



COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 14TH JANUARY 2025 AT 5.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor C. Gordon – Presiding Member
Councillor E.M. Aldworth – Deputy Presiding Member

Councillors:

M. Adams, C. Andrews, A. Angel, C. Bishop, C. Bissex-Foster, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, S. Cook, C. Cuss, E. Davies, D.T. Davies MBE, N. Dix, G. Ead, G. Enright, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Forehead, E. Forehead, J. E. Fussell, A. Gair, N. George, D. Harse, A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, A. Leonard, P. Leonard, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Miles, C. Morgan, S. Morgan, T. Parry, L. Phipps, M. Powell, H. Pritchard, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Rao, J. Reed, R. Saralis, J. Scriven, J. Simmonds, S. Skivens, E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas, L. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade, C. Wright and K. Woodland.

Together with:

D. Street (Interim Chief Executive), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), G. Jenkins (Interim Corporate Director Social Services), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer), L. Sykes (Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), A. Main (Acting Benefits Manager), S. Pugh (Communications Manager), L. Morgan (Licensing Manager), T. Keohane (Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also present to receive presentations of awards:

Supporting People Team and K. Hyman (Holistic Hoarding).

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Presiding Member reminded those present the meeting was being live streamed and a recording would be available via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items – [Click Here to View](#). He advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

IN MEMORIUM

The Presiding Member referred to the recent passing of former Caerphilly County Borough Councillor, John Bevan. Members and Officers stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect. Tributes were paid by the Leader of Council and Members.

1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Broughton-Pettit, D. Cushing, C. Elsbury, T. Heron, D. Ingram-Jones, M. James, G. Johnston, J. Jones, S. Kent, B. Owen, D.W.R. Preece, J. Roberts and A. Whitcombe.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors T. Parry, E. Forehead, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Taylor, C. Wright, C. Cuss, P. Leonard, W. Williams, B. Miles, D. Harse and J. Reed declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item 5 – Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26, due to being in receipt of council tax single person discount. As the interest was personal only there was no requirement for the Members to leave the meeting and they could take full part in the debate and vote. Details are also minuted with the respective item.

3. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Supporting People Team

The Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the award by informing Council that the Supporting People Team have joined with Holistic Hoarding to tackle to complex issue of hoarding, which is a challenge that affects every housing provider but one that is often hidden from sight. As well as supporting people to overcome challenges and remain in their homes, Caerphilly Holistic Hoarding is also raising awareness of this issue and aims to tailor its support to individual's needs, recognising that some people will require more help and over a longer period of time than others.

The Cabinet Member was delighted to announce that the Supporting People Team, along with Holistic Hoarding, won 'Partnership of the Year' at the recently held prestigious UK Housing Awards. These awards celebrate the very best in housing and related services throughout the UK, making this a fantastic achievement and worthy recognition for this successful partnership.

The Presiding Member called forward Shelly, Rhod, Laurena, Tracey, Lia and Emma from the Supporting People Team, and Kayleigh from Holistic Hoarding so that Members could recognise their wonderful achievement.

4. COUNCIL HELD ON 12TH NOVEMBER 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12th November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

5. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2025/26

Councillors T. Parry, E. Forehead, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Taylor, C. Wright, C. Cuss, P. Leonard, W. Williams, B. Miles, D. Harse and J. Reed declared a personal interest due to being in receipt of council tax single person discount. As the interest was personal only there was no requirement for the Members to leave the meeting and they could take full part in the debate and vote.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 49 For, 0 Against and 1 Abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2025/26 financial year along with the previously agreed local discretions be continued.

6. CCBC RESPONSE TO STORM BERT AND STORM DARRAGH (PRESENTATION)

Update from the Leader of Council

With approval from the Presiding Member, the Leader of Council took the opportunity to provide Council with an update on the issues experienced with waste collections over the Christmas period. First and foremost, the Leader apologised to those residents who were impacted by the recent disruption to services. He also thanked all residents for their ongoing efforts to help increase recycling rates and reduce waste.

The Leader recognised that over the festive period, the waste collection service fell short of the usual reliable service that has operated smoothly every Christmas. He assured that this below standard performance has been acknowledged and matters are in hand to ensure that this never happens again. Council heard that up until Christmas Eve, all waste collections were fully up to date but, unfortunately, over the Christmas period there were a number of factors which resulted in significant impacts to certain collection rounds which included shortcomings in the management of staff, issues with the co-ordination of leave rotas and resource pressures caused by sickness absence. The Leader highlighted that there are approximately 40,000 collections every day, over 10 million collections a year, which normally happens seamlessly. However, this Christmas period lessons have been learnt and the Council is urgently revising arrangements to ensure that this was a one-off which will not be repeated again.

The Leader expressed that whilst it is important to recognise and acknowledge the Council's shortcomings, it is equally important to recognise the many success stories.

CCBC Response to Storm Bert and Storm Darragh

The Leader of Council asked Members to recall how Storm Bert and Storm Darragh caused major issues across the UK in November and December last year. He acknowledged that these major storm events are becoming more and more frequent due to the effects of global climate change on our weather patterns. The Leader expressed how these types of adverse weather conditions present significant challenges to the Council's services as rivers, culverts and the drainage infrastructure struggles to cope with a huge volume of rainfall.

It was noted that the Council continuously monitors the prevailing weather forecasts and have robust plans in place to respond to any weather warnings that are issued by the Met Office. It was further noted that the Council has planned monitoring and maintenance regimes in place to keep the drainage infrastructure flowing, but when such weather warnings are triggered the Council implements a proactive programme of works which focuses on clearing priority culverts and drainage gullies ahead of any storm events.

The Leader spoke about the storm damage in Risca, Ystrad Mynach, Llanbradach, New Tredegar and Blackwood; and how staff worked tirelessly to support those whose homes and businesses were impacted by the flooding. The Leader highlighted that keeping the highway network open is always a key priority, however the scale of this recent flooding led to full road closures at key strategic routes in Hafodyrynys, Risca and Llanbradach. He expressed how staff were on site in atrocious conditions for many hours in order to re-open the roads, with minimal impact on the travelling public. Council also heard how the Parks and Countryside Team attended many fallen trees across the county borough, that closed cemeteries, roads and footpaths. Canals, tips, bridges and other structures were inspected and monitored to ensure our communities were kept safe throughout and a huge number of

sandbags were distributed. Members also heard how the Council worked closely with the emergency services and partner agencies to support the worst hit towns and villages.

As well as the crews on the ground, the Leader praised all the staff who also worked hard behind the scenes co-ordinating services, taking emergency out of hours calls or handling requests from tenants impacted by flooding. He expressed that this was very much a 'Team Caerphilly' effort involving staff from many service areas and that it is important to recognise the involvement of all those concerned.

The Leader informed Council that, in terms of support for the community, to date a total of £50,000 has been issued to 70 homes thanks to Welsh Government's Household Support Fund. He urged any Councillor who may know of any residents or business impacted by the floods, who have yet to apply for this fund, to get in touch to ensure they can access this funding opportunity.

The Leader asked Members across the Chamber to join him in placing on record their thanks to all the dedicated staff who were willing and ready to work in very difficult conditions to assist the community.

Finally, the Leader concluded by reminding everyone that we are still only halfway through this winter and over the last 2 weeks the Council has been seamlessly gritting the highway network around the clock as a result of the very low temperatures, ice and snow. In some wards the Council has ensured that side streets have been gritted, that would not normally be treated, in advance of waste collection vehicles entering them to ensure that waste collections could take place.

With regards to the update on the issues experienced with waste collections over the Christmas period, Members acknowledged the Leader's apology. They praised the Refuse Collection Team for continuing to work hard and in all weather conditions. A Member commented on sickness absence being one of the factors which resulted in significant impacts to certain collection rounds, and suggested that a flu vaccination be offered to all frontline staff, particularly those working outdoors.

With regards to the Council's response to Storm Bert and Storm Darragh, Members expressed their own messages of thanks and appreciation to the frontline staff who attended the emergencies and to the staff behind the scenes who co-ordinated the response. Councillor L. Whittle, on behalf of the Plaid Cymru group, praised the amazing efforts of the frontline staff who were out working in extremely dangerous conditions. Councillor N. Dix placed on record his thanks to J. Higgs (Principal Engineer/Structures) for the exceptional work he undertook in Blackwood to support those whose homes and businesses were impacted by the flooding. One Member also expressed thanks to the many volunteers who provided support to the elderly and vulnerable.

A number of suggestions were made in relation to flood prevention, which included clearing gulleys, culverts and drains more regularly. Another suggestion was made for the Council to install sand bins, that are strategically placed, for residents whose homes are at risk of flooding.

In conclusion, the Leader of Council thanked all Members for their kind words. The admiration and respect Members had for frontline staff was noted and the Leader ensured that all the messages would be relayed.

7. GAMBLING ACT 2005 - REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report which informed Members of the result of consultation carried out to review the Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy. The report sought the

approval of Council following its presentation to the Members of the Licensing and Gambling Committee on the 19th November 2024.

It was noted that the Licensing and Gambling Committee had raised concerns regarding the prevalence of TV and online advertising of gambling facilities and had requested that the Licensing Manager formally write to the Gambling Commission to relay these concerns, as this was not a matter that could be influenced within the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy. The Licensing Manager conveyed the response from the Gambling Commission which outlined the current situation. Council heard that the Gambling Commission works closely with the Advertising Standards Authority on gambling related matters on a very regular basis and ultimately it is a matter for the DCMS and the Minister to decide whether to act further. The Council has no jurisdiction over advertising unless the actions of a licensed operator breaches the Councils licensing conditions and code of practice.

Clarification was sought regarding the granting of permits for the use of certain lower stake gaming machines at unlicensed family entertainment venues. The Licensing Manager provided examples of family entertainment venues which are overseen by the Gambling Act, such as amusement parks or amusement centres. It was explained that each local authority will differ depending on location and that there are primarily betting premises and adult gaming centres within the Caerphilly borough.

Responding to a query raised regarding advertising, the Licensing Manager advised Council that there is a restriction of advertising so that gambling products are not aimed at or are, particularly attractive to children. It was explained that advertising will fall outside of the Council's remit as a local authority and will be controlled by the Gambling Commission.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 51 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the revised Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy as detailed at Appendix 4 be approved.

8. NOTICE OF MOTION - TRANSFER THE MANAGEMENT AND ASSETS OF THE CROWN ESTATE IN WALES TO THE WELSH PEOPLE

Consideration was given to the Notice of Motion presented by Councillor C. Mann and supported by Councillors T. Parry, J.A. Pritchard, S. Skivens, J. Reed, G. Enright, A. Angel, L. Whittle, J. Roberts, C. Bishop, J. Pritchard, C. Andrews, C. Morgan and P. Leonard, which requested that Caerphilly County Borough Council supports the campaign to transfer the management and assets of the Crown Estate in Wales to the Welsh People. The motion called upon the Welsh Government to involve all stakeholders to build a coalition of voices, by discussion around this as a matter of urgency. This would be to persuade Westminster, as was done for Scotland in 2016, to transfer the Crown Estate to Wales. The motion asked that the Council lends its name to this campaign, as it could change the lives and fabric of all our communities for the better and asked the Leader of Council to write to both the Welsh Government and UK Government and make a public statement calling for this as a matter of urgency.

Members who spoke in support of the Notice of Motion commented on the local authority being under huge financial pressure and that by placing the Crown Estate in Welsh hands would be one significant step in addressing the decades of unfairness and lack of investment in Welsh communities. Council was informed that the Estate owns an estimated 65% of the nation's foreshore and riverbeds, and more than 50,000 acres of land. The value of Crown Estate holdings in Wales has risen from £96m in 2020 to over £853m in 2023. Members considered the work of the Estate in Scotland and felt that Wales should be afforded the same opportunities. Those Members urged the Council to vote for fairness for Wales.

One Member provided a different view in that Wales would benefit from the partnership between Great British Energy and the Crown Estate, which has the potential to leverage billions of pounds in investment into clean energy. It was expressed how this partnership will create jobs, boost economic growth and reduce energy costs. The Member argued that devolving the Crown Estate would disrupt existing investments and risk jeopardising the crucial role it is playing to achieve the UK Government's plan for change by delivering clean energy and creating new jobs and economic growth across Wales. Some Members agreed in principle with the Notice of Motion but could not support it at this time due to the benefits of the Crown Estate entering into a partnership with Great British Energy.

The Notice of Motion was moved and seconded. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting that there were 27 For, 21 Against and 4 Abstentions) the Notice of Motion was supported by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the Notice of Motion be supported.

9. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR

The Mayor's announcements were noted.

10. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 28(3)

There were no petitions received.

11. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(2)

Question from Councillor G. Ead to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan.

Please could the Leader provide Members with an update on the current status of Recycling and Waste collections, given the concerns raised by both Members and the public. In particular, we would like to know what the worst wards are and what the average wait for delayed bin collections is in these wards. Finally, what is the longest wait for bin collections in these wards over the last 3 months?

Response from the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan, to Councillor G. Ead.

In relation to the latest position with Waste and Recycling collections I understand that all collections are currently up to date. Over the Christmas period we did experience some issues with resources to undertake all the collections required. There were shortcomings in the management of staff, there were also issues with co-ordinating leave rotas and further resource pressures caused by sickness absence. I am sure many of you will know someone who was knocked off their feet by the particularly virulent flu bug over Christmas. But lessons have been learnt and we are revising arrangements to ensure that this will not be repeated.

During this period Officers took the decision to prioritise residual waste and food waste collections. This resulted in some recycling collections being delayed. There were some other minor round delays, but on the whole residual waste and food waste were generally collected either on the correct day or the following day.

With regard to recycling, a number of rounds missed a collection, so their weekly collection ended up being fortnightly. Unfortunately, there were a couple of areas; Pontllanfraith, Maesycwmmmer, Glan-y-nant, Tiryberth and Fleur de Lys, where it was almost 3 weeks for a

recycling collection. We fully recognise the difficulties this caused residents, and a full review has already commenced to ensure such instances do not happen again.

During the Christmas period, weekends become normal working days, with staff having Christmas day, Boxing day and New Years day as bank holidays. This then limits the opportunity for catching up on the weekends, as all crews are already working on what would be a normal collection round.

Throughout the year the service generally runs seamlessly. If there are issues such as breakdowns, staff regularly work on or rollover the work to the next day. Every Friday there is a review of performance to see whether there is anything outstanding, and weekend work is arranged to try and ensure each working week is started without any backlog. With regards to performance over the last 3 months, we have experienced some minor delays, but these have generally been resolved within 48hrs.

I appreciate that there appears a lot of concern that this is a result of the new zoning approach to collections. I would like to re-assure Members that this is not wholly correct. The team have recognised that there have been some balancing issues to resolve between days of the week, and this has been continually reviewed to improve the approach.

During the last 3 months we have had a significant number of reliability issues with vehicles, and to resolve these Cabinet have previously approved investment to refurbish the specialist food and green waste fleet, which are split back vehicles, that are not easily hired in. The service has also hired in some more newer vehicles and disposed of some of the older less reliable vehicles. As you are aware, the whole fleet is currently being reviewed, and the majority will be upgraded over the coming years to allow us to transition to a blueprint collection service, to ensure we can meet the requirements of the Welsh Government recycling targets.

I think it also useful for Members to understand the scale of the waste and recycling collection service. The service of 25 main rounds a day, and undertakes approximately 40,000 collections every day, or over 10 million collections a year. So while we have missed collections over the Christmas period, and we do have smaller issues occasionally through the year, missed collections are a tiny, almost miniscule percentage, of the overall numbers. Though I do understand that message gives little comfort to those residents who have had collections missed.

Staff within this service area work extremely hard all year round and are themselves disappointed that there were some failings over Christmas. I would like to personally thank all the staff that worked over and above during the last 2 weeks to catch up on the missed collections. Some of these frontline operatives have had very little break over the Christmas period when the majority of us were enjoying the festivities.

Supplementary question from Councillor G. Ead to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan.

Councillor G. Ead thanked the Leader for a very comprehensive answer and requested a Members dashboard to show bin collections on a weekly basis.

Response from the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan, to Councillor G. Ead.

Circulating the figures can be looked into, however the Council reports and updates Members daily if there are missed collections. Out of 40,000 collections a week, our missed collections are very small.

12. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(3)

Question from Councillor A. Broughton-Pettit to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change, Councillor J. Pritchard.

Can the Deputy Leader provide an update on the Blackwood Miners' Institute and Llancaiach Fawr?

Response from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change, Councillor J. Pritchard to Councillor A. Broughton-Pettit.

I will firstly provide an update on the future of the Blackwood Miners' Institute. As Members will know, the future running of Blackwood Miners Institute has been under consideration over recent months. The Council announced it would investigate alternative delivery options for the venue, that wouldn't be wholly reliable on Council subsidy. Since last summer, we have been working over these options.

Following detailed engagement with the Councils Arts Development Team, a funding bid to the Arts Council for Wales was submitted last autumn. Last month we received confirmation that £210k has been awarded to the venue, therefore dramatically reducing the Council subsidy for the venue in 25/26 as opposed to 24/25. The funding has already started to be drawn down to ensure the programme of events can be maintained as we transition to a new model of delivery.

The Council will now continue to work collaboratively with the BMI independent Advisory Panel and the Arts Council for Wales to transition to an independent trustee structure and to explore new operating models that will secure the future of this historic cultural venue. The move towards an independent trustee model is being taken to ensure that "Blackwood Arts Centre", the full title of the charity that the BMI operates under, can be run and managed in an independent manner, removing any conflict of interests that have been identified, through the extensive consultation undertaken with the community and stakeholders.

The Council has also been exploring potential avenues for increasing the footfall at the building by considering our own estate, and whether there is a potential for the relocation of services at the building. We are at an early stage of exploration, but we are considering all the options.

A new events and activity calendar is now being programmed for the venue for 2025/26 and details will be announced in due course. I am pleased to report ticket sales and income levels have improved considerably in recent months. But can I stress, the long-term success of the venue will only be strengthened by increased visitor numbers, and ultimately, spend at the BMI. There has been support expressed for keeping the building at the heart of the community, so can I urge all those residents and elected Members, who have expressed their love for the venue, to book a show or performance and tell a friend.

We would like to thank all the staff at the BMI for their work over the course of 2024 and we believe the future is bright for 2025.

I will now turn to providing an update on the future of Llancaiach Fawr. This week the Council announced the appointment of Avison Young to market the Lancaiach Fawr venue. Avison Young have been chosen because they have a wealth of experience both in working in Wales and, perhaps more importantly, promoting leisure/hospitality venues.

During and following the consultation period on the future of Llancaiach Fawr Manor, some very fruitful discussions with potential local operators have been held and the details of these interested parties have been forwarded to the Avison Young to explore further.

The Christmas period is the busiest time of the year for the leisure/hospitality sector and therefore Avison Young will officially launch the marketing of the venue at the end of January, when potential operators will have capacity to react to the opportunity being presented. The following 8 weeks will see the agents, supported by the Council, engage with potential operators and formally put the venue out to tender. It is envisaged that a preferred operator will be identified by the end of April 2025 after which the legals can be finalised before they open the doors of Llancaiach Fawr Manor.

The venue offers so much potential for new operators. What is certain, is that the Council will be looking for an operation that becomes a strong local economic driver that compliments the existing leisure/hospitality offers in the county borough. We will not simply be looking to award to the highest bidder, but we will consider the breadth of all bids to ensure the museum is reopened for the public. As with Blackwood Miners' Institute, the Council is committed to ensuring the venue serves the public under a different operating arrangement. The future of Llancaiach Fawr can be positive, and I assure all Members that we will continue to work proactively to achieve this aim.

These decisions are never taken lightly, but it is possible to breathe new life into these types of facilities - as we have seen from the recent positive announcement about the future of the former Coffi Vista building in Caerphilly, which is due to reopen as an exciting new restaurant over the coming weeks. Effectively removing a £100k a year taxpayer subsidy and generating an actual £26k a year surplus for residents. We should not be scared to make changes when the case for doing so is compelling.

13. TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(12) FOR WHICH A WRITTEN RESPONSE WILL BE PROVIDED.

There were no questions received.

The meeting closed at 6.37pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2025 they were signed by the Presiding Member.

PRESIDING MEMBER