

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Special meeting held on 8th March, 2019 at 4.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor Leighton Rowlands (Mayor); Councillors Julie Aviet, Vincent Bailey, Rhiannon Birch, Jonathan Bird, Bronwen Brooks, Lis Burnett, George Carroll, Janice Charles, Robert Crowley, Andrew Davies, Pamela Drake, Vincent Driscoll, Stewart Edwards, Owen Griffiths, Stephen Griffiths, Sally Hanks, Nic Hodges, Hunter Jarvie, Gwyn John, Dr. Ian Johnson, Gordon Kemp, Peter King, Kevin Mahoney, Kathryn McCaffer, Anne Moore, Neil Moore, Michael Morgan, Jayne Norman, Rachel Nugent-Finn, Andrew Parker, Bob Penrose, Sandra Perkes, Andrew Robertson, Ruba Sivagnanam, John Thomas, Neil Thomas, Margaret Wilkinson, Edward Williams, Mark Wilson and Marguerita Wright.

833 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors Christine Cave, Amelia Collins, Geoff Cox, Ben Gray and Steffan Wiliam.

834 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

835 FINAL PROPOSALS FOR THE REVENUE BUDGET 2019/20 (L) –

The report detailed the final proposals for the Revenue Budget for the Council for the financial year 2019/2020.

The Leader referred to the previous Revenue Budget proposals presented to the Council the previous week. He indicated that at that time he outlined the rationale for the setting of the 2019/2020 Revenue Budget.

Therefore, he did not intend to repeat the details that he set out the previous week other than to remind Members of the following:

- The report detailed the reduction in funding from Welsh Government of £1.181m or 0.77% from the previous year;
- The proposed budget identified net growth £5.488m and savings of £2.92m excluding schools and £3.744m including schools;
- The draft budget proposed to fund schools £4.799m above their indicator based assessment for 2019/2020;
- The savings are lower than in previous years and reflect the increasing difficulty in identifying and delivering new savings;
- You will also recall that the report proposed the use £2m from the Council Fund to support the revenue budget in 2019/20 with a further £1m to be utilised in 2020/2021;

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- The report proposed a budget of £226.098m for 2019/2020, resulting in a Council Tax increase of 4.9%.

He further indicated that the revised report also included:

- An additional cost pressure of £100,000 to support strategic bus routes and community facilities;
- Additional savings of £100,000 which has been achieved by bringing forward savings from 2020/2021 to 2019/2020. These savings would be found within the Managing Director and Resources Directorate.

The revised proposals would set a net Revenue Budget of £226.098m for 2019/2020 which would result in a Council Tax increase of 4.9%. Summarising, the Leader stated that the balancing of the budget for 2019/2020 had been difficult due to the competing pressures faced by the Authority. However, he believed the budget before Council was achievable and accordingly moved the following Motion:

1. To fix the budget for 2019/20 at £226.098m including a provision of £240k for discretionary rate relief to rural shops and post offices and charitable organisations;
2. Approve the budgets for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix C and in the following table:

	£000
Schools	87,896
Strategy, Culture, Community Learning & Resources	11,110
Achievement for All	5,339
School Improvement	1,030
Directors Office	234
Children & Young People	16,098
Adult Services	47,957
Resource Mgt & Safeguarding	272
Youth Offending Service	741
Neighbourhood & Transport Services	26,792
Building Services	0
Regulatory Services	2,041
Council Fund Housing	1,309
Resources	14
Regeneration	2,057
Development Management	967
Private Housing	1,209
General Policy	23,032
Use of Reserves	(2,000)
Grand Total	226,098

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3. Approve the recommendations regarding Net Growth for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix D and Savings for 2018/19 as set out in Appendix E to the report;
4. Set the Council Tax for 2019/20 for its own purposes (excluding Police and Town and Community Council precepts) at the following levels:

Band	Council Tax £
A	830.04
B	968.38
C	1,106.72
D	1,245.06
E	1,521.74
F	1,798.42
G	2,075.10
H	2,490.12
I	2,905.14

5. The proposed draft report on Education Budget and Indicator Based Assessment (IBA) at Appendix A to the report be endorsed and the Director of Learning and Skills make arrangements for it to be forwarded to the School Budget Forum;
6. The initial savings for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 as set out in Appendix F to the report be approved;
7. The Director of Learning and Skills be given delegated powers to determine the amount of money to be allocated to the schools' delegated budgets after consultation with the Schools Budget Forum;
8. The reclassification of reserves as set out in Appendix H to the report be approved.

The Motion was duly seconded by the Deputy Leader.

Councillor Burnett outlined the concerns of the Labour Group in relation to the original Revenue Budget which were laid out clearly by Councillor Moore in the debate the previous week. They felt that whilst the figures stacked up regarding the proposals set out in the most recent report and there was a focus on maintaining services (which was in line with the wishes of Vale residents), they had continuing doubts over the delivery of projects and the achievement of savings. These had been brought into sharp focus when discussing delayed maintenance projects which were, in the main, about equality and support for communities.

She had also welcomed the opportunity to discuss their concerns and reach agreement on a number of key areas, for example:

Creation of specific funding for upgrading to older and Victorian Schools in the Vale and proposed Town Centre on-street parking charges would not now go ahead;

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The Group were also pleased to see the essential bus services 95A/B, raised by Councillor Wilson the previous week and the X91 would now continue;

That the LED replacements of non-standard lights such as Victorian or specialised lamp posts would be reviewed, including the cost-effectiveness of replacement before continuing the programme;

The agreement to support the establishment of the new community facility in St. Paul's and a Masterplan for Gibbonsdown, which would guide the development of community facilities in the area.

Councillor Burnett also referred to the previous meeting where the large disparity in geographic distribution of Strong Communities grant funding was of concern. Her Group welcomed the agreement to provide support to under-represented communities and also the spread of funding awarded would be fully evaluated.

She indicated that whilst on the surface all appeared to be fine, the heart of the Group's concern related to proposals that did not work and the impact of missed savings targets on Council Tax payers and she looked forward to the strengthening of scrutiny to give the public the confidence that matters were being properly monitored and looked forward to developments over the coming months.

In concluding, she alluded to the Group's position which was not about making grandiose statements and claims for either tax funding or for Council Tax cuts. She indicated that she would be supporting the Budget proposals.

Councillor Dr. Johnson, the Leader of the Plaid Cymru Group, intimated that it would be no surprise that he intended to move an amendment to the Budget proposals.

He indicated that when speaking in debates at Council meetings he did so in good faith and explained how he reached his decisions, however it was not always clear how other Members did so.

He referred to the previous week's meeting and events when he suggested a reduction in Council Tax of just under 3.5% which was comparable for all bands with a draw down from the substantial reserves of the Council. He also referred to the fact that certain Members opposed his proposal and also the proposal for a 4.9% Council Tax rise without reasons. He could only assume those Members wanted an even higher Council Tax rise.

Councillor Dr. Johnson also reiterated his comments relating to substantial reserves, under-borrowed in terms of financial exposure and systematically over collecting Council Tax revenue in previous years, £1.8m being the figure last year. Only four Local Authorities in Wales assumed they would collect a lower percentage of Council Tax and referred to the three lowest. In support of comments made by Councillor John the previous week, he noted that the Council had the second highest percentage increase in Council Tax eligible homes in Wales in the last year and the fifth highest in real numbers behind RCT and Cardiff.

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In concluding, Councillor Dr. Johnson alluded to the impact on the budget as a result of teachers' superannuation costs being passed on to the Council rather than met by UK and Welsh Governments. He was surprised that the Leader had made no reference to the Welsh Government Minister's announcement that Welsh Government would in fact be funding these costs. He personally hoped that the funding would be forthcoming and any resulting savings passed on to schools.

Councillor Dr. Johnson moved the following Amendment:

"That £3m be taken from Reserves for the financial year 2019/20 thereby reducing the General Fund balance in the overall total accordingly, and consequently, the Council Tax rise proposed would be reduced to 3.48% equivalent to a Council Tax level for Band D reduced to £1,228.22 with all other bands being altered accordingly."

Councillor Hodges duly seconded the Amendment.

Councillor Neil Moore, the Leader of the Labour Group, indicated that he did not intend to reiterate many of his points that he had made at the previous meeting. That said, given the position of the Council in regard to its reserves and the proposals in front of Council, including Councillor Dr. Johnson's Amendment in relation to the use of reserves, he indicated that his stance on the use of additional reserves had not changed from the previous week's deliberations. He also alluded to the Council's precarious position in positioning itself appropriately to make the relevant savings targets. Therefore, he indicated that he would not be supporting the Amendment.

Councillor Mahoney echoed his previous comments made at the last meeting in regard to the national Labour and Conservative Parties' support of international funding, including the UK's contribution to the EU. He considered the matter to be very relevant given that on the other hand, the Council was expecting Tax payers of the County to pay increased Council Tax.

The Leader, indicated that he was not surprised at the Amendment put forward by Councillor Dr. Johnson and concurred with Councillor Moore's view of the Council's position in relation to the use of its reserves. The proposals to use an unprecedented amount of reserves was in order to keep the Council Tax rise to one of the lowest in Wales. He reminded Councillor Dr. Johnson that the over collection of Council Tax had formed part of the Council's reserves which were now being used to reduce the proposed Council Tax. The Council had provided funding in relation to teachers' pension contribution and consequently no schools were suffering any disadvantage and consequently indicated that he would be opposing the amendment.

Councillor John indicated that whilst he supported the Amendment at the previous meeting of Council, events had since moved on. He alluded to the changes set out in the revised Proposed Budget and indicated that he was pleased that discussions were now taking place around proposed car parking charges.

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

Councillor Neil Thomas, on behalf of himself and Councillor Sivagnanam, welcomed the new funding for the Community Hub at St. Pauls in Penarth which was much needed and crucial support for what he considered the wellbeing of residents in their Ward and the wider community. He also restated his support for public transport in Penarth and looked forward to working with officers to make the proposals a success and indicated that he and Councillor Sivagnanam would be supporting the Motion.

Councillor Wilkinson, echoing the comments of Councillor Neil Thomas, also indicated that she was pleased to see support within the budget proposals for a wider master plan for Gibbonsdown and she signalled that she would be supporting the Motion.

Councillor John, referring to the Council's proposals for car parking charges, sought clarification from the Leader if on-street car parking charges were to be removed given their implications for users, particularly in Llantwit Major. He also viewed the Council's Reshaping Services programme as a complete waste of time based on his personal knowledge in relation to Llantwit Major Town Council's progress on the subject. That said, he was pleased to see that there was funding to supporting the X91 bus service and also other bus services in the Vale.

Councillor Kemp, in referring to specific points raised by Councillor Burnett which he considered in part to be referring to Penarth Leisure Centre, suggested that Councillor Burnett read his reply to her question a year ago which indicated that if the project had been managed properly the work would have been completed under the Labour Administration, but unfortunately it had not. He also alluded to the additional funding proposed in the budget which was proposed to be met from planned savings being brought forward. He also bore in mind Councillor Moore's previous comments made at the last meeting, indicating concerns about savings that were not being made or should have been made, but now the proposals under consideration were seeking to bring forward planned savings from later financial years. Whilst indicating that these were small amounts he was unsure how these were going to be achieved.

Councillor Dr. Johnson indicated that he would be voting against the Motion for the reasons he had outlined at the Council meeting the previous week. That said, he did admire the tenacity of the Leader of the Council who had negotiated with the Labour Group to reach a deal on the Budget, given the prevailing political environment. He did not agree with the manner or method of reaching such an agreement to get the Budget approved. In principal, he considered that this was not the right way, but both Groups had a lot in common.

Referring to the refreshed Budget, he concurred with certain points made by Councillor Burnett and acknowledged that some were good ideas, but not actually part of the proposals under consideration. Referring to repairs to the fabric of Victorian and more modern schools, he concluded in citing the previous report of the relevant Scrutiny Committee then chaired by Councillor Hodges, and reminded all

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that the repairs referred to by Councillor Burnett were not undertaken during the previous Labour Administration. Turning to the Strong Communities Funds and the comments made at the previous week's Council meeting, he acknowledged that there was a potential flaw in the application process and it was something that he and the Glamorgan Voluntary Services informed Councillor Moore, the then Leader, and Councillor Burnett at relevant meetings as far back as 2017. He sought an assurance that with this deal that future applications would be dealt with in an equitable manner not favouring one part of the Vale to the detriment of Barry.

Touching upon supported bus services in the County, he welcomed the proposals to invest in such services, however, he considered that lessons must be learned about how those services which were struggling could be more successfully operated in the future, particularly when Cardiff Bus had declared those services as unviable. He also took on board the comments of the Leader in regard to the Council's funding of teachers' pension contributions, but considered the Council was now funding this from Council Tax. He considered that when the grant funding was received from Welsh Government that this should not rest in the Council's bank account, but be used to ensure schools had appropriate funded budgets so that they did not have to make staff redundant.

Councillor Perkes indicated that she would be supporting the Motion, acknowledging proposals for upgrading older Victorian schools in the Vale.

Councillor Moore, referring to teachers' pensions contributions, indicated that it was right not to include the Welsh Government funding in the proposed Budget Proposals previously, as there had been no confirmation as to the total funding envelope that would be received. He disagreed with Councillor Kemp's comments in regard to Leisure Centres, reminding him that consultants were appointed in May 2017, at the time when the Administration changed. Referring to Councillor Mahoney's comments in relation to the International Development Fund he considered overall individuals' tax contributions to the Fund and to the EU were very small amounts.

His attention then turned to the unprecedented events of the previous week and urged Members to put the matter behind them. Empathising with the Leader's circumstances, he also concurred with the Leader's earlier comments in that he also only had the interest of the Council and residents and tax payers at the heart of his concerns and thanked the Leader and Deputy Leader for agreeing to the additional funding now contained within the proposals. On balance, he and his Group believed that it would be irresponsible not to agree to set a budget at the meeting and leave vital services in jeopardy and the most vulnerable unprotected and in limbo. Therefore, he indicated that he and his Group would be supporting the Motion.

Councillor Hodges, referring to an interesting debate and alluding to the Labour Group's list of demands, suggested that the upgrade to Victorian schools had already been requested by the Scrutiny Committee, but not yet costed; the removal of on-street parking charges, he was not sure if that had been totally agreed; supported bus services, £100k, referred to paragraph 4.14 of the report, which stated included £90k to "support if necessary and appropriate" and therefore considered this to be ambiguous; increased scrutiny, which was at no cost to the Council and

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he considered that all Members should do their jobs better and finally, in regard to funding for St. Paul's Church in Penarth and work on community facilities in Gibbonsdown, there was no commitment for any spending just officers' time. In regard to Strong Communities Grant, the equal geographical distribution of grant funding was the minimum he expected.

The Leader, in summing up, commenced by referring to the Council's proposed Car Parking Policy, and whilst not wishing to pre-determine the outcome of consultation on the issue which would be reported to Cabinet shortly, he intimated that it was not difficult to agree to the Labour Group's request given that his Administration had already decided that they were not going to propose to place parking meters in the High Streets of the County. In regard to LED lighting, moving forward there would be a cost benefit analysis undertaken. His attention then turning to the St. Paul's Church community space, he had personal worries about the issue as a long-time member of the Project Board. Referring to being the Chair of the Management Committee of The Gathering Place, he was aware of the running costs associated with the annual rental and consequently, the inclusion of funding to kick start the project could only be a good thing for the community.

In referring to Councillor Mahoney's comments in regard to foreign aid, he was pleased to say that that was well above his pay grade and he would therefore not be touching upon the matter any further.

In terms of his meeting with Councillors N. Moore and Burnett with the Deputy Leader, he considered all the points that had been raised during those discussions had been sensible and he was happy to agree to. He indicated that he was happy to have any conversation or discussions with any Member of the Council on any issues which they would like to bring to his attention and he would do the best that he could do to assist them in supporting them.

In turning to the points raised by Councillor John, he reiterated that he did not wish to predetermine the matter. Both of the relevant Scrutiny Committees would be discussing the matter and he hoped Members would be reasonably pleased with the draft proposals when it was considered by the Cabinet shortly. Referring to Councillor Kemp and Councillor N. Moore's comments in regard to savings, he reminded Members that the savings brought forward were to be met from the Managing Director's Department, given that that Department had reached its savings target previously and therefore he had no doubt that the target would be achieved on this occasion.

Taking up the point raised by Councillor Dr. Johnson in regard to Strong Communities Grant and also mentioned by Councillor Burnett, he had taken on board the points raised by Members, but suggested that the "playing field" was level acknowledging that some communities may need additional support to provide capacity to submit grant applications. He was accordingly prepared to look at that and see what could be done to ensure all stakeholders had an equal opportunity to access support. The Leader had also noted Councillor Dr. Johnson's remarks in regard to schools and deficit budgets and pointed out that schools had been protected almost over and above any other service of the Council and it was his

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intention to continue to do that, however, he was requiring schools to make some small savings in the next financial year.

In concluding, he acknowledged Councillor Hodges' point raised in regard to repairs to Victorian schools and the Council's Car Parking Policy and had no doubt that the matter would be further discussed at the relevant Scrutiny Committees. Therefore, he hoped that Members would support the budget.

A Recorded Vote then took place on the recommendations before Council:

Members	For	Against	Abstain
Julie Aviet	√		
Vince Bailey			√
Rhiannon Birch	√		
Jonathan Bird	√		
Bronwen Brooks	√		
Lis Burnett	√		
George Carroll			√
Janice Charles			√
Robert Crowley	√		
Andrew Davies			√
Pamela Drake	√		
Vince Driscoll			√
Steward Edwards	√		
Owen Griffiths	√		
Stephen Griffiths			√
Sally Hanks	√		
Nic Hodges		√	
Hunter Jarvie	√		
Gwyn John	√		
Ian Johnson		√	
Gordon Kemp			√
Peter King	√		
Kevin Mahoney		√	
Kathryn McCaffer	√		
Anne Moore	√		

No.

Neil Moore	√		
Michael Morgan	√		
Jayne Norman	√		
Rachel Nugent-Finn			√
Andrew Parker	√		
Bob Penrose	√		
Sandra Perkes	√		
Andy Robertson			√
Leighton Rowlands			√
Ruba Sivagnanam	√		
John Thomas	√		
Neil Thomas	√		
Margaret Wilkinson	√		
Edward Williams	√		
Mark Wilson	√		
Marguerita Wright			√
TOTAL	27	3	11

It being duly

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the budget for 2019/20 at £226.098 million including a provision of £240k for discretionary rate relief to rural shops and post offices and charitable organisations.

(2) T H A T the budgets for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix C to the report and in the following table be approved:

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Grand Total	226,098

(3) T H A T the recommendations regarding Net Growth for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix D and Savings for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix E to the report be approved.

(4) T H A T the Council Tax for 2019/20 be set for its own purposes (excluding Police and town and Community Council precepts) at the following levels:

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A	830.04
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(5) T H A T the proposed draft report on Education Budget and Indicator Based Assessment (IBA) at Appendix B to the report be endorsed and the Director of Learning and Skills make arrangements for it to be forwarded to the School Budget Forum.

(6) T H A T the initial savings targets for 2020/21 and 2021/22 as set out in Appendix F to the report be approved.

(7) T H A T the Director of Learning and Skills be given delegated powers to determine the amount of money to be allocated to the schools' delegated budgets after consultation with the Schools Budget Forum.

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(8) T H A T the reclassification of reserves as set out at Appendix H to the report be approved.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To set the 2019/20 budget in line with statutory requirements.
- (2) To allocate budgets to services.
- (3) To reduce risk to services and balance the budget.
- (4) To set Council Tax levels for 2019/20.
- (5) So that the report can be presented to the Schools Budget Forum.
- (6) To set minimum targets for achieving savings.
- (7) To set out delegated authority in relation to the allocation of the Education and Schools budget.
- (8) To ensure that reserves are both adequate in purpose and level.