas Phillip Noel Crowley.

Council stood to observe a minutes silence.

The Mayor went on to congratulate the following who was honoured in the Kings New Years Honours List. Mrs Janice Victoria Williams, Chair of Swansea Bay Health Board for public service, Mrs Debbie Lane for supporting and saving young lives, Mrs Wendy Ansell Specialist Midwife Nurse for services relating to harmful practices and women seeking sanctuary. Mr David John James for Volunteering Services, Mr Andrew Vaughan John, Chair of Aberavon Rugby Football Club for services to charity and business, Mrs Karen Pitt, for services to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematical Skill and lastly Mr Jeremy Mark Vaughan, of South Wales Police.

The awards were acknowledged by Council with a round of applause.

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## 2. **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader announced to Council that the draft Budget Consultation for 2025/2026 had been published and was to be considered by Cabinet, Friday the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

The Leader went on to state that whilst the improved government settlement figure is welcomed there is however a shortfall in funds to address the pressures within Governments in Wales. It has been estimated by the WLGA that the pressures going forward for next year in Wales amounts to £560 million pounds.

Despite the lack of pressure funds, the Leader informed Council that provisional local government funding had been secured to the amount of £253 million pounds, half of which is required.

The Leader finalised by requesting Council members continue to lobby to Welsh Government for an improved final settlement figure. The Leader stated that he would be responding to the consultation and urged members to do the same.

## 3. **Declarations of Interest**

The following interests were declared in relation to Agenda item 5 – Annual Presentation to Council from South Wales Police.

Councillor Sian Harris – as she has a son who is a serving member for South Wales Police.

Councillor Mike Harvey – as he is a Design and Crime Officer for South Wales Police.

Councillor Chris Williams – as he has a daughter who is a serving police officer for South Wales Police.

4. **Public Question Time.**

There were none.

5. **Annual Presentation to Council from South Wales Police**

The Mayor welcomed to the meeting Chief Superintendent Steve Jones BCU Commander for Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot, who gave a presentation to Council on the current position for South Wales Police.

Following the presentation members asked, of the 13,000 figure of extra officers outlined by West Minister how many would Neath Port Talbot benefit from. Chief Superintendent Jones responded by saying that whilst he was unsure how the 13,000 would currently be implemented, he was keen to keep pushing Welsh Government.

Members gave special thanks to Police Officer Tom Richardson for his continued work within the community of Sandfields West. Members asked for information relating to additional policing staff and of which how many were dedicated to local communities. Chief Superintendent Jones responded by saying that whilst overall numbers did not increase, response officers did. As an example response officers increased in Neath by 10, 2 per shift. Response calls and actions were outlined to Members. Chief Superintendent stated that whilst officers may not be visible in communities, lots of work was still going on behind the scenes.

Members went on to ask a further question, asking how long will the set period be for maintaining officers, including the Police Inspector? Chief Superintendent followed on with a response stating whilst turn arounds in Leadership is often, the force are keen to establish 10 year, however in reality the figure stands at around 3 to 4 years. South Wales Police share Members concerns.

Members requested that the presentation be shared as there was some communities missing from the data. Chief Superintendent explained that this was due to the format of the report but would happy to oblige in sharing the data with Members.

Members thanks the Chief Superintendent for the presentation given at today's Council meeting. The Deputy Leader went on to tell Council of their recent meeting with the new Police Commissioner Emma Wools which was received positively.

6. **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 25/26**

Cllr Simon Knoyle, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice introduced the report, which was to authorise the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 as further amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 and any subsequent amendments that may be required by legislation in relation to The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2025.

That the Council approve the retention of the existing discretionary elements in relation to the Prescribed Scheme:

- (i) That no increase in the backdated period for all claimants be applied from the standard 3 months contained in the Prescribed Scheme.
- (ii) That no increase in the extended reduction period for all claimants be applied from the standard 4 weeks currently contained within the Prescribed Scheme.
- (iii) Apply a 100% disregard for War Disablement Pensions, War Widows Pensions and War Widower's Pensions for all claimants.

7. **Corporate Plan Annual Report 23/24**

The Leader introduced the Corporate Plan Annual Report 2023/24 to Council, which provides an account of progress made against the four well-being objectives and actions set out in the council's Corporate Plan 2022/2027: "Recover, Reset, Renew" for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

**Resolved:**

That the Council adopts the Corporate Plan “Reset, Review, Recover” Annual Report for the period: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

That the Leader of Council be given delegated authority to make such changes as may be needed to the Annual Report prior to publication, provided that such changes do not materially alter the content of the document considered by Council.

8. **Establishment of a Modernisation Group**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services Mr Craig Griffiths introduced the report to Council.

It was proposed that a Modernisation Group within the Council to review and enhance decision-making processes be established. The aim would be to ensure that Council procedures are efficient, transparent, and aligned with best practices.

Resolved:

That members approve the establishment of a modernisation group on the terms identified in the report.

9. **Governance and Audit Committee- Appointment of Voting Lay Member**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Mr. Craig Griffiths introduced the report to Council, which was to obtain approval for the appointment of a voting lay Member of the Governance and Audit Committee following a selection panel that met on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

**Resolved,**

That the individual referred to in paragraph 5, of the report be appointed as voting lay member of the Governance and Audit Committee.

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

The Mayor called upon Councillor Goldup-John to introduce his motion put before Council on 'The profit of the Crown Estate'.

Councillor Goldup-John addressed Council.

'Thank you, Mr. Mayor. The profit of the Crown Estate, made from National Resources in Wales should be no different to that of Scotland. Revenue generated from the Crown Estate in Wales was valued at over £600 million pounds at the end of 2022 and has grown since.

The revenue generated by this asset directly flows into the UK Treasury. This money, especially in times of uncertainty could be used to help create well-paid, green jobs, further research and development solutions in all sectors and work to bring down the domestic energy costs.

Noting the opportunity we have here with the development of the Celtic Freeports there could be a benefit to the local community by devolving the Crown Estate to Wales. Profit made from Wales is Natural Resources should be kept in Wales to boost our economy. The revenue from Scottish Assets go straight to the Scottish Government and we should be no different. This Council should support the campaign to devolve management of the Crown Estate and its assets in Wales back to the Welsh Government and the funds raised from this, should be used to support social needs of the Welsh people.

And therefore, accordingly it is resolved that this Council and that the Leader of Neath Port Talbot Councillor Steve Hunt, write to the appropriate Secretary of State and the First Minister of Wales, outlining our support to persuade West Minister on the terms of this motion to devolve the Crown Estate as a matter of urgency. Thank you, Mr Mayor.'

Members followed on by endorsing the statement given by Councillor Gold-up John. Members gave their disbelief on why other nations in the UK could keep hold of their funds but Wales could not.

The Deputy Leader gave his support to the motion, saying there are increasing calls from Local Authorities in Wales to see the devolution of the Crown Estate. Principles including economic and budgetary reasons was mentioned. At present the Crown Estate own large areas of the coast, rivers and landscape in Wales an increase of £21 million to over £150 million in 2024. A result of resources seen across

county areas including energy which the Council have a particular interest in specifically the Celtic Freeport and Flow.

Across the United Kingdom the profit from the Crown Estate went up from £345 million in 2020 to £1.1 billion in 2024. In comparison to Scotland, Wales does not receive a direct proportion of the profit. Scottish Government was in receipt of over £100 million in 2024. It is estimated that Wales would receive over £50 million pounds if the Crown Estate was devolved.

The Deputy Leader went on to say that Councils in Wales between them pay 300,000 to crown estate for the use of their land. Profit has been seen in terms of natural resources.

Several members went on to express their gratitude to Councillor Goldup-John for the motion and gave thanks.

The Leader, Councillor Steve Hunt informed Council he was looking forward to compiling a letter of support to West Minister on behalf of Council Members.

**Resolved:**

That the motion 'The Crown Estate' be carried.

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

There were no questions received.

12. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

**CHAIRPERSON**

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