

VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting held on 29th September, 2014.

Present: Councillor Howard Hamilton (Mayor); Councillors Janice Birch, Rhiannon Birch, Jonathan Bird, Bronwen Brooks, Lis Burnett, Philip Clarke, Geoff Cox, Claire Curtis, Rob Curtis, Pamela Drake, John Drysdale, Kate Edmunds, Stuart Egan, Christopher Elmore, Christopher Franks, Keith Geary, Eric Hacker, Val Hartrey, Keith Hatton, Nic Hodges, Hunter Jarvie, Gwyn John, Fred Johnson, Dr. Ian Johnson, Maureen Kelly Owen, Peter King, Kevin Mahoney, Anne Moore, Neil Moore, Andrew Parker, Bob Penrose, Anthony Powell, Rhona Probert, Gwyn Roberts, John Thomas, Ray Thomas, Rhodri Traherne, Margaret Wilkinson, Clive Williams, Christopher Williams, Edward Williams and Mark Wilson.

431 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE -

These were received from Councillors Richard Bertin, Jeff James, Audrey Preston and Steffan Wiliam.

432 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -

Councillors Gwyn John and Edward Williams declared an interest in Agenda Item 13(a): Update on the Implementation of the Llantwit Learning Community on the grounds that they were Local Authority representatives on the Governing Body of Llantwit Major Comprehensive School.

Sian Davies, Managing Director left the meeting for the duration of the following item on the grounds that the purpose of the Special Meeting held on 2nd September, 2014 had been to discuss matters directly relating to her terms and conditions of service.

It was also

RESOLVED - T H A T Agenda Item No. 13(d): Insurance Indemnity to Returning Officer and Election Staff would also be dealt with in the absence of the Managing Director, given her interest as the Council's Returning Officer.

433 MINUTES -

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th June, 2014 and the Special Meeting held on 2nd September, 2014 were approved as a correct record.

434 INSURANCE INDEMNITY TO RETURNING OFFICER AND ELECTION STAFF (REF) -

RESOLVED - T H A T the proposals of the Cabinet, as set out in Minute No. C2423, 28th July, 2014, be approved.

435 ANNOUNCEMENTS -

The Mayor made the following announcements:

- (i) On 1 July 2014, he had the honour of greeting their Royal Highnesses, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall when they visited the Galilee Chapel in Llantwit Major.
- (ii) On 12 July 2014 he had represented the Authority at the Bridgend Show.
- (iii) On 21 July 2014 he had represented the Authority at the Royal Welsh Show.
- (iv) He had attended several events over the last few months in connection with the commemoration of World War 1.
- (v) On 17 July 2014 the Vale of Glamorgan Council became the first local authority in Wales to protect space as a Centenary Field at Alexandra Gardens in Penarth.
- (vi) On 3 August 2014, St Augustine's Church in Penarth had held a service of commemoration and re-dedication of the Roll of Honour.
- (vii) On 4 August 2014 there had been a National Service of Commemoration at Llandaff Cathedral.
- (viii) At the end of August, he and the Mayoress had visited the Council's twin town in Rheinfelden, Germany.
- (ix) He had been proud to represent the Authority on 4 September 2014 at the Celtic Manor at a reception hosted by HRH Prince of Wales for the Wales NATO Summit and had had the pleasure of meeting the President of the United States.
- (x) Finally, he had represented the Authority at the 125th Anniversary Service for Merthyr Dyfan Cemetery, Barry.

436 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC -

The following questions had been received and were replied to as shown below, in accordance with the Council's agreed protocol:

(i) **Question from Mrs. C. Awoyemi**

As a mother to two young children who will be starting school in the next year I am concerned about the lack of opportunities for them to use the Welsh language outside school and to socialise through the medium of Welsh.

Therefore I would like to ask the Council the following question. What percentage of funding within the existing budget is allocated by the Vale of Glamorgan Council

towards Welsh medium provision outside school hours for children between the ages of four and eleven living in the Vale of Glamorgan?

Reply From the Leader

The Council provides, and supports, an extensive programme of activities for children aged 4 to 11 outside school hours and continues to review the programme. The following information outlines the activities available and being developed. We are not currently able to provide the percentage funding figure.

In 2012/13, the Council gave assistance and financial support to set-up a Welsh unit at St Aubin's pre-school in Penarth, which provides both pre-school and wraparound care for children aged 4+; this support was replicated in Cylch Bethesda and Ysgol Nant Talwg.

During the last year, the Council part-funded an individual to become a registered childminder in the Penarth area, who is due to become registered with Care and Social Service Inspectorate Wales. This individual would be able to offer childcare to children aged 4-11 through the medium of Welsh.

In this financial year, the Council has provided both assistance and a £6000 grant to set up an afterschool club, Clwb Y Ddraig, in Ysgol Dewi Sant to support the club until it becomes self-sufficient.

Meetings have taken place with Mentor Bro Morgannwg to discuss supporting Welsh medium childcare for children aged 4-11. A questionnaire was distributed via schools in July 2014. A meeting is due to take place in October to discuss the next steps, with a view to extending the number of weeks offered to children in an existing holiday club based in Barry.

Many of the activities available to children and young people outside of school hours are run by the local schools, clubs and the URDD. The Urdd receives £10,000 from the Council through the Voluntary Action Scheme and £10,000 from the Youth Service Welsh Government Revenue Grant.

Through the Dragon Sport scheme we assist local schools and their volunteers to deliver extra-curricular sports activities. This scheme is offered to all primary schools in the Vale, and five Welsh medium schools participate in the scheme. The Council offers training and resources as part of this scheme.

The URDD oversees a programme of sports activities in the Cardiff & Vale area that offer a range of sports opportunities through the medium of Welsh for children aged 5-11. These opportunities are either delivered directly by the URDD or through linking with local sports clubs.

Individual schools also offer a range of activities, such as Street Dancing for Years 2-4 in Sant Baruc. Pen Y Garth run an after-school care club and Sant Curig runs an after-school care club for pupils from the age of 4-11, offering a range of activities.

Every library stocks Welsh language books for both children and adults and has started to order children's talking books. Barry and Penarth libraries have a range of Welsh magazines. The library website is a useful resource for children of all ages. Visits to the libraries give children an opportunity to meet Welsh Language authors such as Eurgain Haf and Dewi Pws. A range of projects have been run in conjunction with schools, including a creative writing project, creating Welsh short stories inspired by some of the library's historical photographs of the Vale. Each Saturday the library service runs an Amser Stori for younger children at a number of libraries and Caffi Cymraeg at Barry Library.

(ii) Question from Mrs. N. Harkus

In January of this year the council leader made an urgent report to cabinet relating to a proposed community garden and nature area at Cemetery Approach, Barry.

The Cabinet agreed to set aside a budget to permit clearance of the sites, and that delegated authority be given to council officials which included:-

1. to agree a lease between this Council and Barry Town Council, and
2. to submit an 'Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant Scheme' application in connection with this project.

I would be grateful if the council leader could tell me what the up to date position is with regard to the site clearance, the lease, and the grant application.

Reply from the Leader

Could I firstly thank Mrs Harkus for her question.

Since the Cabinet meeting of 27th January 2014, Members and officers from both this Council and Barry Town Council have been working together to submit an 'Armed Forces Covenant Grant' bid, to develop the two sites at Cemetery Road into Centenary Fields.

Following a number of project board meetings between the two Councils, which I personally Chaired, a joint grant application for up to £250,000 was agreed and submitted on 19th September 2014.

This Council had already made £20,000 available for initial land clearance work and this commenced in September with a scheduled completion date of the end of October 2014. Our officers are also progressing a planning application for the project in readiness for the Centenary Fields development scheme to start later this financial year.

When the position in respect to the grant is known, the joint project board will meet to discuss the necessary lease arrangements aimed at transferring the two parcels of land to Barry Town Council.

I must say that I am pleased with the progress made on this project to date, which not only demonstrates this Council's willingness to involve the local community in the future use of this land, but also our excellent relationship with Barry Town Council.

We expect to hear of the success or otherwise of our grant application by the end of October 2014.

437 NOTICE OF MOTION -

The following Notice of Motion (submitted by Councillors Dr. Ian Johnson and Chris Franks) had been included on the agenda for discussion:

"That this Council:

Notes the importance of the Vale of Glamorgan's libraries for community activities and their contribution to improving adult and child literacy, and therefore expresses concern at proposals that will lead to an over-reliance on volunteer staff and cuts to hours in this well liked service."

In introducing the Motion, Councillor Dr. Johnson referred to the proposed reduction of library services in the Vale of Glamorgan as having twice been discussed at Cabinet and by the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee, but to this being the first opportunity for Full Council to debate this issue.

He considered the Vale of Glamorgan Library Service to be held in high regard with the number of active users in the Vale substantially higher than the Welsh or UK average. He quoted the level of active borrowers and physical visits per 1,000 population as being approximately 20% higher in the Vale than the United Kingdom.

He alluded to 96% of Vale library users as being of the view that they received a good service and 95% of them being satisfied with the opening hours – compared to an average of 83% and 90% respectively across the rest of Wales.

He stated that it was well-recognised that libraries were one of the first services to be cut by local government when facing tough times, and alluded to the precedent set in England, where the number of libraries, including mobile libraries, had reduced significantly.

Councillor Dr. Johnson referred to the County Library, in Barry as facing a 22% cut in hours, making library access "almost impossible" for anybody working outside the centre of Barry. He referred to similar cuts being proposed in Penarth, Cowbridge and Llantwit Major Town Libraries.

'Community-run' libraries, as suggested, for Dinas Powys, Sully, St Athan, Wenvoe and Rhoose would, he suggested, rely on some 50 volunteers per facility to prove viable. Whilst he understood there to have been a positive response to requests for volunteers made in the questionnaire distributed before Christmas 2013, in the light of recent announcements, he felt that Q21 of the questionnaire must be considered to be misleading.

He quoted the following statement which preceded Q21:

'In order to extend and improve our library services, we may need to increase the number of volunteers who support paid members of staff. Volunteers would not replace paid members of staff.'

He felt volunteers who were signing up were looking to 'improve' the library service, not put people out of a job.

Referring to the forthcoming draft Welsh Government budget and the likelihood of significant cuts he understood that each local authority in Wales had to make their own spending decisions and he was not trying to make the case for maintaining every single service in the Vale, at all times. Where improvements could be made to services, he hoped they were and where efficiencies could be introduced, he hoped likewise. However, he did not accept the premise that library services should be at the 'front of the queue' in terms of cuts.

He asked that the Council recognise the importance of library services and reject the proposals for cuts in opening hours and community services at the expense of experienced and well-trained staff and he moved the Motion as submitted.

In moving the Motion, Councillor Dr. Johnson requested that it be the subject of a Recorded Vote (this being supported by means of the relevant number of Members as required under the Constitution).

Councillor Franks, in seconding the Motion, referred to a range of reports to Cabinet and the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee where there had been an opportunity to provide answers to the many questions asked by the public and the staff. However, he felt that, to date, there had simply been bland responses and assurances.

He queried what would happen if there were inadequate number of volunteers and/or the flow of volunteers was not maintained.

He also suggested that the questionnaire had been 'flawed' with residents being misled when told that volunteers would not replace professional staff. He queried whether professional staff, with years of training could be adequately replaced by well-meaning volunteers.

He asked as to the reaction of the Welsh Government to these proposals and, more importantly, the concerns of residents.

Councillor Franks also sought clarification regarding the number of people who had offered to volunteer. Referring to the large number of library closures in England, he asked whether the choice facing residents was volunteer-run facilities or closure.

He referred to the Administration as previously pledging that libraries would not close and asked what "Plan B" existed.

In concluding, he felt all Members understood the financial pressures facing the Council. However, he referred to budget reports for the previous year showing that the Council under-spent by £2.5m and received an extra £2.5m in income than anticipated (making a total of an additional £5m of resources available).

Councillor John Thomas, Leader of the Conservative Group, indicated that the Group supported the Motion before Council. Personally, he was very concerned regarding the proposed relocation of St. Athan Library, given his view that St. Athan was probably one of the most deprived communities outside Barry. He also suggested that consideration could be given as to whether Section 106 monies from developments could be utilised.

Councillor Clarke echoed the comments made by the two Plaid Cymru members and also suggested that the legality of the questionnaire issued to staff might be capable of being challenged.

The Deputy Leader, as the Cabinet Member responsible for Libraries, indicated that the numerous questions raised by Councillor Franks would have been noted by officers present and responses would be provided. He suggested that no Councillor in the Chamber would ever have envisaged such difficult decisions having to be made. As far as the consultation exercise was concerned, he alluded to the Library Strategy having been reconsidered by Cabinet, when a number of issues which had been raised were recognised. He considered the Motion before Council to be somewhat premature, given that no decision had actually been made. The Council would be going out to consultation with regards to three specific issues, viz.:

- relocating the St. Athan library
- reductions in opening hours
- a community approach to service delivery.

He alluded to the large number of libraries closing throughout the country and reminded Members of the £32 million savings the Council was required to find over the next three years. He queried what alternative proposals Plaid Cymru might have, given their opposition to various savings proposed.

The Deputy Leader moved an amendment to the Motion to the effect that, after the word "literacy", the remainder of the Motion be deleted and replaced by the words "and acknowledges the innovative steps this Council is taking in trying to secure the future of the library service in the Vale of Glamorgan."

At this point of the meeting, Council agreed to suspend Standing Orders in order that the Monitoring Officer could advise Members whether the amendment as moved contravened Standing Orders. She advised Members that the amendment was valid.

The Leader formally seconded the amendment to the Motion.

He reiterated the fact that no decision had yet been taken and that the three specific issues referred to above would be the subject of a consultation exercise. Despite the figure being mentioned by certain Members, he was unaware of any specific mention

in a report to a total of 50 volunteers being required for each facility. Referring to the query as to the Welsh Government stance on this matter, they had not commented. He reminded Members that the Council was not the only Council in Wales reviewing its library provision. He also reiterated the fact that it was not the intention to close libraries.

He referred to earlier efforts to gauge interest from Town and Community Councils in providing a mobile library service and to the fact that Barry Town Council had been the only Council to express an interest in such a proposal. Commenting as to a 'Plan B', he considered there to be no need for such a plan given a decision had yet to be taken.

He reminded Members that the underspend alluded to by Councillor Franks had been clarified in the Statement of Accounts, which had been submitted to Cabinet and each Scrutiny Committee.

The possible utilisation of Section 106 monies would be looked at. Other possibilities for service delivery could include the Council working with voluntary groups or the setting up of companies (as, for example, in Rhondda Cynon Taf). He acknowledged there was still some room for manoeuvre and for the Council to attempt innovative ways to keep libraries open. As such, he reiterated his view that the original Motion before Council was premature.

Asked by Councillor Powell whether, as mover of the original Motion, Councillor Dr. Johnson was prepared to accept the amendment, Councillor Dr. Johnson indicated he was not.

Councillor Dr. Johnson referred to the series of questions asked by Councillor Franks. He would await full responses being made available to all Members. He considered there to be issues regarding capacity of any volunteer structure and alluded to a service model in Wiltshire where 40/50 volunteers were required for each facility. He was sure residents of St. Athan would make their views known regarding the proposed relocation of the library. He understood that there might well be issues relating to the use of Section 106 monies, but urged Cabinet to consider such a use. He reiterated his view that Q21 of the questionnaire issued to staff to be misleading.

Responding to the Leader's comments, he alluded to Council Tax having been over-claimed by £2.5 million the previous year and to the Plaid Cymru Group only having opposed an increase totalling £800,000. He also commented that Council Tax only represented 25% of the Council's total revenue.

In conclusion, Councillor Dr. Johnson indicated he would await the consultation exercise but was strongly against the proposals as they stood.

At that point, a Recorded Vote took place in respect of the amendment to the original Motion, with voting taking place as follows and it being

RESOLVED - T H A T the amended Motion be approved.

For the Amended Motion	Against the Amended Motion	Abstain
Councillor	Councillor	Councillor
Mrs. M.E.J. Birch	J.C. Bird	
Ms. R. Birch	P.J. Clarke	
Ms. B.E. Brooks	G.A. Cox	
L. Burnett	C.P. Franks	
Mrs. C.L. Curtis	Mrs. V.M. Hartrey	
R.F. Curtis	K. Hatton	
Mrs. P. Drake	N.P. Hodges	
J. Drysdale	T.H. Jarvie	
Ms. K. Edmunds	Dr. I.J. Johnson	
S.C. Egan	Mrs. M. Kelly Owen	
C.P.J. Elmore	K.P. Mahoney	
K.J. Geary	A. Parker	
E. Hacker	R.A. Penrose	
H.C. Hamilton	J.W. Thomas	
G. John	R.P. Thomas	
F.T. Johnson	R.L. Traherne	
P. King	A.C. Williams	
Mrs. A.J. Moore	C.J. Williams	
N. Moore		
A.G. Powell		
Ms. R.F. Probert		
G. Roberts		
Mrs. M.R. Wilkinson		
E. Williams		
M.R. Wilson		
25	18	0

The amended Motion having been carried, a further recorded vote took place with the Motion as amended now being the Substantive Motion on which the vote was taken, it being

RESOLVED - T H A T the following Motion be approved :

“That this Council:

Notes the importance of the Vale of Glamorgan’s libraries for community activities and their contribution to improving adult and child literacy and acknowledges the innovative steps this Council is taking in trying to secure the future of the library service in the Vale of Glamorgan.”

For the Motion	Against the Motion	Abstain
Councillor	Councillor	Councillor
Mrs. M.E.J. Birch	J.C. Bird	
Ms. R. Birch	P.J. Clarke	
Ms. B.E. Brooks	G.A. Cox	

L. Burnett	C.P. Franks	
Mrs. C.L. Curtis	Mrs. V.M. Hartrey	
R.F. Curtis	K. Hatton	
Mrs. P. Drake	N.P. Hodges	
J. Drysdale	T.H. Jarvie	
Ms. K. Edmunds	Dr. I.J. Johnson	
S.C. Egan	Mrs. M. Kelly Owen	
C.P.J. Elmore	K.P. Mahoney	
K.J. Geary	A. Parker	
E. Hacker	R.A. Penrose	
H.C. Hamilton	J.W. Thomas	
G. John	R.P. Thomas	
F.T. Johnson	R.L. Traherne	
P. King	A.C. Williams	
Mrs. A.J. Moore	C.J. Williams	
N. Moore		
A.G. Powell		
Ms. R.F. Probert		
G. Roberts		
Mrs. M.R. Wilkinson		
E. Williams		
M.R. Wilson		
25	18	0

438 WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION'S ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE WILLIAMS REPORT (LEADER) -

The report of the Commission on Public Services Governance and Delivery - the Williams Report - was published in January 2014. It opined that there were significant problems relating to the scale and sustainability of local authorities and proposed that the number of Councils be cut from the current 22 to between 10 and 12. Among the new Councils would be a merged Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Council. A Welsh Government White Paper, Reforming Local Government, was published in July 2014 and broadly endorsed the Williams Report. Welsh Government was consulting on the White Paper, with responses required by 1st October 2014.

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) in July 2014 presented an alternative proposal. The proposal, in summary, involved the creation of combined authorities that would plan and deliver services at a regional level. Representation would be from each of the Councils in the area, possibly with other stakeholders, e.g. Welsh Government. The proposal was broadly based on the regional combined authorities in England.

The Leader referred to discussions he had held with the other Group Leaders as the model alluded to above was not considered to be a reasonable alternative to Williams. In any event, he informed Members that, at a WLGA meeting on 26th September, 2014 it had been decided not to proceed with such an approach and

the Paper before the WLGA was simply noted. Given the change in circumstances, he moved (with the Deputy Leader seconding the proposal) that the WLGA decision not to proceed be noted.

RESOLVED – T H A T the decision of the WLGA not to proceed with its alternative approach to the Williams Report proposals be noted.

439 WELSH GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER: 'REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT': COUNCIL RESPONSE (LEADER) -

The Commission on Public Services Governance and Delivery - the Williams Commission - was set up in April 2013. In August 2013 the Council submitted detailed evidence to the Commission, arguing for its continued existence as a Council and outlining the ways in which collaboration with other bodies could enable it to address its challenges (attached as Appendix A to the report to Council). In January 2014, the Commission published its report and recommendations – "Commission on Public Services Governance and Delivery Document" - which included a merger of existing local authorities, including the merger of the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Councils. In a meeting of the Council in March 2014, the following was resolved: "That this Council rejects the Williams Commission proposal to merge it with Cardiff City Council and considers that the Vale of Glamorgan Council is a viable and successful authority which should continue in its present form".

A Welsh Government "White Paper, Reforming Local Government" (attached as Appendix B to the report) was published in July 2014 and broadly endorsed the Williams report. Welsh Government was consulting on the White Paper, with responses required by 1st October 2014. Appendix C to the report before Council was the Council's draft response to the questions posed in the White Paper.

On 18th September 2014, Welsh Government published a document entitled "Invitation to Principal Local Authorities in Wales to Submit Proposals for Voluntary Merger" (attached as Appendix D to the report). This document gave more detail in respect of the proposal outlined in the White Paper, enabling Councils to submit bids for voluntary mergers which would allow them to merge sooner than Welsh Government's legislative timetable otherwise provided for. Initial Expressions of Interest for voluntary mergers were required by 28th November 2014.

The main points from the White Paper response to Williams were:

- Broadly supported the Williams Commission proposals.
- Proposed 12 councils with the Vale of Glamorgan merging with Cardiff (and Bridgend with Neath Port Talbot; Rhondda Cynon Taff with Merthyr).
- Proposals were not costed and there was a serious error in the original paper which stated highest estimate of the cost of merger as roughly 0.5% of annual Local Government expenditure, this should have been 5%, if not nearer 7.5%.
- Encouraged voluntary mergers of councils and proposed incentives.
- Established a proposed timetable for legislation and implementation.

- Welsh Government to consider a review of Town and Community Councils. However, Welsh Government did not want to recreate a two-tier system of local government.
- Stated there needed to be a change to funding mechanisms, mentioned nothing firm on council tax impact but hinted that local government might have to pay for the cost of reform.
- Two bills were proposed. A first bill would be introduced January 2015 (expected Royal Assent November 2015), dealing with voluntary mergers and other preparatory matters. The second bill, planned to be drafted by Autumn 2015, set out the proposals for the new merged councils. This bill would not be introduced into the Assembly until after the May 2016 elections.
- A staff commission to be set up (and put on a statutory basis by the second bill).
- The then Minister for Local Government concluded her foreword to the White Paper by stating “Local Government must take the lead in designing its own destiny. We must work together, in partnership, over the coming months to build Local Authorities designed for Wales, in Wales”.

The paper stated that Councils could make alternative proposals but these would need to be supported by all Councils directly and indirectly affected, particularly if seeking to make an exceptional case over alignment with health and police areas. It was also indicated that the Welsh Government would wish to see a commitment to voluntary mergers in this case.

The document “Invitation to Principal Local Authorities in Wales to Submit Proposals for Voluntary Merger” alluded to above set out a process for voluntary mergers. Expressions of interest in a voluntary merger should be submitted by 28th November, 2014; fully developed cases by June 2015; statements of confirmation of intention to proceed by November 2015. Welsh Government would consider these and, by February 2016, develop the necessary subordinate legislation for approval by the Assembly.

If approved, there would be no elections in May 2017 for Councils voluntarily merging and terms of existing Councillors would be extended to May 2018. The Shadow Council would be established in October 2017 with vesting day 1st April 2018.

The Second Bill would be drafted by Autumn 2015. This bill would establish the new merged Councils. It would not be introduced into the Assembly until after May 2016, with Royal Assent expected in the Summer of 2017.

Local elections to existing Councils would be held in May 2017, for a term of three years (for merging Councils). In May 2019, the elections for the new merged Councils would be held for a three year term. Councils would be shadow until vesting day of 1st April 2020.

The report to Council outlined the available options for merger.

Options for Merger

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's current position was that it would wish to continue as a self-standing unitary council. This section of the report, however, focussed on the implications for the Vale and its residents should a merger become inevitable or desirable.

The Welsh Government currently proposed that the Vale be merged with Cardiff. A number of other options existed, subject of course to the willingness of alternative partner councils. The options could include merger with our immediate neighbours Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT), Bridgend and Cardiff or even including multiple authorities from further afield.

Merger with RCT included some of the disadvantages that merger with Cardiff represented as the two Councils were so different in size and identity (a matter explored in more detail below). Merger with multiple authorities could severely reduce the responsiveness of a new Council to local needs, impacting adversely on Vale residents. Consequently, these two options had not been considered further and focus was on a potential merger with Bridgend or Cardiff.

Bridgend and the Vale Council areas were of a similar size. Bridgend had a population of over 139,000 and the Vale just under 127,000. The resultant new Council would have a population of circa 266,000 which was large enough to benefit from economies of scale and provide resilience. The combined population would be greater than Monmouthshire and Newport (237,000) and Conway and Denbighshire (209,000), which were Councils proposed in the Welsh Government response to the Williams report. In addition, it would also compare favourably with Anglesey and Gwynedd (191,000) and Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire (198,000). It would also be larger than the two of the proposed stand-alone councils of Carmarthen (184,000) and Powys (133,000).

Cardiff had a population of over 345,000 and a combined Vale / Cardiff Council would have a population of circa 472,000. When assessed against the definite recommendations of the Williams Commission, this would be significantly larger than the next largest council following mergers, namely, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Torfaen (population of 340,000). Indeed, even standing alone, Cardiff with a population of over 345,000 would be the largest Council in Wales, when assessed in terms of population.

The similarity in size between Bridgend and the Vale was more likely to lead to an equitable distribution of resources across the area of the new Council than would be the case should the merging councils be significantly different in size and, consequently, influence.

In addition, where the size of merging councils was similar, a new Council was more likely to adopt best practice from whichever of its predecessor Councils demonstrated it. Where a single large Council dominated, there was a significant risk that the practice that is adopted was the one carried out by the majority from the dominant Council and this quite frequently would not be the most effective and efficient means of delivery.

If the Vale merged with Cardiff there was a real risk that the Council could be seen as overlarge and remote from the people it served. In order to overcome this, it could be necessary to set in place decision and service delivery mechanisms that enabled the council to be more responsive to local areas' needs. This would be at a financial cost eroding any savings made from scale of delivery.

A merged Bridgend / Vale Council, whilst sufficiently large to be sustainable, would not be so large that it became too distant from the citizens it served. It would not be necessary to institute elaborate sub-structures for service delivery to try and preserve some sense of place and make service delivery sensitive to the needs of the local population. The size would also mean the Council would be able to innovate and yet be nimble enough to implement that change quickly.

The nature of the areas of Bridgend and the Vale were similar, in that both had significant rural areas, small distinct towns and villages, coastal towns and administrative centres and shared a Heritage Coast. This contrasted starkly to Cardiff, which was a densely populated urban conurbation with approx. 2,500 people per square kilometre. In contrast the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend had about 500 people per square kilometre.

Also of importance was the fact that the Vale of Glamorgan had a unique identity when assessed in a regional context, performing a valuable function in terms of leisure, recreation and food production. It was predominantly rural and of its 33,097 hectares, 85% (28,132 hectares) was agricultural land. The preservation of agricultural land was essential in terms of protecting food supply for future generations.

The Vale had 53 km of coastline, of which 19 km was Heritage Coast that connected with the Heritage Coast within Bridgend. It had a very similar housing need to Bridgend and the town centres of both the Vale and Bridgend faced competition from new forms of retailing and the draw of the capital city of Cardiff.

Both Bridgend and the Vale Councils also generated significant commuter traffic by road and rail into the Capital city and day trip traffic to areas such as Barry Island, Porthcawl and the coastal strip.

In view of the similarities with Bridgend, for the Vale of Glamorgan, there was likely to be more commonality in the nature of the challenges, opportunities and problems experienced and nature of service delivery and key policies with Bridgend than with Cardiff. This, in turn, was more likely to drive efficiencies in service delivery.

It was also more likely to assist in preserving the identity of the area as well as promoting regeneration activity; formulating and implementing planning policy; and delivering transport services. For the reasons outlined, and the geographical context, merger with Bridgend was seen as a more sustainable option, and a means of ensuring that the rural characteristics of both Bridgend and the Vale were protected and enhanced for the benefit of the wider region.

There were particularly strong links between the population in the western Vale with Bridgend, in terms of access to services, including health, retailing and recreation. It was however recognised that to the east of the Vale there were also very strong links with Cardiff, e.g. Penarth for similar purposes.

Many of the residents in the Vale travelled to Cardiff for work and social activity. Consequently, merging with Cardiff could bestow an advantage in terms of transportation and highway planning. There were several strong public transport links, both rail and bus, between the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff, as there were with other council areas surrounding Cardiff.

A merged Bridgend / Vale Council would also be within the Cardiff “travel to work” area and the merger could assist in transport/highway planning for the existing Bridgend and Vale areas. The Vale of Glamorgan railway line linked Bridgend through the Vale to Cardiff. Bus Services similarly also linked Bridgend and the Vale to Cardiff (e.g. the X2 service via the A48 and the 302/303 that linked Bridgend with the rural Vale, Barry and Cardiff).

With the advent of the Cardiff Capital City region, the importance of transport, economic development and infrastructure was already being driven forward at a regional level and the Vale merging with Bridgend was not, as a consequence, seen as disadvantageous. Indeed, the commonality of issues between Bridgend and the Vale could be viewed as a strength and a key opportunity. The new merged Council would also need to work with Cardiff and this resultant collaboration could be more beneficial than just a merger of Cardiff with the Vale.

With regard to education the Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff and Bridgend were in the Central South Consortium, together with RCT and Merthyr. Consequently, there were strong links between the Councils in education. Bridgend and the Vale both had 65 schools, with about 22,000 pupils. This compared to Cardiff which had 136 schools and about 52,000 pupils. Schools were structured in a like way in all three Councils.

Performance and prospects for improvement following the last full Estyn inspections of the Vale and Bridgend were judged by Estyn to be of the same level (“adequate”) whereas Cardiff had further progress to make in this area (“is in need of significant improvement”).

Bridgend and the Vale were in the same Police Basic Command Unit (BCU) and consequently a merger of the Vale and Bridgend councils would facilitate joint working with the police on community safety and related issues. A merger with Cardiff would mean a new Cardiff / Vale would need to work with two BCUs (one of which would be partial) unless the Police re-organised the command structure.

A merger with Cardiff would mean the new merged Council would exactly match the footprint of the Cardiff / Vale UHB. This would make integration of social care and health less complex. A significant amount of progress had already been made in this area, including setting up of joint posts.

With regard to integration programmes for Social Services and Health, merger with Bridgend would mean that the local authority area would straddle two Health Boards. Under the current NHS arrangements a new Bridgend / Vale Council would need to work with Cardiff and Vale UHB and with Abertawe Bro Morgannwg UHB as well as other councils within the footprint. It should be noted, however that:

- Major hospital services were already planned on a regional scale through the South Wales Programme
- Significant numbers of Western Vale residents depended on the provision of hospital and some other health services in Bridgend, which was covered by a neighbouring Health Board, Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board
- For community and primary health services (the most important relationship for adult social care), both Cardiff / Vale and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg UHBs operated a locality structure within which the Vale and Bridgend had locality status. This is to ensure that services are properly grounded in matching local need and local service. For example, there were considerable demographic and social differences between the current Vale locality and Cardiff South.

The Cardiff / Vale UHB would need to work with two Councils (as opposed to one under the current Welsh Government proposal). However, in reality, health and social care issues in Cardiff and the Vale were already different to some extent. With regard to Abertawe Bro Morgannwg UHB, the Welsh Government proposals would require them to work with two councils. Depending on the future shape of Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Councils, this could remain as two or increase to three. Consequently, a merger of Bridgend with the Vale should not pose insurmountable difficulties to the two affected health boards

The management structures of Bridgend and the Vale were close in size and had similar cultures. This again differed significantly from Cardiff which, as a capital city, had a large Corporate Management Team and the significantly different culture of a major city Council.

The Vale Council already had established relationships and joint working with both Cardiff and Bridgend and this would assist in a merger with either Council. Bridgend and the Vale shared a single Internal Audit Service, which had proved to be very successful. The Vale's Civil Parking Enforcement role was provided by officers working for Bridgend. There were also similar examples between the Vale and Cardiff. The Vale worked extensively with Cardiff and a number of other authorities in Wales on waste and recycling projects, both as part of Prosiect Gwyrdd and, most recently for Bio-degradable Waste treatment. The Vale shared senior management post in both Mental Health and Learning Disability Services with Cardiff.

Prior to 1st April 1996 some services were delivered by South Glamorgan County Council. Consequently, some activities within the Vale were organised in a similar way to Cardiff. However, this had diminished significantly over the years, and both Councils would have changed service delivery to more accurately reflect the differing needs of their populations.

There was a perception on the part of many people in communities in the Vale that decisions made by the former South Glamorgan Council were Cardiff-centric and that the Vale suffered from under-investment. Examples include a lack of school investment, particularly in the secondary sector, coupled with at that time having no Welsh medium secondary school in the Vale, and under-investment in highway infrastructure.

Since the 1996 reorganisation and the establishment of the current Vale Council, many of these deficiencies had been remedied. The Council had established a Welsh medium secondary school and had invested substantially in the schools infrastructure, building a new secondary school in Cowbridge and new integrated educational and community facilities in Penarth, with further plans in place for Llantwit Major. It had also addressed infrastructure issues in Barry in particular, such as regeneration and public realm improvements in the Town Centre and at Barry Island. The Council had also focused on the social-economic needs of its rural areas, with Creative Rural Communities successful in attracting funding year after year for a huge number and range of projects due to its close relationship with rural communities and understanding of their specific needs.

Conclusion

As alluded to above, the Council's draft response to the White Paper was attached as Appendix B to the report to Council. The White Paper included reference to a number of issues outside that of reorganisation of local government – they included engaging with communities, improving service performance, strengthening democracy and improving scrutiny. It was assumed in the White Paper that merging Councils would enable these things to happen, although there was no actual evidence that this was so. The draft response to the White Paper, therefore, took the opportunity of making this point as an introductory statement before providing responses to the questions asked in the White Paper itself. However, for consistency with the format of the White Paper consultation this was repeated at the end at question 26.

The Council's case remained that the Vale was sustainable as currently formed. However, with regard to potential options for merger, there were links between the population in the Vale and Cardiff, for example for work and social activities. Nevertheless, this was also true of the other local authority areas surrounding Cardiff, including Bridgend, Caerphilly, RCT and Newport.

There could be more complexity with regard to social care/health integration if Bridgend and the Vale were to merge. However, this could be overcome and it would not make sense to form a new Council based on just a single service area (social care) to the detriment of all other services such as education, regeneration and strategic planning.

A new Bridgend / Vale Council could still work closely with Cardiff (e.g. on the new shared Regulatory Services), Neath Port Talbot, Swansea or any other of the surrounding councils. Indeed, whatever the shape of the new merged Councils, cross-boundary and cross-organisational collaboration would be essential in the

future in order to achieve the Council's objectives, e.g. on transport, education, social services, health and the city region agenda.

Similarly, a new merged Cardiff / Vale would also need to work with surrounding Councils. However, a Cardiff / Vale Council would be significantly greater in size, and, quite possibly influence, than any of its prospective partners. This disparity would not assist in equal partnership working.

There would be no detriment to Cardiff resulting from a Bridgend / Vale merger as the capital city was already of a sufficient size (population over 345,000) to benefit from scale. Where it would be beneficial to achieve even greater scale economies or where a regional approach was desirable, this arrangement would offer an improved opportunity for collaboration between a merged Bridgend / Vale and Cardiff, as both of these Councils would be, and are currently, within the same city region area. Additionally, Cardiff would not be distracted by the massive organisational disruption caused by a merger and could focus on its important role as the capital city of Wales and improving the prosperity of the city region.

As a merger with Cardiff was the current Welsh Government proposal, the issue of detriment to Bridgend of such a merger was not a major consideration under the Welsh Government White Paper.

In speaking to the comprehensive report before Council, the Leader indicated he had held meetings with each of the Leaders of the Council Groups in order that all views could be taken into account. He felt that the Group Leaders generally shared the same view.

He referred to the Council having previously resolved that it did not wish to merge with Cardiff. This stance was reiterated in the recommendations contained in the report, as was the belief that the Vale of Glamorgan Council was a sustainable Council in its own right and urged the Welsh Government to allow the Vale of Glamorgan Council to continue as a stand-alone Council. However, the Leader reminded Members that the Welsh Government had said they do intend to go forward with merger proposals generally, whether or not Councils co-operated. As such, the draft Council response to the White Paper made the Council's "stand-alone" position clear, but stated that, should that position not be accepted by Welsh Government, then delegated authority given to the Managing Director in consultation with himself, to enter into pre-emptive negotiations for a voluntary merger with other Councils that shared the same values and cultures as the Vale of Glamorgan. It should be regarded as a holding position.

It was also proposed that Welsh Government be asked to confirm what arrangements and financial support were available to the Council should it proceed with an "early adopter" approach. Whilst Welsh Government documentation had implied that there could be funding available, the level of such, if any, was far from clear. He also pointed out that the Welsh Local Government Association had taken the view that money for early mergers should not be "top-sliced" from local government. If Authorities decided to go forward as a voluntary merger, then that should not be at the disadvantage of other Authorities' funding.

As set out in the recommendations, all Group Leaders would continue to be kept fully informed of progress, or otherwise and there would a further report to Cabinet and any subsequent Council meeting (including calling Extraordinary Council Meetings if deemed necessary, for example, before 28th November 2014).

The Leader formally moved the report, it being seconded by the Deputy Leader.

Councillor Dr. Ian Johnson referred to the Plaid Cymru Group as being broadly in agreement with the recommendations in the report, albeit they considered the position now facing Local Authorities to be a direct result of Labour Party policies.

The Plaid Cymru Group considered the disadvantages of reorganisation to be very clear. These would include unsettled staff, insecurity surrounding jobs, senior management being distracted when it came to service delivery and the uncertain costs of reorganisation.

He found it difficult to support proposals for a merger with Bridgend County Borough Council, as opposed to a stand-alone Council in the Vale as he could see no genuine advantage for Vale citizens in doing so. He questioned which services would be improved, that could not already be delivered in collaboration.

He allude to the Council having already rejected a merger with Cardiff, which he considered to be with good reason, given a recent critical Wales Audit Office Report, which had strongly criticised the political leadership of that Council.

In concluding, the Plaid Cymru Group did not consider that the Williams Commission proposals provided the answer to the present problems facing local government. More radical solutions, including, for example, the footprint of a Cardiff Capital Region might make sense, with the Vale and Valleys “counter-balancing the power of Cardiff.” In addition, the possibility of additional powers for Town and Community Councils could be explored.

Councillor John Thomas, Leader of the Conservative Group, indicted that the points he would raise would be less political than those of Plaid, given the issue was far too important a matter for the Vale of Glamorgan than seeking to score “political points”.

Councillor Thomas moved an amendment to the recommendations, to the effect that recommendations (1) and (2) remain ; recommendations (3) and (4) be deleted ; that the wording of recommendation (5) be amended to read “That the Leader agrees to keep all Group Leaders informed of the progress, or otherwise, of the proposals within the White Paper and the results of the consultation” ; and recommendations (6) and (7) would remain. At that point, he also thanked the Leader for keeping the Group Leaders informed to date.

The Conservative Group was concerned with the proposed answer to Question 16 in the consultation document. He referred to the reference to the new Minister, since taking up office, having made it perfectly clear that he, would, indeed, force through mergers if necessary. The Conservative Group was firmly of the opinion that the view of this Council when the issue was last voted upon should stand, that nothing

had changed in the meantime and that the Vale of Glamorgan Council was a sustainable Council and should be allowed to stand on its own.

He felt sure that Members would agree that “big is not beautiful “, also alluding to the recent WAO Report mentioned earlier in the meeting. The Conservative Group was dubious of the savings which would be made by reorganisation. If Local Government itself was going to have to fund reorganisation, it could be many years before, savings, if any, materialised.

The Conservative Group firmly believed that any discussions that the Council held with other Councils, or with the Welsh Government, on voluntary mergers would weaken the case to remain a “stand-alone” Council, and that was why the amendment to the recommendations had been moved.

The amendment to the recommendations, as outlined above, were duly seconded by Councillor Bird.

Councillor Clarke reiterated his view expressed at a previous Council Meeting in that he saw no need for the continuation of two Local Authorities, with the associated senior management structure, as currently existed.

Councillor Penrose sought clarification regarding the amendment moved by the Conservative Group, given his understanding of the agreement reached at the recent Group Leaders’ meeting. It appeared to him that the amendments seemed to be diluting the agreement reached. Whilst Members might well have their own views on whether or not there should be mergers of Councils, he felt it would be remiss of the Council (in terms of its responsibilities to Vale residents) not to have a contingency plan, should it be forced into voluntary mergers by the Welsh Government.

In bringing the debate to a conclusion, the Leader indicated he would be resisting the amendments to the recommendations. He considered that, in some respects, the Council did, indeed, need a fall-back position (this being reflected in recommendation (3)). Recommendation (4) was designed to seek some clarity as to potential arrangements and financial support available to Councils in the event of an “early adopter” approach.

The Leader referred Members to one amendment he wished to make in terms of the proposed response to Question 4 in the consultation document, which related to “What changes might be made to the way Local Authorities were currently constituted to ensure local transparency and clarity of accountability?”. He felt the response should also contain reference to the fact that, currently, Scrutiny Committees allowed members of the public to speak at meetings on specific issues that were on the agenda. Normally, this would be agreed in advance, within an agreed protocol and with the consent of the relevant Chairman. This highlighted the fact that the Council was, in fact, already allowing members of the public to speak. Subject to the inclusion of the above additional wording in the response, the Leader reiterated his opposition to the Conservative Group amendment.

Councillor John Thomas confirmed the proposed amendment, i.e. that :

“Recommendations (1) and (2) remain, recommendations (3) and (4) be deleted and that the wording of recommendation (5) be amended to read “That the Leader agrees to keep all Group Leaders informed of the progress, or otherwise, of the proposals within the White Paper and the results of the consultation.”
Recommendations (6) and (7) would remain.”

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

A vote then took place on the original recommendations (with the additional wording to be inserted in the response to Question 4 in the consultation document being agreed) and it was

RESOLVED - T H A T

- (1) The Council notes the issues set out in the report.
- (2) The Council confirms its previous resolution to resist a forced merger with Cardiff City and County Council and believes that the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough is a sustainable Council in its own right and urges Welsh Government to allow the Vale of Glamorgan Council to continue as a stand-alone Council.
- (3) Should this position not be agreed by Welsh Government or that indications from Welsh Government confirm that they will not give such an undertaking, delegated authority is given to the Managing Director in consultation with the Leader to enter into pre-emptive negotiations for a voluntary merger with other Councils that share the same values and cultures as we do here in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- (4) Welsh Government be contacted to confirm what arrangements and financial support are available to this Council for proceeding with an early adopter approach.
- (5) The Leader agrees to keep all other Group Leaders informed of the progress or otherwise of the above resolutions.
- (6) A further report be presented to Cabinet and any subsequent Council meeting, including an extraordinary Council meeting if deemed necessary.
- (7) Delegated powers are granted to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Leader, to respond to the Welsh Government White Paper on the Council's behalf.

440 SCRUTINY COMMITTEES' ANNUAL REPORT: MAY 2013 - APRIL 2014 (MD) -

The draft Annual Report had been considered and approved by all five Scrutiny Committees during July and September 2014 and contained details of the work of the Committees over the year, together with statistical information. In submitting the report to Council, Councillor Wilson, as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee

Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group, alluded to the plethora of items dealt with across the five Scrutiny Committees during the year and to the desire of Members to increase public engagement and participation in the scrutiny process.

RESOLVED - T H A T the Scrutiny Committees' Annual Report 2013-2014 be received.

441 CHANGE TO MEMBERSHIP OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE (MD) -

Councillor John Thomas, as Group Leader of the Conservative Group, had indicated that the Group wished to replace Councillor Bird with Councillor Traherne as a member of the Democratic Services Committee.

RESOLVED - T H A T Councillor R.L. Traherne replace Councillor J.C. Bird on the Democratic Services Committee, with effect from 30th September, 2014.

442 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION/OFFICER DELEGATIONS (MO) -

Since the formal introduction of the Council's new executive arrangements in May 2002, the Constitution had remained under review and would continue to be so on an ongoing basis. Under Article 15 of the Constitution the Monitoring Officer had a duty to monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure that the aims and principles contained therein were given full effect. Any changes considered necessary were subject to approval by the Full Council after consideration of the proposals by the Monitoring Officer.

A cross-party Constitution Working Party had been established to consider amendments to the Council's existing Constitution, taking into account the new Model Version issued for consideration/adaptation by local authorities in Wales. Various officers had been going through the existing Constitution and preparing draft revised sections for consideration by the Working Party. Often, the text was very similar to the current version. However, there were also various new legislative requirements and provisions which needed to be taken into account and which were reflected in the Model Version. The Working Party would continue to meet as necessary prior to a report being submitted to the Council in due course.

Notwithstanding, and in advance of, the above, Appendix A to the report contained a number of proposed amendments / updates / recommendations to the Constitution together with the rationale for such. In summary, these related to:

- Amendments to Schedule 1 of Part 3 of the Constitution - Functions not to be the Responsibility of an Authority's Executive (to reflect legislative changes)
- Certain matters falling within the provisions of Part X of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

- As a result of the above, consequential amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Public Rights of Way Sub-Committee and the delegated powers granted to the Director of Development Services.

The opportunity would also be taken to make any minor typographical / housekeeping changes to bring the document up to date.

RESOLVED - T H A T the following amendments / additions to the Council's Constitution be approved:

<u>Page No.</u>	<u>Article/Part</u>	<u>Proposed Amendment</u>	<u>Reason for proposed amendment</u>
38	Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule 1 – Functions not to be the responsibility of an Authority’s Executive 	G. Power to promote or oppose local or personal bills The deletion of the words “local or personal” and the insertion of the word “private”. I. Miscellaneous Functions The deletion of “2 Functions relating to sea fisheries.” The insertion of the following: “17. Power to make or revoke an Order designating a locality as an Alcohol Disorder Zone.”	To reflect the provisions of Sections 52 and 53 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. To reflect the amendments made in the Local Authorities (Effective Arrangements) (Functions and Responsibilities) (Wales) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2013. To reflect the provisions of Section 16 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006.
55	Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions	The addition of the following wording to the Terms of Reference of the Public Rights of Way Sub-Committee: “To consider and determine under delegated powers applications for Footpath and Bridleway Orders affected by development under Section 257 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 where opposition which has been raised as a result of pre-Order consultation remains unresolved.”	In line with existing delegations.

219	Part 8 – Officer Delegations	The addition of the following delegation to the Director of Development Services: “Authority to consider and determine Footpath and Bridleway Orders under Section 257 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, where such Orders are unopposed during pre-Order consultation.”	To clarify existing delegations.
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443 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2013-14 (SECTION 151 OFFICER) -

The Council's External Auditors had completed the audit of the Council's Financial Statements for 2013/14 and amendments had been incorporated therein.

The Audit Committee on the 22nd September 2014 considered an agenda item entitled 'Audit of the 2013/14 Financial Statements - Reporting to Those Charged with Governance'. The Committee recommended that the report of the Wales Audit Office be approved and the Financial Statements, including the final Letter of Representation, be recommended for signature by those authorised.

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations, the Statement of Accounts for 2013/14 must be approved before the 30th September and signed and dated by the Mayor as Chairman of the Council. The Statement of Accounts had already been considered and endorsed by the Audit Committee.

In addition, the Annual Governance Statement needed to be formally approved by Council and signed and dated by the Leader of the Council. This statement had already been considered and endorsed by the Audit Committee.

Councillor Dr. Ian Johnson, alluding to the amount of reserves, quoted a figure of £38.5 million as previously being the estimated balance, compared to a figure in March 2014 of £74 million. He asked the Leader whether these figures were comparable and to clarify the position for Members.

The Leader agreed to provide a written response to all Members. Councillor Dr. Ian Johnson indicated he would forward his question in writing to the Leader to assist.

RESOLVED -

- (1) T H A T the Letter of Representation to the Wales Audit Office be noted and that it be agreed and signed and dated by the Chairman of the Audit Committee.
- (2) T H A T the Annual Governance Statement (within the Statement of Accounts) be approved and signed and dated by the Leader of the Council at page 100.
- (3) T H A T the Statement of Accounts 2013-14 be approved and signed and dated by the Mayor, as Chairman of the Council, at page 19.

444 UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LLANTWIT LEARNING COMMUNITY (REF) -

As noted earlier in the Minutes, Councillors Gwyn John and Edward Williams declared an interest in this item in their capacity as Local Authority Governors of the school.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services reminded Members of the supplementary report from Cabinet of 30th June, 2014 which had been tabled for the Council meeting and was to be taken into account, together with the report of the

same Cabinet meeting circulated with the agenda. Paragraph 25 of the report contained details of the funding alluded to in the Cabinet reference.

RESOLVED - T H A T the proposals of the Cabinet, as set out in Cabinet Minute No. C2378, 30th June, 2014, be approved.

445 TREASURY MANAGEMENT (REF) -

RESOLVED – T H A T the proposals of the Cabinet, as set out in Cabinet Minute NO. C2410, 28th July 2014, be approved.

446 RHOOSE POINT PUBLIC OPEN SPACE : PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF BYE-LAWS (REF)

In moving the report, the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Parks, Culture and Sport Development asked Members to consider agreeing an additional recommendation granting delegated authority to the Director of Visible Services and Housing, in consultation with himself, to make any minor amendments deemed necessary to the wording of the bye-laws.

RESOLVED -

(1) T H A T the proposals of the Cabinet, as set out in Cabinet Minute No. C2416, 28th July, 2014, be approved and Council authorise that a bye-law application be made to Welsh Government as detailed at Appendix B as attached to the Cabinet report.

(2) T H A T the Director of Visible Services and Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Parks, Culture and Sport Development, be granted delegated authority to make any minor amendments deemed necessary to the wording of the bye-laws.

447 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2014/15 - 2017/18 (REF) -

Approval was sought for the draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/15 to 2017/18.

The budget strategy for 2015/16 was approved by Cabinet on 30 June, 2014 (Minute No. C2363). This established a baseline for services to prepare initial revenue budgets for 2015/16 based on the cost of providing the current level of service and approved policy decisions and including any net savings targets set. It also set out the timetable to be followed and required Directors to review savings already approved, with a view to implementing them ahead of the target date and to consider areas for further savings.

The purpose of the Medium Term Financial Plan was to link the Council's strategic planning process with the budget process and to ensure consistency between them. It was a mechanism that attempted to match future predicted resources and

expenditure, identify potential shortfalls and provide the financial framework for the next 3-5 years. Its purpose was to inform members and to suggest a way of dealing with the future financial pressures facing the Council.

This Medium Term Financial Plan, therefore, attempted to:

- Identify the main financial implications resulting from the increased pressure falling upon Council services, including pay and price inflation, legislative and demographic changes;
- Estimate the reduced financial resources that would be available to the Council to meet these demands in light of the Minister's letter;
- Match the predicted expenditure and resources and provide a framework to develop a financial strategy towards achieving a balanced budget for the next 3 financial years.

The draft Medium Term Financial Plan covered, for revenue, the period 2014/15 to 2017/18. An Executive Summary was included at pages 2 – 6 of the Plan, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report. With the exception of the Minister's letter, Welsh Government had not yet given any indication of local government funding levels for 2015/16 to 2017/18. However, the timeframe for the budget process necessitated use of the best available information at the time if a balanced budget was to be achieved by the statutory date. The assumptions made in the Plan were, therefore, based upon the contents of the Minister's letter and the subsequent views of key commentators (including the Welsh Local Government Association) as to the prospects for local government funding over the next few years.

Initial estimates presented the following picture which showed a projected savings target between 2015/16 and 2017/18 of £32m, comprising of £18m of savings already identified and £14m yet to be allocated.

Matching Predicted Resources to Expenditure	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000
Real Term Decrease in Resources	9,210	8,170	5,070
Cost Pressures	1,303	6,316	3,422
Identified Savings	(8,857)	(8,706)	(645)
Costs to be met within Schools	(362)	(371)	(380)
Additional Shortfall	1,294	5,409	7,467

The matching exercise indicated that there remained £1.3m of savings to be identified for 2015/16 and this was after already identifying £8.8m. The achievement of the identified savings was by no means guaranteed, but failure to deliver this level of savings would significantly impact on the Council achieving its required financial strategy which would now be based on an estimated reduction of £32m by 2017/18.

As a result of the high level of savings required, there would be difficulties in maintaining the quality and quantity of services without exploring opportunities for collaboration and alternative forms of service delivery. The only realistic option

facing the Council in future years was to commence a programme of reshaping and transforming services.

To ensure that the budget set for 2015/16 continued to address the priorities of Vale residents and the Council's service users, the budget setting process would incorporate in-depth, targeted engagement with a range of key stakeholders. This would be a process of collaboration – with staff, trade unions, public sector partners, the voluntary sector, service recipients and the Vale's communities (including its Town and Community Councils).

A key outcome from the 2014/15 budget process was to re-examine the relative priorities between different services given the financial challenges which lay ahead and to reaffirm the specific financial strategies for Education & Schools and Social Services. In light of the level of savings to be found by 2017/18, a further review would be necessary in order to ascertain whether it was viable to continue with these financial strategies.

Other options which were recommended within the Plan for exploration as part of the 2015/16 budget process were:

- Consider the results of the budget engagement process in determining priorities for future savings and service delivery
- Review the appropriateness of the current financial strategies for Education and Schools, Social Services and Other Services
- Review feasibility of increasing the use of the General Fund Reserve as part of the financial strategy
- Further reviewing the level of cost pressures with a view to services managing and reducing demand and mitigating pressures
- Services funding their own residual cost pressures through reviewing their existing budgets and revised/alternative means of service provision
- Services meeting their own pay and price inflation, superannuation increase etc through reviewing their staffing structure in line with changes to service delivery and workforce planning requirements
- Reviewing the priorities for funding statutory and non-statutory services, including establishing minimum levels of services provision
- Pursuing options for reshaping services including means of alternative service delivery in order to attempt to maintain the level of service while reducing the cost of provision. This was considered further in a separate report on this agenda entitled Reshaping Services – A New Change Programme for the Council.

Referring to a question regarding consultation / collaboration with Town and Community Councils, the Leader referred to recent meetings held with the four Town Councils regarding the Council's Reshaping Services Strategy. The intention was to have further dialogue with Town and Community Councils as the Strategy evolved.

RESOLVED - T H A T the proposals of the Cabinet, as set out in Cabinet Minute No. C2432, 11th August, 2014, be approved.

448 IMPROVEMENT PLAN (REF) -

The Draft Improvement Plan Part 2 : Annual Review of Performance 2013/14 had been considered by the Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources) on 16th September, 2014. The report had been presented to the Committee, as the lead Scrutiny Committee, due to the fact that publication of comparative information had been embargoed by the Wales Audit Office until 3rd September 2014. Officers had, therefore, been unable to report to some of the Scrutiny Committees in time and the decision had been made to refer the report to Corporate Resources as the lead Scrutiny Committee, to Cabinet and, subsequently, to Full Council. The Improvement Plan had to be published by 30th October 2014.

The Draft Plan contained performance and information for Improvement Objectives that had been agreed in June 2013. The document primarily looked back over 2013/14 and contained key performance measures, targets and actions which helped demonstrate progress towards the achievement of the Council's Improvement Objectives.

Whilst substantially complete, the Committee had been informed that further minor amendments would be required following changes to performance information provided by the Local Government Data Unit and from proof reading. However, based on the Council's overall assessment, it was concluded that the Council had been successful in achieving the majority of the positive outcomes intended in its Improvement Objectives for 2013/14, despite challenging financial times. Overall, 7 out of the 8 Improvement Objectives that had been set for the year had been judged to have been successfully achieved with 1 partially achieved. A summary of the conclusions of the 8 Improvement Objectives for the Vale was identified in paragraphs 8 to 19 of the report.

Pages 65 to 86 detailed how the Council had performed against the 2013/14 national performance data set in comparison with the previous year and with other local authorities in Wales. Data had been collected and reported on 44 national performance indicators (PIs) and, of these, 43 had data that could be compared with the previous year. The key highlights included:

- in total 9 indicators had achieved the best possible performance in 2013/14. Of these 9 best PIs, 6 of these indicators continued to maintain their best possible performance (either 100% or 0%) when compared to the previous year. There was only one indicator in 2013/14 that did not continue to maintain the best possible performance when compared to 2012/13.
- 23 indicators showed an improvement (based on their PI value). This was up on the previous year where 21 indicators had shown an improvement (based on their PI value).
- 14 indicators showed a decline (based on their PI value) during 2013/14 compared with 10 indicators that showed a decline during 2012/13.
- 8 indicators that had previously shown improvement in 2012/13 (based on their PI value) now showed a decline in their performance for 2013/14.

- 6 Indicators during 2013/14 had shown no change in their performance when compared to 2012/13.
- Percentage wise: 52% of comparable indicators improved, 14% maintained the best possible performance and 32% declined. In comparison 70% of comparable indicators in Wales improved as did 74.4% within the South East Wales Region. The Vale's performance was better than Wales in 25 (58%) of comparable indicators and similarly in 24 (56%) when compared against the South East Wales Region.

A breakdown of how the Council performed in each of the quartiles against other Welsh local authorities in 2013/14 was as follows:

- 43% (19) indicators were in the upper quartile of performance.
- 36% (16) indicators were in the middle quartile of performance.
- 20% (9) indicators were in the lower quartile of performance.
- This performance showed an improvement from the previous year in which the Vale achieved 17 top quartile, 11 middle quartile and 15 bottom quartile performing indicators.

In considering the report the Chairman and Members of the Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources) had referred to the following concerns:

- pages 35 to 37 – performance in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). Members, aware that a further report was to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee over the forthcoming months in relation to DFGs, requested that the data information contained within the Improvement Plan be also detailed in that report for Members' further consideration. A further request was that the report also include detailed information in relation to the process / timescale for the receipt of applications, referral to OT and work undertaken. The Head of Service for Performance and Development also advised that the Wales Audit Office was currently undertaking a review of DFGs which would include consideration of the PIs for the service area.
- With regard to the PIs in respect of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), the Chairman referred to the Welsh average of 3.7% and the direction of travel for the Vale worsening. He suggested that further detail in relation to this PI be presented to the Scrutiny Committees (Lifelong Learning) and (Corporate Resources).
- For Adult Social Services, again the direction of travel was deteriorating for the Vale when compared to the Wales average and Members requested that the Director of Social Services or his substitute attend a future of the Committee regarding this issue.
- Similar concerns were raised in relation to Children's Services regarding resources and future implications and again Members requested officer attendance a future meeting of the Committee in relation to this matter.
- In referring to Leisure Services and the number of visits to the local authority leisure centres, it was suggested that the Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) consider the implications of the direction of travel in relation to this PI. The Democratic and Scrutiny Committee Services Officer advised

that the Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) was due to receive a report in respect of such matters in the next few months.

In view of the fact the timetable had not allowed all Scrutiny Committees to consider the report, Members of the Committee suggested that the relevant Scrutiny Committees, where issues had been raised as outlined above, be given the opportunity to consider this Committee's concerns.

Having considered the report, The Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources) subsequently,

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Improvement Plan for 2013/14 be endorsed, and referred to Cabinet and Council for consideration and approval.

(2) T H A T having regard to the comments referred to above, the relevant officers with responsibility for Disabled Facilities Grants, NEETs, Children's and Adult Services be requested to attend a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, to advise on the issues affecting the performance in these areas in relation to the direction of travel as contained within the report.

(3) T H A T the report and the comments of this Scrutiny Committee be referred to the relevant Scrutiny Committees responsible for the service areas for Disabled Facilities Grants, NEETs, Children's and Adult Services for their further consideration.

(4) THAT the comments of the Scrutiny Committee as above be referred to Cabinet for their consideration

Cabinet on 22nd September 2014, having considered the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee,

RESOLVED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted and referred to Council for approval.

During the ensuing discussion, the Leader reiterated the fact that the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources) would be the subject of reports to the relevant Scrutiny Committee(s) in due course.

Councillor Traherne, as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee (Social Care and Health) expressed his concern regarding the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources) in relation to the "direction of travel". He wished to reassure the Council that all Members of the Scrutiny Committee took their role seriously in terms of monitoring performance. Officers were regularly questioned but, unfortunately, the relevant officers had been unable to attend the Corporate Resources meeting when this item was discussed. Had they done so, he considered the Committee would have been better informed. He also alluded to the fact that comparisons with performance elsewhere were not always being made on a "like for like" basis. It was also always necessary to take account of other factors, such as

the views of external regulators. The Scrutiny Committee (Social Care and Health) would be considering the matter at its next meeting.

Councillor Wilson, as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources), confirmed that relevant officers would be attending a forthcoming meeting. He was also aware of the many issues that needed to be taken into account in addressing this matter.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Parks, Culture and Sport Development referred to the comments made regarding his areas of responsibility. He pointed out that the report's findings were based on figures relating to all sports. However, The Council's performance was based on Sport Wales' survey on leisure / indoor sports.

Councillor Bird considered there to be a recurring theme of different local authorities recording certain areas of performance in different ways. He felt that the Welsh Government should be requested to provide greater clarity / consistency and to be more prescriptive in its approach to this area.

The Leader indicated he had already made representations regarding this matter. He was concerned, for example, how figures in relation to Disabled Facility Grants were compiled across Welsh local authorities.

Councillor Drysdale referred to the matter having been raised at the Audit Committee and to Steve Barry (Wales Audit Office) as the Council's Relationship Manager, undertaking to look into the matter. He suggested that, should Members feel there were any further issues which should be brought to Mr. Barry's attention, they should inform him accordingly.

RESOLVED – T H A T the proposals of the Cabinet, as set out in Cabinet Minute No. C2471, 22nd September 2014, be approved.

449 WASTE MANAGEMENT AND CLEANSING: INTERIM RESIDUAL WASTE CONTRACT (REF) -

RESOLVED - T H A T the use of the Urgent Decision Procedure (Cabinet Minute Nos: C2400 and C2402), 14th July, 2014, (as set out in Article 13.09(a)(ii) of the Council's Constitution), in relation to the offer of an interim residual waste treatment contract from Viridor, be noted.

450 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 8.2 -

Due notice had been given of the following questions:

(i) Question from Councillor Philip Clarke

Members will be aware that the Welsh Government is currently seeking a response to the White Paper whereby expressions of interest for voluntary mergers are required by November 2014.

There are financial incentives available to any local authority which merges with another in advance of the inevitable forced mergers under the proposed legislation. The Vale of Glamorgan Council are faced with cuts of £35m, and there are considerable savings to be made from voluntarily pursuing a merger with Cardiff as recommended in all options proposed by the Williams Report and favoured by the Welsh Government. An additional four years of savings would have a significant impact, reducing the need to make cuts in front line services.

Can the Leader explain why this Council has not entered into dialogue with another authority to voluntarily expedite the process in the interest of the Taxpayer?

Response from the Leader

The voluntary mergers referred to in the question were the subject of a paper published by Welsh Government on 18th September, "Invitation to Principal Local Authorities in Wales to Submit Proposals for Voluntary Merger". The paper describes what will need to be included in any Expressions of Interest by Councils in respect of voluntary mergers, and states that these initial Expressions of Interest have to be submitted to Welsh Government by 28 November. The paper is attached as an Appendix to the report going to Council this evening, "Welsh Government's White Paper *Reforming Local Government – Council Response*", in which Council's views are sought. The Council will need to determine in due course if such an Expression of Interest is submitted, and, if so, with which other Council as a partner. I will bring proposals on this matter to Members when more information is available.

Although the White Paper intimated that a financial incentive would be offered to Councils who merged voluntarily, it now seems from the "Invitation to Principal Authorities..." paper that "targeted support" is what is on offer. It is not clear, therefore, that voluntary merger in itself will bring financial benefits. However, when I met with the Minister on Friday at the WLGA he did 'imply' that money might be available for IT, Council Tax rationalisation etc. but in my opinion it seemed speculative at this time. More information will be needed regarding this aspect.

Furthermore, I am not at all convinced that mergers generally will achieve significant savings, and the Council has already made that point in its submission to the Williams Commission.

It remains, however, that the Council faces very severe financial challenges as a result of the Government's austerity regime. It is the steps outlined in the recent report agreed by Cabinet on Reshaping Services, rather than local authority mergers, which will provide the means by which we deal with those challenges and achieve the necessary savings.

(ii) Question from Councillor Rhodri Traherne

It is abundantly clear that the First Minister and the Welsh Government are ramping up the pressure on Local Authorities with a view to implementing the Williams Report's recommendations in regard to the reorganisation of Local Government.

It would seem that not a month goes by without someone of note praising the Williams Report in the media and encouraging the First Minister to “wield the axe” without delay. It is also of note that Leighton Andrews has been recalled to the Welsh Government Cabinet to mastermind reorganisation. The Welsh Local Government Association appears weak and vacillating and rumours abound. One of the most sinister is the existence of a tawdry deal between Labour and Plaid Cymru to force reorganisation through the National Assembly for Wales after the 2016 Elections.

Can the Leader answer the following questions?

Firstly, can he tell Members whether he has had any discussions with the First Minister and or any other Welsh Government Minister about the Williams Report and its proposals for the future of Local Government?

Secondly, if he has had such discussions, and I cannot believe that he has not, could he tell Members what was discussed?

Thirdly, can he confirm whether our Assembly Member, Jane Hutt, is supportive of a merger between Cardiff City Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Council? I think that it is important that there is absolute clarity on this issue.

And, finally, is he aware of any ‘National Deal’ between the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru with a view to forcing the Williams Report’s recommendations for the reorganisation of Local Government through the National Assembly after the 2016 Assembly Elections.

Response from the Leader

I can confirm I have had such discussions with Welsh Government. During these discussions I have made the Council’s position with respect to the Williams Report perfectly clear – that we believe that the case for reorganisation has not been made, and that the best option for the Vale and its communities would be for the Vale Council as presently constituted to continue. This is in accordance with the Council’s resolution of March 2014 and, indeed, confirmed again at tonight’s meeting. I have also met with the Council’s Group Leaders and am keeping them apprised of the situation.

As to the Assembly Member’s views, I am sure she will make them known when she is in a position to do so. However, it should be acknowledged that, as a Welsh Government Minister, she is required to comply with their Code of Conduct. Clearly, Welsh Government has taken a collective view on the Williams Commission proposals and are currently consulting on that through the White Paper and also on the paper “Invitation to Principal Local Authorities in Wales to Submit Proposals for Voluntary Merger”.

However, I should stress that the new Minister, Leighton Andrews, made it abundantly clear on Friday at the WLGA Council Meeting that the status quo is not an option and he is determined that the Williams proposals will be taken forward in

some shape or form. Have no doubt he will secure some reorganisation with, or without, our or any Council's help.

He therefore urged Councils to consider voluntary mergers within the criteria set out in the Invitation to Principal Local Authorities document mentioned earlier but also implied that he would consider any proposal either following the Williams map or otherwise.

I am not aware of any deal between the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru of the sort Councillor Traherne refers to. I also understand that relationships are not that close to suggest one has been considered.

Supplemental

Councillor Traherne asked the Leader whether he would ask the Vale's Assembly Member, Jane Hutt, to publically indicate whether she rejected the concept of any merger between the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff City Councils.

The Leader confirmed that he had held discussions with the Assembly Member, who was also the Minister for Finance and Government Relations. He reiterated his earlier comments regarding her being bound by the Welsh Government Code of Conduct, by which she clearly had to abide. The Welsh Government had taken a collective view and, therefore, the Assembly Member was unable to stand outside that particular agreement. It might, or might not, be that she would provide her views once the White Paper had been responded to but the current position would remain until she decided otherwise.

(iii) Question from Councillor Rhodri Traherne

The collection of rubbish and recycling affects every single family in the Vale of Glamorgan and this Council has made excellent progress in meeting Welsh Government targets to date. However, whilst we have managed to increase our recycling rates from 54% in March 2013 to 55% in March 2014, in 2016 we will be expected to recycle 58% of our waste which is, I would suggest, going to be difficult under the current arrangements.

I was wondering whether the Cabinet Member could update Council on his plans for meeting this demanding target. In particular could he let us know?

Whether he intends to move to monthly 'black bag collections' in order to encourage recycling?

Whether he intends to move to three weekly 'black bag collections' in order to encourage recycling?

Whether he intends to limit the number of 'black bags' per collection per household in order to encourage recycling? For example, in Swansea each household is only allowed three black bags every two weeks.

Whether he intends to introduce 'see-through' bags in order to highlight those households who are failing to recycle?

And finally, whether he would like to introduce a 'pay as you throw' policy, meaning the more that households recycle the less they pay for the service.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Visible Services

Could I firstly thank Councillor Traherne for reminding Council of our excellent progress with recycling over the last few years. I am very pleased to inform him that we are still making good progress and, whilst we must not become complacent, are also on target to meet, and hopefully exceed, the 2015 / 2016 recycling target of 58%. Whilst future recycling targets will be much more challenging to achieve, I have no plans currently to move towards any of the suggestions he has indicated.

Officers are currently developing a new waste management strategy for the consideration of Cabinet, recognising both our future financial challenges and the achievement of the Welsh Government recycling target of 64% by 2019 / 2020. Our recycling performance at the kerbside is unlikely to increase to achieve this standard on its own unless there are some additional interventions introduced. However, we are aiming to utilise the bottom ash generated from our residual waste via Prosiect Gwyrdd and this could contribute up to an additional 6% towards our 2019 / 2020 target, allowing us to meet, and even exceed, the recycling performance required by this date.

The relevant Scrutiny Committees will be consulted on the development of the new waste management strategy, which I hope will be in place early in the new financial year.

Supplemental

Councillor Traherne referred to the Sustainable Future Commissioner, Peter Davies, having told BBC Wales in June of this year that he would like to see a single system of recycling across Wales. He asked whether the Cabinet Member was aware of any Welsh Government initiatives to standardise recycling and, if so, how this was likely to impact on the people of the Vale of Glamorgan and whether the Council might be forced to abandon co-mingling.

The Cabinet Member indicated he was unaware of any such Welsh Government proposals and, consequently, was unable to comment.

(iv) Question from Councillor Nic Hodges

Are there any plans to build a lido at the Knap in Barry?

Response from the Leader

A simple answer would be 'No' and no such plans exist or are likely to, as far as this council are concerned.

However, as reported in the local press, we are always interested to hear of innovative ways which could attract visitors to the Vale or make the Vale a better place to live.

Despite advising of this, to date we have not been provided with any viable plans for the development of the new lido or, indeed, any other plans – such as the much talked about aquarium that was in the LDP / Collins Leisure Consultants report.

Again no one has come forward with a business plan to proceed with such a venture and this is the ‘real’ reason why this Council has not considered that proposal within the study. It was simply a suggestion in the study, but no one appears to want to carry out such a venture. If they had they could have come forward during the recent marketing exercise.

As you know this Council has to make substantial savings, estimated at £32m in the next 3 years. Therefore, the Council could not, and does not, have any plans to commit itself to a Lido or any such developments.

But I will reiterate again, we are always eager to talk to anyone who puts forward a sustainable business case and are able to access finance for their initiative.

Perhaps I can also put to bed once and for all the unfounded rumours that we have plans or any intentions of proposing to build flats on the old Knap pool site.

(v) Question from Councillor Nic Hodges

Would you consider specifically marketing part of the former Butlins site for a waterpark?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Innovation, Planning and Transportation

The site was marketed at the end of last year with a tender deadline of January this year. The 10 acre site was marketed for leisure and tourism purposes, which clearly would have allowed for a waterpark proposal. I do not feel it is appropriate to market a site of this scale and significance to a single, specific prescribed use (namely waterpark) but do feel that the nature of the tender process would have allowed waterpark uses to come forward.

(vi) Question from Councillor Nic Hodges

What were the profit and loss figures for the former Knap Lido in the last 5 years of its operation?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Innovation, Planning and Transportation

As records are only kept for seven years, there are no financial records available relating to the final years of the Knap Lido. From discussions with officers who were employed at the time of the operation of the Lido, I understand that in the years up to the closure of the pool in 1996 the subsidy per user per visit was in excess of £10. I understand that, in addition to this level of subsidy, the pool plant was beyond economic repair and the sheer size of the pool made compliance with modern water quality extremely difficult and costly.

Supplemental

Councillor Hodges asked the Cabinet Member to respond to suggestions by individuals in the press that a new Knap Lido would be a 'goldmine' for the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Commenting that the Knap Lido was, in fact, outside her portfolio, the Cabinet Member had, nevertheless, obtained information from Cabinet colleagues to assist. She reiterated the Leader's earlier comments regarding the Council being committed to quality leisure and tourism facilities in the Barry Island/Knap area. The Council was prepared to discuss proposals with anybody that came forward but, to date, had not actually had an approach from anybody to do with a Lido development.

(vii) Question from Councillor Nic Hodges

How many burial spaces are there available at Porthkerry Cemetery and what are the plans for the future?

Response from the Leader

There are currently twenty standard sized graves and two cremated remains plots available at Porthkerry Cemetery. Officers are examining ways to increase the potential total to thirty standard plots and twelve cremated remains plots, though this will be within the existing curtilage.

There are no plans currently to extend the Cemetery at Porthkerry or to develop an alternative site.

Supplemental

Councillor Hodges indicated he had concerns that residents of Rhoose and the greater Rhoose area, who did not have a Community Council to take up such issues, may, at some future date, have to be buried in Cardiff and face consequential burial rates at significantly higher prices than at Porthkerry Cemetery. He asked whether the Leader shared his concerns.

The Leader indicated he understood the concerns expressed, but reiterated his comments regarding officers looking at ways to increase capacity. Obviously, burials

outside the area would be subject to the charges applying at that particular cemetery or crematorium.

(viii) Question from Councillor Nic Hodges

Would you consider changing the Cabinet responsibilities to ensure that the future role of the Library Services is properly represented to the Council and its residents?

Response from the Leader

I am confident that the current arrangements are working effectively to ensure effective political leadership for the library service. You will know that on occasions it is necessary for members not to participate in debate and decision-making where they have a personal interest: we will always, therefore, ensure that deputising arrangements are in place to ensure that the appropriate debate and decision-making takes place in such circumstances and, indeed, that happens.

Supplemental

Councillor Hodges again asked whether the Leader would consider adjusting Cabinet responsibilities so that libraries were 'properly represented'.

The Leader felt he had already answered the question. Members were aware that, due to a personal interest, the Cabinet Member with the portfolio had had to step aside. Cabinet shared responsibilities and the burdens of office equally and maintained awareness of each other's service areas and responsibilities. As such, he considered the current arrangements to be perfectly adequate.

(ix) Question from Councillor Chris Franks

With the growing cost of energy, the risks to the security of supply and the need to reduce dependency on non-renewable fuel, will the Leader comment on what progress has been made to improve the insulation of council buildings, including schools, detailing the financial investment involved?

Response from the Leader

For new council buildings the insulation values of the fabric should meet the building regulation requirements of part L.

The Building Regulations have been devolved in Wales and insulation values increased. By 2019, to meet the EU directive then new non-domestic buildings should be 'zero carbon', meaning that there should be no net fuel input for them to function. (this does not account for energy required for commercial activity within the building).

As far as existing council buildings are concerned, the main driver for insulation has been via the Salix interest-free loan scheme. A ring-fenced recycling fund of

£600,000, which is 50% funded by the Council and 50% by the Salix organisation, has been available since 2009. For suitable schemes, building managers are able to borrow interest free from the Salix fund, repaying from the predicted savings through reduced energy consumption.

So far, 31 buildings have had fabric insulation installed since 2009; the total investment being £192,000. It is calculated that this has reduced the Council carbon dioxide emissions by 500 tonnes per year (out of a total of just over 10,000 tonnes per annum). Over the lifetime of the buildings the financial savings from the measures are estimated to be over £3 million.

Other insulation work outside of the Salix scheme includes the cavity wall insulation of the Civic Offices (2007) and, more recently, the Victorian Roof project (started in reaction to the Apollo theatre ceiling collapse in 2013) where lathe and plaster ceilings are being reinforced via the application of insulation boards (the scheme is 10% funded via the Salix fund).

Council Officers have endeavoured to identify any buildings that can be insulated but if Members are aware of any others that have not yet been identified then please contact David Powell, Energy manager on 01446 709576, or via email on Dpowell@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk.

A complete list of the buildings already insulated can be provided on request. It should be noted that only buildings owned by the Council can qualify for Salix funding and the building budget holder has to accept responsibility for the repayment of the loan.

Supplemental

Councillor Franks asked what additional ways the Leader intended to use to lower the Council's use of non-renewable sources of power, e.g. providing solar panels on Council buildings as opposed to simply Council houses.

The Leader confirmed that this was already occurring in respect of many buildings (including on all new Council buildings). A rolling programme was in place designed to cover any buildings that qualified to benefit from solar panels.

(x) Question from Councillor Chris Franks

Will you indicate how the current financial situation will impact on our bio-diversity aspirations, especially in respect of cutting grass verges and other public spaces?

Response from the Leader

Our current public open space and highway verge cutting regimes are aimed at satisfying our statutory duties for highway safety, providing maximum amenity value for our open spaces and conserving both our financial resources and the natural environment.

Whilst it is inevitable that the financial challenges will have an impact on our future grass cutting regimes, we will endeavour to continue to satisfy these principles as best we can as the Reshaping Services project progresses.

As there will be a greater emphasis on maximising our use of resources in future, it is likely that more and more of our green spaces will be left to develop naturally with minimal, or no, mechanical maintenance regimes. This is likely to have the effect of encouraging increased bio-diversity on certain areas of land which were previously subject to more intense maintenance arrangements. Members will be involved in the Reshaping Services programme and, therefore, party to all the associated frontline service implications as the programme progresses.

Supplemental

Councillor Franks asked whether the Leader could assure the Council that budget reductions would not damage sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and other areas of bio-diversity importance (suggesting that some areas needed to be mowed to avoid them simply reverting to scrub).

The Leader confirmed the Council would always take the best actions possible. SSSIs were governed by legislation which determined how they were dealt with. He alluded to some measures which had already been taken, including mowing on an irregular basis in an open field area, but with sufficient cutting to keep scrub land at bay.

(xi) Question from Councillor Rhodri Traherne

I think I am right in saying that Cardiff City Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff Council meet in 'Full Council' 12 times each year to discuss Council Business in order that the Administration can explain to Members how it is tackling current and, indeed, future issues. In view of this fact it is perhaps rather worrying that the Vale of Glamorgan Council only meets 5 times each year in 'Full Council' and, as such, Members have relatively few opportunities to question the Administration. In view of the current and ongoing 'Review' of the Council Constitution is the Leader minded to increase the number of times that 'Full Council' meets each year in order to promote greater democracy and transparency in this Council.

Response from the Leader

I am surprised at this question as we have followed what you did when you were part of the previous Administration.

The number of meetings of Full Council held in local authorities does, indeed, vary. The number, and frequency, of meetings is a matter for individual authorities.

I consider that the Council's business is being dealt with appropriately under our existing arrangements. Your Group recognised that "This Council considers that the Vale of Glamorgan Council is a viable and successful authority." in a recent resolution to Council. If we are, that, then we are carrying out our duties properly.

As such, we do not need as many Council meetings as others may require. We have no 'backlog' of business occurring in our Council meeting calendar.

As far as holding the Administration to account is concerned, I would also point out that (as Members are aware) the vast majority of decisions within a Local Authority rest with the Executive. Each and every item considered by the Council's Cabinet is, obviously, subject to the 'call-in' process.

As Members are aware, on occasions, specific issues are deemed important enough to justify the holding of a Special Meeting and this practice will continue.

Supplemental

Councillor Traherne reiterated his request that the Leader consider the holding of more Council meetings than currently occurred.

The Leader pointed out that the Council's procedures allowed for its business to be dealt with efficiently. He alluded to the meeting itself as a being a good one and to the fact that Members had submitted 23 questions, which provided an example of the ample opportunities available under the current regime to hold the Administration to account.

(xii) Question from Councillor Rhodri Traherne

Earlier this year it was announced by the Welsh Government that 20 million pounds would be given to 40 underperforming schools from a new Schools Challenge Cymru Fund to help them improve. The Cabinet Member will be aware that Barry Comprehensive is one of these schools. Whilst I feel sure that the additional support will be most welcome there is the wider issue as to why Barry Comprehensive School is underperforming to such an extent that it has been selected for this special assistance from the Welsh Government. Perhaps the Cabinet Member can explain why things have gone so badly wrong?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Welsh Government selected the 40 secondary schools to benefit from Schools Challenge Cymru, based on the levels of pupil attainment and the levels of deprivation according to the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In 2013 Barry Comprehensive School had disappointing GCSE results, and with 22% of pupils entitled to a free school meal, deprivation was also relatively high.

Prior to the announcement of Schools Challenge Cymru, the Council had taken a number of steps in response to the disappointing results.

The school was identified as needing an enhanced package of challenge and support from the Central South Consortium. The Director of Learning and Skills sent a formal warning letter to the school setting out minimum targets for improvement in 2014: if the targets were not met the Council would use its statutory powers of intervention.

An individual school progress meeting between a Panel of the Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) and school representatives took place and reviewed the robustness of the school's improvement plan and considered the progress of the school to date.

I am pleased to let you know that reflecting the hard work of the Governing Body, Senior Leadership Team and staff, this year's provisional GCSE results show material improvement compared with the previous year. However, it must be noted that the school has not met the minimum expectations for attainment in Level 2 plus English to Maths but they have met their agreed target on improving attendance and that the minimum target for improved attendance was met.

There remains, however, a great deal to do to ensure that the aspirations of the school and the Council are delivered: the Schools Challenge Cymru programme, delivered through the Central South Consortium, will have an important role to play.

I should also add that following the completion of a feasibility study to consider the possible creation of a co-ed secondary school for Barry, I hope to bring forward a report later during the Autumn, reporting the conclusions of the work.

Supplemental

Referring to his understanding that Schools Challenge Cymru would be funded with £4 million from Westminster and £8 million from Welsh Government, Councillor Traherne referred to it being rumoured that £5 million of the Welsh Government funding would be cut from existing schemes. Referring to the importance of for example, literacy and numeracy, he asked the Cabinet Member to clarify the position.

The Cabinet Member indicated he was aware of ongoing discussions between Directors of Education in Wales and the Welsh Government regarding plans for in-year savings. Within the Central South Consortium, those discussions were ongoing as a collective with the hope that the impact of any in-year savings on schools directly would be mitigated and to try and find such savings from within the Consortium.

(xiii) Question from Councillor Rhodri Traherne

I would be most grateful if the Cabinet Member could update Members on her plans for a Vale of Glamorgan Heritage Centre. She may recall that when I last asked for an update she did not provide much clarity as to whether or not a Vale of Glamorgan Heritage Centre would be established during this Administration's term of office. Instead she directed us to read Charles Leadbeater's work on the Virtuous Circle of Social Capital, which I have done. Now it may be that some Members have failed to explore Charles Leadbeater's fascinating work and as such I will try to sum up the Virtuous Circle of Social Capital as succinctly as possible. The Circle consists of six stages:

Stage 1 is The Initial Endowment of Social Capital – A network of relationships and contacts which are tied together by shared values and interests.

Stage 2 is Physical Capital – Normally a Building.

Stage 3 is Financial Capital – Normally ‘start-up funding’.

Stage 4 is Human Capital – Normally the recruitment of the right people to run the Project.

Stage 5 is Organisational Capital – Normally the development of a more formalised management structure, financial systems and a stronger set of relationships with partners.

Stage 6 is Paying Dividends – Basically the physical success of the project and the creation of more Social Capital, which completes the “Virtuous Circle”.

It has been over a year since the Cabinet Member last addressed this issue in this Council Chamber. As such, in regard to the establishment of a Vale of Glamorgan Heritage Centre, can she tell us where she thinks the project lies in the Virtuous Circle of Social Capital? It seems to me that we may still be languishing at Stage 1 and after a year’s work this seems somewhat disappointing. Would she agree?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Innovation, Planning and Transportation

As an academic it was always rewarding when a student took the time to look up references. However it was often necessary to ensure the student has fully understood the concept and its application.

Stage 1 is, indeed, related to social capital and the network of relationships and contacts but as Leadbeater then goes on to explain, and I quote “The first job of a social entrepreneur is to take whatever endowment of social capital he is given and to use these relationships to create more social capital, by getting more people and organisations involved with the project, by building a wider web of trust and co-operation around the project. With this start-up fund of social capital the social entrepreneur can then get access to the physical, financial and human capital needed to get the show on the road.”

So it’s not just about who your friends are. It is a complex process of building the capacity of individuals through the bridging, as well as bonding, social capital of organisations and of communities and that is exactly what we are doing. The recent tackling poverty funding will support work into capacity building of the third sector, recent funding to Vale CVS is supporting collaboration and development of third sector consortia and the work of the Communities First Team is developing social and human capital within our more disadvantaged communities. Our Creative Rural Communities team are similarly supporting local individuals, businesses and organisations through the Vale Ambassadors programme, through work on place development and through the recent enterprise bursary scheme.

Even the decision of this Administration to ignore advice to close a school in our most disadvantaged community and to invest in it is all about developing the social and human capital.

Achieving worthwhile outcomes takes time but we know it can be done.

Last week I was delighted to accept the award of UK Pier of the year on behalf of this Council. It is a shining example of just what can be achieved. A committed and forward-thinking group first discussed the renovation of the Penarth Pier Pavilion as far back as 2004 and the Council, under the previous Labour-led coalition, allocated match funding in principle in 2008. The project very much followed the concept under discussion and took until 2013 to fully complete the scheme.

Tomorrow evening I will be attending the Welsh Social Enterprise of the Year Awards where Anthea Clements, CEO of Barry YMCA Hub, is shortlisted as Social Enterprise Champion of the Year. All who are aware of the Hub will appreciate the work and time that has gone into their achievements. I wish her well for tomorrow.

Similarly, following protests at the previous Administration's plans to develop the Cowbridge Cattle Market, a group of individuals has been working on a proposal to find a sustainable solution. Again, it is very much following this model.

Our view of regeneration is very much about sustainable solutions that address social and environmental as well as economic issues, an approach that will deliver real benefits for our communities not just a 'build it and they will come' box-ticking exercise.

This Administration is committed to the role of heritage in regeneration and recognises that there is a wealth of heritage-related organisations across the Vale of Glamorgan. Those organisations possess a network of relationships and contacts which share values. However, as was stated in a report commissioned by the previous Administration in April 2010, to date, few organisations work collaboratively and so have not, in Leadbeater's words, 'Built up a wider web of trust and co-operation'

So in answer to your question, the heritage organisations of the Vale are probably somewhere in stage 1 and we look forward to working in partnership with them towards stage 6.

Supplemental

Councillor Traherne asked how many times the Cabinet Member had personally met with interested groups during the last 12 months to explicitly discuss the establishment of a Vale of Glamorgan Heritage Centre.

The Cabinet Member stated she frequently met with Third Sector organisations of all types and often signposted them on to sources of further support. She had signposted heritage organisations in that manner but, sadly to date, due to lack of development past the early stages of Stage 1, they had not taken up that support.

(xiv) Question from Councillor Dr. Ian Johnson

What powers does the Vale of Glamorgan Council have to prevent hydraulic fracturing from being undertaken within its boundaries?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Visible Services

The Council will be well aware of my personal views regarding hydraulic fracturing. The powers available to the Council relate purely to the planning process. Any company or business wanting to extract gas by hydraulic fracturing will need to apply for planning permission and any such application will then be considered, having regard to all relevant and material planning considerations. I do have concerns regarding the Westminster Government clearly being in support of fracking.

Supplemental

Councillor Dr. Johnson, believing there should be a moratorium on this in Wales, asked the Cabinet Member what representations he had made to Welsh Government regarding the matter.

The Cabinet Member pointed out that the issue was not within his powers and, as such, he had made no such representations.

(xv) Question from Councillor Dr. Ian Johnson

How many households are there in the Vale of Glamorgan to which the bedroom tax currently applies, and how many of these include a disabled resident?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Building Maintenance and Community Safety

There are 929 individuals as at 22nd September 2014 who are affected by the social size criteria under-occupancy deduction (also known as 'the bedroom tax'). 782 of these by 14% (under-occupation of 1 bedroom) and 147 by 25% (under-occupation of 2 or more bedrooms).

The Council does not hold information as to whether the individual is disabled or not as this has no bearing on the deduction.

Supplemental

Councillor Dr. Johnson referred to a response having previously been given in respect of disabled residents and, therefore, to being surprised that this had not occurred on this occasion. He asked whether the Cabinet Member would clarify the position for future reference.

The Cabinet Member indicated she would do so and would provide a written reply.

(xvi) Question from Councillor Dr. Ian Johnson

When is the Welsh Government report on the Barry Regeneration Area due to be published?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Innovation, Planning and Transportation

I am advised that Welsh Government officials are, in fact, working on this report at present, with a view to publishing information this Autumn.

Supplemental

Councillor Dr. Johnson, referring to the 'great interest' shown in Barry regeneration by the Council in a meeting in 2013, asked whether the report would be submitted to Full Council for discussion once published.

The Cabinet Member indicated that she imagined the report would, in fact, be submitted to the Cabinet in the first instance.

(xvii) Question from Councillor Dr. Ian Johnson

What is the currently constituted membership of the board responsible for furthering the regeneration of Barry?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Innovation, Planning and Transportation

As agreed by Cabinet on 24th March 2014, there is no Regeneration Board. However, after an extensive recruitment exercise, I am delighted to advise that the membership of the Barry Regeneration Advisory Group is as follows:

Councillor Lis Burnett (Chair)
Councillor Neil Moore
Rob Thomas
Marco Zeraschi
Keith Thomas
Mike James
Rachel Connor
Heather Stevens
Tamsin Stirling
Emma Watkins
Councillor Stuart Egan
Sue Toner
Paul Roberts
Peter Cole
Mark White
Phil Williams
Mark Harris

Supplemental

Councillor Dr. Johnson asked whether it would be possible for Barry Councillors on the Council to attend meetings of the Advisory Group as observers and to offer comments as necessary (given that this had not been allowed in the past, but that the Group was now run by the Council itself).

The Cabinet Member did not presume that members of the group would wish their specific discussions and contributions to be 'scrutinised'. As an Advisory Group, the outcome of any discussions would be taken forward and then discussed in the Cabinet and, therefore, be open to formal scrutiny within the Council. She reiterated that the Group had no executive powers and was not a decision-making body, but existed solely in an advisory capacity.

(xviii) Question from Councillor Dr. Ian Johnson

How many completions have been made of the target 9,950 houses for the 2011-2026 Local Development Plan, and what percentage of that target does this represent?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Innovation, Planning and Transportation

The Council's latest Joint Housing Land Availability Study (JHLAS) for 2014 contains the list of completions at Appendix 2. This shows that between April 2011 and March 2014 the total number of housing completions was 449 or 4.5% of 9,950. The number of completions since March 2014 is currently unknown and this will be surveyed in April 2015 for the next study.

Supplemental

Suggesting the the figures quoted resulted in a requirement of around 800 houses per year having to be built for the remainder of the Local Development Plan, Councillor Dr. Johnson asked the Cabinet Member whether the Council would be following Gwynedd Council's lead and reducing the target, or bringing back revised figures to the Council.

We have previously advised that all matters relating to the LDP including housing requirements will be carefully considered in the round. This means considering the responses to Deposit LDP, the responses to the alternative sites consultation and any other relevant changes that require the LDP to be updated. We cannot silo off housing as a separate issue. We must consider all relevant matters at the appropriate stage in the process.

The Cabinet Member stated that, as mentioned previously, when discussing housing numbers, there had been a period of economic downturn where house-building was lower, but building was now starting to increase. She pointed out that, of the 9950 units in the LDP, Policy SP3 required 2694 affordable housing units. In terms of

evidence, the Local Housing Market Assessment 2010 considered the nature and scale of the shortage of affordable housing and identified a need of 915 affordable units per year between 2010 and 2014. The figures contained in the LDP meant that affordable housing needs would not be met as the LDP actually only sought to contribute to this with about 2694 units. The Council needed to look at the whole before making any decisions. Knee-jerk reactions based purely on reduced number of house-building over a shorter period was not a sound approach.

(xix) Question from Councillor Dr. Ian Johnson

Could the Leader define what he means by 'permanent austerity', a phrase that he has been quoted as using in local press reports?

Response from the Leader

What I have actually done is quote other people who have used the phrase. The local press reports that Cllr. Johnson is referring to are in connection with the Council's reshaping services programme. As such, he will be aware that Central Government's austerity drive has created a period of unprecedented financial pressure in the public sector. Over the past 5 years the Vale of Glamorgan Council's budget has reduced by nearly £29m, with further substantial savings necessary in the next 3 years estimated in the latest draft Medium Term Financial Plan to equate to a reduction of over £32 million. If we want to continue to provide the services that we know our residents need, then we must find new ways of delivering them.

The reference to the phrase 'permanent austerity' is one that has been used by many analysts (and it is they I have quoted in press reports) to describe the position for the public sector and actually originated from the Prime Minister's speech at the annual Lord Mayor's Banquet in November 2013 where he signalled that austerity measures would continue after 2015 if the Conservatives won the next election.

As he outlined a vision of a heavily reduced public sector, the Prime Minister said that cutting the deficit was not just about "difficult decisions on public spending, It also means something more profound, it means building a leaner, more efficient state. We need to do more with less. Not just now, but permanently."

It is my sincere belief that such a policy is unsustainable. However, the position that we are presently faced with means that failure to deliver the required level of savings will not be an option for the Council and it remains the expectation is that this period of austerity will continue (as I have said in the past) for the foreseeable future.

Supplemental

Referring to the Welsh Government draft budget the following day, Councillor Dr. Johnson asked what representations the Council was making to ensure that local government, especially the Vale of Glamorgan Council, received a fair deal from Welsh Government.

The Leader indicated he had already made many representations (as had every other Leader in Wales) in relation to local government finance. One of the arguments made against the Williams Commission proposals was that, in times of such austerity, such an exercise was unaffordable. He would continue to try and strengthen finances available for local government as he had always done.

(xx) Question from Councillor Chris Franks

According to Welsh Government, Enterprise Zones are of crucial importance to the economy. How many jobs have been created in the Vale of Glamorgan Enterprise Zone?

Response from the Leader

Thank you for the question, this time to me instead of my Cabinet Colleague. I am afraid you will get a similar response.

As you know these are Welsh Government initiatives and a question relevant to them.

This is why I am surprised at this question, given that your Party has taken the matter to the Information Commissioner, complaining that statistics related to each Zone have not been released.

Your Party have asked Welsh Government for the number of jobs created in each of the seven Zones and you have now complained to the Commissioner, who is looking into the complaint. I suggest you await that outcome.

However we are aware from publically available information of 5142 jobs created and / or safeguarded across 7 Zones in two years (2012 – 2014).

This included 2159 new jobs in 188 businesses. There are 6500 jobs in the pipeline according to the First Minister.

Supplemental

Councillor Franks asked whether the Leader shared his concerns that the Minister was refusing to provide the information regarding Enterprise Zones.

The Leader reiterated the point that the decision was one for Welsh Government, but that, if he could extract the facts, he would do so.

(xxi) Question from Councillor Chris Franks

Will you report on the measures being undertaken to improve the attractiveness of Cardiff Wales Airport for both passengers and freight, detailing the authority's discussions with Welsh Government?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Innovation, Planning and Transportation

This is a matter for the Airport, as measures to improve the attractiveness of the Airport itself is a matter for the owners. That said, I can advise that over the last twelve months, considerable investment has been made to the internal layout of the terminal with investment in the baggage handling hall, the air side facilities as well as the facilities for customers within the entrance to the terminal. There have also been modifications to the access and parking arrangements, which have simplified the car parking process and drop off areas.

Supplemental

Referring to the Airport as an important economic asset for the Vale, Councillor Franks asked what steps the Council was taking to ensure that employment generation related to the airport was maximised.

The Cabinet Member indicated she would do as she would with any major private sector employer (such as Renishaws recently regarding vacancies). As such, the airport would be treated no differently to any other organisation capable of delivering economic benefits to the Vale of Glamorgan.

(xxii) Question from Councillor Chris Franks

Will you report on progress that has been achieved over the last 2 years to improve the infrastructure which will reduce traffic congestion across the county?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Innovation, Planning and Transportation

Bearing in mind the length of the meeting I am happy to e-mail to all Members a lengthy reply. I am equally happy to read the reply in full.

(N.B. Members agreed to receive the following reply by e-mail)

The Council has been very successful over recent years receiving a range of highway improvement grants aimed at improving highway safety, increasing network capacity and encouraging modal shift.

The following schemes have either been implemented or have been considered at feasibility stage and are currently awaiting funding:-

- Sycamore Cross Junction Improvements – This scheme was primarily road safety led and introduced to improve safety at the junction and also to create additional junction capacity for the future.
- Cardiff Road, Dinas Powys, Traffic Signals upgrade – The MOVA intelligent traffic signal system, which senses the length of traffic queues on the various

junction legs, was introduced to improve and optimise traffic flows at peak periods.

- Barons Court signalised junction and Barry Road – Re-design of lane arrangements on Barry Road and reconfiguration of signal timings at the Barons Court Junction to optimise and improve capacity and traffic throughput, particularly from Windsor road and Barry Road directions.
- Implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council – Aimed at reducing illegal and obstructive parking throughout the Vale, which can have a potential detrimental effect on traffic flows.
- Railway Walk, Penarth – The introduction of improved cycle facilities to provide safe, suitable, direct and usable infrastructure off the highway network to encourage modal shift and reduce the reliance on the use of private cars. This scheme has taken place against a backdrop of significant investment in walking and cycling within Penarth in recent years.
- Port Road, between Weycock Cross and the Barry Docks Link Road (BDLR) – The completion of ‘off road’ shared cycle / footway to increase safety and to encourage modal shift and reliance on the use of private cars. Funding has been awarded in 2014/15 to deliver a further element of this route between Barry Comprehensive School and Weycock Cross and is currently on site being delivered. This will, in time, connect to the shared cycle / footway recently completed along Port Road. £50,000 has also been awarded to fully design the off-road route from the Barry Docks Link Road to Culverhouse Cross. Funding is actively being sought to deliver this infrastructure; part of which will be delivered through development of the recently approved housing scheme adjoining Wenvoe Garden Centre.
- Gileston to Old Mill Highway, St. Athan, Highway improvement Scheme – Works to improve the alignment at Gileston are due for completion in December 2014. This is primarily a road safety scheme but it should improve travel times between the western rural Vale and population Centres located in Barry, Penarth and Cardiff. It will also aid movement within the Enterprise Zone.
- Porthkerry Road, Rhose – The completion of ‘off road’ shared cycle / footway to increase safety and to encourage modal shift and reliance on the use of private cars. Further funding has been made available to extend this route through Porthkerry Country Park through the use of Creative Rural Communities funding and will be delivered this financial year.
- Numerous walking schemes have been implemented via the Rural Development Plan for Wales via the ‘Rural Footpath Grant’ and have been match funded mainly through the Rights of Way Improvement grants, S106 funding as well as contributions from Community Councils and other sources. Examples include:

- Footpath Improvements in Ewenny and Corntown, Cowbridge Footpath Improvements linking the town centre with the comprehensive school and a new footpath linking St. Marys Church with The Herberts.
- National Cycle Network (NCN) improvement works – To accommodate cycling facilities at the British Airways Maintenance Centre (BAMC) roundabout, Rhoose and at Llanmaes Road at the Llantwit Major Bypass traffic signals, to improve cycling safety and to encourage modal shift reducing reliance on the use of private cars.

The following schemes to improve traffic flows have been progressed to feasibility stage.

- Barry Docks Link Road / Port Road roundabout junction – A proposal to signalise the roundabout junction or increase capacity of the roundabout.
- Colcot Road / Port Road – A proposal to improve lane allocation and roundabout capacity.
- McDonalds roundabout (Cardiff Road / Barry Docks Link Road) – A range of proposals are being considered to improve traffic flows and capacity, ranging from minor works to a significant reconstruction of the junction.
- Merrie Harrier traffic signal junction, Penarth – Various proposals are being considered to improve traffic flows and capacity ranging from minor works to a significant reconstruction of the junction.
- Pill Street / Windsor Road – Junction changes are being considered which could improve traffic flows at this location.

Funding is currently awaited for these schemes though they are now ready to commence to design stage should funding become available at any time.

In addition, officers are shortly to undertake a 'metro' study to review options for improving bus infrastructure and priority along the Port Road corridor from Culverhouse Cross to St. Athan and the Cardiff Road corridor from Barry to Cardiff. This work, funded by a Welsh Government grant, is due to commence this calendar year and is aimed at reducing reliance on use of private cars along these routes.

Individual traffic studies and investigations of junction loadings will be undertaken as and when required as developments progress through the Local Development Plan. Members will be aware that major development proposals require Transport assessments which inform the need, or otherwise, to improve capacity of the highway and public transport network. Members will also be aware that the Local Development Plan makes provision for sites to bring forward new road and public transport infrastructure.

As well as considering traffic congestion, we also have a duty to consider sustainable travel when considering new development and, currently, the Council

benefits from the following funding streams to provide infrastructure and services to encourage sustainable modes of travel to try to reduce congestion as follows:

- Council's own funding through Capital and Revenue budgets
- S106 Planning obligation contributions
- Various Welsh Government Grants, such as Road Safety grants, Safe routes in Communities and Regional Transport Services Grant
- European funding via the Creative Rural Communities rural regeneration programme
- As a Council, we have introduced a policy to top slice S106 sustainable transport contributions to support community and public transport in order to provide choice of travel modes

Finally, a Task and Finish Group from the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee, which concluded its work in April 2014, identified a range of actions and further measures to assist in reducing traffic congestion across the County. These actions are being progressed, with the Scrutiny Committee due to receive an update on progress at the end of this current financial year.

(xxiii) Question from Councillor Chris Williams

Since I brought this matter to the attention of the then Director twelve years ago and subsequently, it was decided that a new junction was the best option to replace the unsafe bridge, I and the residents of Dinas Powys have waited patiently for a safer junction, one of only two serving the southern half of the largest Village in the Vale. Householders have been flooded again in this time but unlike other areas of the Vale there is never any money in the budget to address this serious problem, so can you please tell me.

Are we insured against any third party claims in respect to damage caused by structural failures in view of the fact that an independent report by Capita Symonds in February 2013 stated that, 'the bridge deck should be replaced within the next 12 months'.

Is the junction dependent on planning permission being given for a housing development on Cross Common Road?

Has agreement been reached with the land owner for purchase of the land? If not, is there a deadline for purchase?

If unable to reach agreement on land purchase, will the scheme to replace the deck of the existing bridge be reinstated and when will this work actually start?

Has the new road layout been fully designed ready to tender or has it been tendered?

The existing bridge is structurally unsafe and should be closed. How can the council justify putting people at risk, when a structural report clearly stated the bridge should be closed by February 2014?

Response from the Leader

I am a little surprised at Councillor Williams' questions as I understand that he was provided with a detailed update on the position with the replacement of this bridge, in writing, on 29th August 2014.

He will be aware that the previous correspondence advised that officers were hoping to conclude in principle negotiations with the agents acting on behalf of the landowners, where the new road junction is to be created, within the next 8 to 10 weeks; this is now 4 to 6 weeks.

The Council's technical officers consider that the existing structure is safe for traffic as normal and are continuing to inspect the bridge and its propping structure at regular intervals. Officers recently commissioned a further independent bridge inspection and report from Capita Symonds, the consultants who produced the 2013 structural report, and this concluded, "As no significant deterioration has been observed since the previous inspection, it is considered that the bridge is able to continue in service whilst a replacement option is currently being reviewed by the Authority". The Council is insured for third party claims in respect of all damage or personal injury which occurs on the adopted highway, which are proved to be the responsibility of the Council, so there are no additional liability concerns.

The agreement to transfer land to the Council will be dependent on outline planning permission being approved for housing on the site. However, such permission will be determined independently of the land negotiations by the Council's Planning Department.

A preliminary layout for the new road alignment has been prepared and is being discussed as part of the negotiations with the landowner's agents. The detailed design and tender for the new road alignment is unlikely to take place until the completion of negotiations and any relevant planning permissions being obtained.

As you have previously been advised, if we are unable to reach agreement with the landowner's agents, works to replace the existing bridge deck at its current location will commence early in 2015.

Our officers will ensure that local Members continue (as they have been) to be kept informed as the land negotiations progress.

Supplemental

Councillor Williams asked the Leader to indicate whether the relevant Cabinet Member would be available to attend another site meeting to face residents who were "fed up" of waiting for a junction.

The Leader considered the position to have been made perfectly clear and that, as far as he was aware, Councillor Williams had agreed with the proposal as, indeed, other local Members did. He reiterated the fact that the consultants' report had indicated there had been no further deterioration and that the bridge was quite safe.

He considered the best option would be to have a new junction and, if the Council could achieve that through the planning process, he felt that was the best way forward.

The Leader remarked that, having asked him the question, Councillor Williams was now seeking the attendance of the Cabinet Member at a residents' meeting.