



MINUTES OF MEETING

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 20TH MARCH, 2024

PRESENT: Councillors M Colbran (Chair)
J Thomas (Vice-Chair)

Councillors A Barry, B Carter, L Davies, E Galsworthy, K Gibbs, D Hughes, D Isaac, J Jenkins, C Jones, C T Jones, D Jones, M Jones, P Layton, G Lewis, L Minett-Vokes, L Mytton, G Richards, D Roberts, D Sammon, J Scriven, W R Smith, M Symonds, G Thomas, I Thomas, S Thomas and A Williams-Price

Officers:

C Kennedy (Head of Legal and Governance Services - Monitoring Officer), L Hull (Chief Finance Officer / Section 151 Officer), L Curtis Jones (Director of Social Services), S Walker (Director of Education), J Jones (Director of Neighbourhood Services), C Dinham (Communications, Consultation and Engagement Manager), H Brown (Head of HR and Organisational Improvement), G Morgan (Solicitor), A Taylor (Head of Democratic Services), A Stephens (Cabinet Policy Officer), J Llewellyn (Head of Childrens Services), S Lyons (Performance and Scrutiny Officer), V Robst (Corporate Communications, Consultation and Engagement Manager), B Lee-Burrowes (Corporate Communications) and K Roberts (Corporate Communications)

M Morgan (Democratic Services Officer), E Galeozzie (Democratic Services Officer), M Phillips (Senior Democratic Services Officer), O Moore (Democratic Services Officer) and M Edmunds (PA to the Leader and Mayor)

ITEM NO.	AGENDA MATTER	DECISION
802	Apologies for Absence	Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Davies and Councillor C Tovey.
803	Declarations of Interest	Councillor L Davies Declared his Interest in Item 5 – Aberfan Community Centre as he is an employee of the Leisure Trust. Councillor G Thomas Declared his Interest in Item 8 – Non-Domestic Rates – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Wales 2024/25.
804	Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)	The Council approves as accurate (subject to any amendments) the Minutes of the following Meetings:
804a	Full Council - 21/02/2024	Resolved that: The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held 21 February 2024 be accepted as a correct record.
804b	Full Council - 28/02/2024	Resolved that: The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held 28 February 2024 be accepted as a correct record.
804c	Full Council: 06/03/2024	Resolved that: The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held 6 March 2024 be accepted as a correct record.
804d	Cabinet - 21/02/2024	Resolved that: The Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held 21 February 2024 be accepted as a correct record.
804e	Cabinet - 28/02/2024	Resolved that: The Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held 28 February 2024 be accepted as a correct record.
804f	Governance and Audit Committee - 26/02/2024	Resolved that: The Minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee held 26 February 2024 be accepted as a correct record.
804g	Planning, Regulatory and Licensing: 28/02/2024	Resolved that: The Minutes of the Planning, Regulatory and Licensing Committee held 28 February 2024 be accepted as a correct record.
804h	Rights of Way - 28/02/2024	Resolved that: The Minutes of the Rights of Way Committee held 28 February 2024 be accepted as a correct record.

804i	Scrutiny : Social Services - 27/02/2024	<p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held 27 February 2024 be accepted as a correct record.</p>
804j	Scrutiny : Regeneration and Public Protection: 05/03/2024	<p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The Minutes of the Regeneration and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee held 5 March 2024 be accepted as a correct record.</p>
804k	Scrutiny : Learning and LGES: 04/03/2024	<p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The Minutes of the Learning and LGES Scrutiny Committee held 4 March 2024 be accepted as a correct record.</p>
804l	Scrutiny : Neighbourhood Services, Countryside and Planning: 11/03/2014	<p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The Minutes of the Neighbourhood Services, Countryside and Planning Scrutiny Committee held 11 March 2024 be accepted as a correct record.</p>
804m	Scrutiny : Corporate Support and Resources: 12/03/2024	<p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Support and Resources Scrutiny Committee held 12 March 2024 be accepted as a correct record.</p>
805	Leaders Address - State of the Council	<p>State of the Council Address</p> <p>Councillor G Thomas Leader of the Council addressed the Council.</p> <p>The Leader also advised that a full copy of his address would be made available.</p>
806	Aberfan Community Centre	<p>Declaration of Interest</p> <p>Councillor L Davies having Declared his Interest in this item left the Meeting for the consideration of this item.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council Councillor G Thomas then made the following statement on the Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Community Centre:</p> <p><i>'Between 1988 and 30th March 2015 Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Community Centre was managed by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council as trustees for the Aberfan Disaster Fund and Centre. The Centre has never been a Council asset and the Council has never 'owned' it.</i></p> <p><i>Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust Ltd – now known as Wellbeing Merthyr – was created from the Council's former Leisure Services Department.</i></p> <p><i>The belief was that by creating a Charitable Trust the service would be better protected at a time of austerity, and have more opportunity to access grant funding, in turn</i></p>

		<p><i>providing a better service for the people of Merthyr Tydfil.</i></p> <p><i>Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust Ltd. took over Leisure Services in Merthyr Tydfil on 1st April 2015.</i></p> <p><i>Following Charity Commission approval in October 2015, Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust Ltd became the Trustees of The Aberfan Disaster Fund and Centre. The transfer of Trusteeship of the building occurred in April 2016.</i></p> <p><i>In December 2023 Full Council made the decision to end the agreement with the Trust, as the result of a number of concerns in relation to the delivery of the contract.</i></p> <p><i>Over recent months the Council has been attempting to work with Wellbeing Merthyr on the managed termination of that contract, which includes the continuation of services at Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Community Centre.</i></p> <p><i>Whilst we were initially working to a date of 31st March, this has extended to 30th April 2024.</i></p> <p><i>The complication with Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Community Centre is that the building is vested in the current Trustees and does not automatically revert to the Council at the end of the current contact, therefore we face some additional legal hurdles in relation the Centre.</i></p> <p><i>To take over services there we need to have permission from the Trustees.</i></p> <p><i>Our aim and priority is to keep all leisure facilities open, including Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Community Centre, and we have reached out to Wellbeing Merthyr as the Trustees of the Centre to ensure the seamless continuation of service.</i></p> <p><i>Any decision in relation to Aberfan centre rests solely with the current Trustees so my plea to them is to please work with us to ensure a seamless transition of service for the people of Merthyr Tydfil.'</i></p> <p><i>Councillor G Thomas then led the Council through the 'Aberfan Community Centre' report and moved the recommendations detailed at Paragraphs 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 of the report.</i></p> <p><i>This motion was then seconded by Councillor M Symmonds.</i></p> <p><i>Questions were then raised by the Members on the report and were responded to in detail by the Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Geraint Morgan Solicitor.</i></p> <p><i>Councillor C T Jones then referred to the recommendation detailed at Paragraph 2.3 of the report and moved an amendment that a report be brought to the Council Meeting scheduled for 17 April 2024 giving an update to Members in relation to the due diligence exercise.</i></p>
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		<p>This amendment was seconded by Councillor B Carter.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer then gave advise on the proposed amendment.</p> <p>Councillor G Thomas then advised that he was happy to accept the amendment in relation to the recommendation at Paragraph 2.3.</p> <p>Further questions were then raised together with Members making comments on the report.</p> <p>Resolved that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The continuation of discussions with Wellbeing Merthyr to ensure that a Leisure and Library Service are provided from Aberfan after the termination of the Management Agreement be approved (b) The undertaking of a full due diligence exercise in relation to the acquisition of the Trusteeship of the Centre and surrounding land be approved (c) The presentation of a further report to Council at the Meeting scheduled for 17 April 2024 giving an update on the due diligence exercise and following receipt of Charity Commission advice be approved.
807	Pay Policy Statement 2024-2025	<p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The Pay Policy 2024-2025 (Implementation date 1 April 2024) be approved.</p>
808	Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028	<p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 be approved.</p>
809	Non-Domestic Rates - Retail, Leisure & Hospitality Rates Relief Wales 2024/25	<p>Declaration of Interest</p> <p>Councillor G Thomas having Declared his Interest in this item left the Meeting for the consideration of this item.</p> <p>Resolved that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The implementation of the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme in accordance with the rules described in the report be approved (b) Sections 47 (1) (a) and S47 (3) (Discretionary Relief) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 shall apply as regards the hereditaments described above in accordance with the rules described in relation to those hereditaments.
810	Elimination of Profit	<p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The progress to date be noted and the proposed next steps be approved.</p>

811	Update on the Remote Working Policy	<p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The report for Information be received.</p>
812	Annual Equality Report for 2022-2023	<p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The report for Information be received.</p>
813	To deal with any other urgent business or correspondence	<p>Apology</p> <p>Councillor B Carter stated that at the Council Meeting of 6th March during some difficult exchanges he made comments which might have given the appearance that he was being disrespectful to residents of the Gurnos. Councillor B Carter stated that this was not his intention at all and he had the greatest of respect for all Communities of Merthyr Tydfil and he apologised wholeheartedly for any offence caused by those comments.</p>
814	To receive communications from Their Worship the Mayor	<p>No Communications were received from Their Worship the Mayor.</p>