

Minutes of the Meeting of COUNCIL
held at Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely via
video conference on Thursday, 14th December 2023

PRESENT: Councillor Maldwyn Lewis (Chair), Councillors Shelley Childs, Bryan Davies, Catrin M S Davies, Clive Davies, Euros Davies, Gareth Davies, Gethin Davies, Ifan Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Amanda Edwards, Endaf Edwards, Elizabeth Evans, Eryl Evans, Gwyn Wigley Evans, Keith Evans, Raymond Evans, Wyn Evans, Keith Henson, Paul Hinge, Hugh R M Hughes, Chris James, Gwyn James, Ceris Jones, Gareth Lloyd, Sian Maehrlein, Ann Bowen Morgan, Caryl Roberts, Mark Strong, Wyn Thomas, Matthew Vaux, Alun Williams and Carl Worrall.

(10.00am - 12.35pm

1.05pm - 2.10pm)

Procedure

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Maldwyn Lewis welcomed all to the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was being webcasted.

1 Apologies

- a) Councillor John Roberts apologised for his inability to attend the meeting;
- b) Councillors Elaine Evans and Rhodri Evans apologised for their inability to attend the meeting due to other Council duties.

2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests

- a) Councillors Bryan Davies, Gareth Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Wyn Evans, Gareth Lloyd and Matthew Vaux declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 8, noting that they had received dispensation to speak and to vote on this item;
- b) Councillors Ifan Davies and Chris James declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 8, noting that they had received dispensation to speak only on this item;
- c) Councillor Catrin M S Davies declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 8, noting that she had received dispensation to speak and to vote on the matter of second homes; and dispensation to speak only on the matter of long-term empty properties;
- d) Councillors Gethin Davies and Eryl Evans declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 8, and withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on this item;
- e) Councillors Bryan Davies, Euros Davies, Endaf Edwards, and Chris James declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 10, and withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on this item;
- f) Councillor Maldwyn Lewis declared a personal interest in relation to item 12;
- g) Eifion Evans, Chief Executive declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 10, in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Local Government and withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on this item.

Councillor Euros Davies noted that there is an empty farm property in his Ward which is held in trust by the Council. The Monitoring Officer advised that Council-appointed Trustees are exempt from prejudicial status.

3 Personal matters

- a) Councillor Maldwyn Lewis extended his sympathies to Councillor Wyn Evans on his recent bereavement;
- b) Councillor Carl Worrall congratulated the Carers' Team on their excellent workshop held at Theatr Felinfach recently;
- c) Councillor Carl Worrall congratulated Pamela Worrall on achieving 4th place in the World Sea Angling Championships in Sicily. She is now ranked 12th in the world;
- d) Councillor Gareth Davies congratulated George Ryley on reaching the short-list as "Individual of the Year" at the recent GO Wales awards and wished him well upon his retirement at the end of December.
- e) Councillor Euros Davies congratulated all Ceredigion competitors on their success at the recent Winter Fair, many winning first prizes and championships;
- f) Councillor Euros Davies congratulated Mr Denley Jenkins on being elected President of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show 2024.

4 Declaration of Acceptance of Office and an Undertaking to comply with the Code of Conduct by Councillor Shelley Childs

Chairman welcomed Councillor Shelley Childs to his first meeting of Council and wished him well in his role.

Elin Prysor, Monitoring Officer addressed the Council on the statutory requirement for all Members to make a Declaration of Acceptance and an undertaking to comply with the Code of Conduct, confirming that Councillor Shelley Childs in making his statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office had received comprehensive training on the Council's Code of Conduct on Monday 20th November 2023.

This is in order for him to perform his functions with an understanding of the Principles of Public Life, his duties and responsibilities under the Code, and also the consequences for failing to do so.

Councillor Shelley Childs verbally accepted his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the undertaking to comply with the Code of Conduct which had been previously signed by him and countersigned by the Proper Officer.

The Leader of the Council, and both Leaders of the opposition congratulated Councillor Shelley Childs and wished him well in his role.

5 Minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 26 October 2023

A Recorded vote was taken, as agreed and in accordance with Rule 14.5 of the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution ...

Additional text:

“upon the following recommendation:

That Council (acting as the Registration Authority) finds that the doctrine of statutory incompatibility prevents the registration of the Land as a Village Green and accordingly Council refuses the Application to register the Land as a Village Green.

Members voted as follows:”

Councillor Gareth Davies asked that the wording of the declaration of interest in agenda item 2: Declarations of personal and prejudicial interest is also reflected in the agenda item that the declaration refers to.

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm as a true record the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 October 2023, subject to the above amendments.

Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

6 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Policy, Performance and Public Protection upon a proposal to ban the giving of live animals as prizes on Ceredigion County Council property

Councillor Matthew Vaux, Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection presented the report noting that careful planning and consideration needs to be in place prior to the purchase of an animal and that a campaign by the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has led to this proposal to implement a ban on giving live animals as prizes on Ceredigion County Council property. He noted that the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (applicable in both England and Wales), does not forbid giving live animals as prizes unless they are given to unaccompanied children, however the RSPCA believes that this legislation does not go far enough and does not cover the animal welfare issues associated with this practice.

Councillor Caryl Roberts, Chair of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that this report was considered by the committee and that they were very happy to support this proposal as animal health and welfare is especially important to us having a strong agricultural economy.

Following discussion, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council implements an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on Council land.

7 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Policy, Performance and Public Protection upon the Ceredigion County Council Self-Assessment Report 2022/23

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and Public Protection and People and Organisation presented the report to Council noting that Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced a new Self-Assessment based performance regime for Principal Councils, which include

5 specific duties. He noted that since April 2023 Ceredigion County Council has been undertaking its latest round of self-assessment which has been reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillor Keith Evans, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee noted that the committee has discussed the report in detail and recommended its approval by Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the Self-Assessment Report 2022/23 including the Annual Review of Performance and Well-being Objectives, and
2. Approve that the Corporate Well-being Objectives to remain unchanged for the next year.

8 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Finance and Procurement upon the Council Tax Premiums applicable to Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes in Ceredigion

Councillors Bryan Davies, Gareth Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Wyn Evans, Gareth Lloyd and Matthew Vaux were given dispensation to speak and to vote on this item.

Councillors Ifan Davies and Chris James were given dispensation to speak but not to vote on this item.

Councillor Catrin M S Davies was given dispensation to speak and to vote on matters relating to second homes and to speak but not to vote on matters relating to long-term empty properties.

Councillor Gethin Davies and Eryl Evans withdrew from the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and Public Protection and People and Organisation presented the report to Council noting that on the instruction of Cabinet, a 6 week formal Public Consultation on the future level of Council Tax Premiums on both Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes in Ceredigion was held between 18 September and the end of October 2023, and that a Cross-Party Working Group was also established. Cabinet considered the findings of the consultation and comments received from the Cross-Party Working Group and agreed the recommendations. It was noted that if an increase to the Council Tax Premiums was agreed by Council, Members would need to agree what to do with any additional income at a future meeting, and that in terms of timing there would be a phased approach reviewed continually in terms of the number of houses being available, and the number of homes returning to the stock of available homes. He noted that potential income has not been a consideration in bringing the recommendation to Council and noted that housing affordability for young people was a consideration, which also impacts upon the Welsh language if people cannot afford to live in their communities.

Councillor Gareth Davies noted that Council decided in March 2016 to increase the Council Tax premium on Long Term empty properties and Second homes in Ceredigion by a premium of 25% from 1 April 2017. He noted that in accordance with legislation, a long-term empty property is defined as a dwelling that has been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least 12 months with the furnishing or occupation of a dwelling for one or more periods of six weeks or less not affecting a dwelling's status as a Long-term empty dwelling. The legislation defined Second homes as 'Dwellings occupied periodically' which are substantially furnished but not lived in by a permanent resident. All references to Second homes therefore are to 'Dwellings occupied periodically'.

He noted that the report to Cabinet contained information relating to the number of properties in Ceredigion in each premium category, the areas in Ceredigion with the highest concentration / volume of these properties, the age profile of the long-term empty properties in Ceredigion, the Ceredigion Community Housing scheme, the legislative background, and the timeline and associated governance requirements. He also noted that there were 1,403 responses to the public consultation, which is the second highest ever response to consultations by Ceredigion County Council.

Councillor Gareth Davies noted that addressing the issues of second homes, holiday homes ownership and the conversion of residential properties to holiday lets is a key priority within the Council's approved 2022-2027 Corporate Strategy. This and increasing the supply and range of options for affordable housing in Ceredigion forms a key part of the Corporate Wellbeing Objective - 'Creating Sustainable, Green and Well-connected Communities'.

Councillor Paul Hinge asked what could be done to ensure a consistent approach in terms of empty homes which that are partially furnished that give the impression of being lived in when they are not. The Corporate Lead Officer for Finance and Procurement noted that there is always a risk when changing the premium categories, however there is resource within the team and processes are in place to deal with such situations to minimise avoidance measures, but that this is an area where an increase in resources is required.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd asked about the impact upon holiday lets if they do not meet the business rates criteria of 182 days' occupancy per annum from 1 April 2024, whether holiday lets subject to a planning clause which restricts occupancy all year round would be exempt and whether the current arrangements in terms of allocation of income from the premiums would still apply. These questions were reiterated by several other Members during the discussion.

Councillor Gareth Davies noted that the changes relating to the 182 days' let criteria is as a result of Welsh Government legislation and is not within the control of Ceredigion County Council and that this is policed by the Valuation Office Agency, and it was noted that a Class 6 exemption clause would apply to seasonal homes. The Corporate Lead Officer: Finance and Procurement also confirmed that under WG legislation, the Class 6 Premium exemption

now extends to include dwellings restricted by a planning condition which either prevents occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in any one year period or which specifies that the dwelling may only be used for a holiday let or which prevents occupancy as a person's sole or main residence. These Premium exemptions would also apply if a property reverts back to Council Tax by virtue of not hitting the 182 days threshold to remain on Business Rates.

Eifion Evans, Chief Executive confirmed that determinations relating to the allocation of the 25% premium is a political decision, which will remain in place until 1st April 2024, and that a political decision would be required at the end of March 2024 as part of setting the budget. Duncan Hall, the Corporate Lead Officer for Finance and Procurement confirmed that there is currently £1.8million in Community Housing Scheme, and it is anticipated that this will increase to circa £2.5million by the end of the year, which will remain in this scheme.

Councillor Gwyn Wigley Evans noted that Ceredigion County Council should raise the premium to its maximum of 300%, in order to keep up with other authorities who have previously increased their rates, as some may decide to move here if neighbouring authorities decide to increase their premiums further. He noted that due to the current circumstances, we are unable to build, however empty homes do not require planning permission.

Councillor Marc Davies reiterated the importance of supporting young people to remain in their communities, but asked if there was evidence that raising the premium would result in the desired outcomes, as opposed to resulting in the sale of holiday let businesses resulting in more second homes.

Councillor Catrin M S Davies outlined the impact in terms of smaller properties being bought as second homes, and the lack of contribution made to the local community and its economy where such properties remain empty for a significant period of the year. She noted that the 182 day clause did not sit comfortably with her either, however it should be noted that it is a luxury to own two homes when some people do not have anywhere to call home.

Councillor Ann Bowen Morgan noted that she agreed with the recommendations, and that an increase to 150% may encourage people to sell their second homes giving others an opportunity to buy. She noted that 75% of the owners of second homes live outside of Ceredigion, with many of these from England which has a detrimental impact upon the language.

Councillor Euros Davies noted that he was more willing to see an increase in premiums on empty properties as several in his ward are falling into disrepair, which de-values neighbouring properties, and a concern that they may be broken into. Many of these are affordable properties which would be suitable for young people especially with the grants available to bring long-terms empty properties back into use. People have invested in second homes to develop them as holiday homes and holiday lets employ local

people to clean them. If holiday lets are sold as second homes, this will have an impact upon this employment as they will not require cleaning.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd proposed an improvement to recommendation 2, to vote on items a) and b) separately in order to provide an opportunity to review evidence of the impact of increasing the premium during year 1 prior to deciding on a further increase in year 2. This was reiterated by several Members.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans also noted that assumptions were being made in terms of decreasing property prices providing opportunities for young people to buy and the impact upon the Welsh language, noting that the opportunity has already passed in Aberaeron and that house prices are high because people want to live there. She noted that lots of holiday lets are now coming onto the market due to the 182 day rule, and that she had never seen as many houses for sale in New Quay and with tourism being the mainstay in Ceredigion, she did not want to see job losses.

Councillor Keith Evans noted that a strong economy is required to keep young people in Ceredigion, however we have failed to do this for decades with people leaving for better opportunities in Cardiff at the expense of Ceredigion. He noted that he sympathised with people who own second homes as a result of inheritance, however they use these as a place to stay and to contribute to the community.

Councillor Alun Williams noted that many of the Members had received letters from second homeowners outlining their contributions to the community but noted that this is not as good as occupancy by full time residents 365 days a year. He noted that there was a tendency to over generalise who might buy a property, and that it would probably be a mixed picture, however there is an acute housing shortage, with young people struggling to buy, and some living in sub-standard homes and unable to settle down in their communities where others have two. He noted that this isn't something that applies to Wales only, and that areas such as Devon and Cornwall and areas in Scotland are also looking to put the premium up by 100%, and that this must be looked at in a wider context. Any local authority charging significantly less would be placing themselves in a vulnerable position and become a magnet for second home ownership.

Councillor Matthew Vaux noted that the Ceredigion County Council planning service will need to look at the possibility of removing the restriction on seasonal homes so that holiday lets can be transferred to all year round residences.

It was **RESOLVED** to vote on items 2a) and 2b) separately, and to remove "and then" from the end of item 2a).

Furthermore it was also **RESOLVED**:

1. that the existing 25% Council Tax Premium applicable to **Long Term Empty Properties** will increase with effect from 01/04/24, to:

- a) 100% for Properties that have been Long Term Empty Properties for up to and including 5 years.
- b) 150% for Properties that have been Long Term Empty Properties for over 5 years and up to and including 10 years.
- c) 200% for Properties that have been Long Term Empty Properties for over 10 years.

with all time periods including the initial continuous period of 12 months for a dwelling to become defined as a 'Long Term Empty Property' by virtue of it being unoccupied and substantially unfurnished.

2a) that the existing 25% Council Tax Premium applicable to **Second Homes** will increase to 100% to take effect from 01/04/24.

2b) that the existing 25% Council Tax Premium applicable to **Second Homes** will increase to 150% to take effect from 01/04/25.

3. To note that any potential financial considerations arising from their decisions will be dealt with as soon as possible as a separate matter at a separate future meeting.

9 EXEMPT ITEM

The report (Appendix B1 and B2) relating to the item above is not for publication as it contains exempt information as defined in paragraph 12 and 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007. If, following the application of the Public Interest Test, the Council resolves to consider this item in private, the public and press will be excluded from the meeting during such consideration, in accordance with Section 100B(2) of the Act. Members will be requested, when dealing with the items, to consider whether to exclude the public and press from the Meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the content of the report remain restricted and not to exclude the public and press from the meeting as the document was not discussed in public.

10 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: People and Organisation upon the Teacher Pay Policies 2023/24

Councillors Bryan Davies, Euros Davies, Endaf Edwards, Rhodri Evans and Chris James withdrew from the meeting for the duration of the discussion. Eifion Evans, Chief Executive also withdrew from the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement presented the report noting that the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (Wales) Document 2023 was published on 5 October 2023 and confirms the teachers' pay arrangements in Wales for 2023/24. He noted that the statutory elements includes a 5% uplift to all statutory scale points and allowances, payable from 1 September 2023 and that consultation has taken place with the local teaching trade unions and accepted.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve:

1. The Model School Pay Policy 2023/24 and to commend to Governing Bodies for adoption within schools in Ceredigion;
2. The Model Unattached Teacher Pay Policy 2023/24 for centrally employed teachers.

11 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services upon the Ceredigion County Council Petition Scheme to include e-petitions

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation presented the report to Council noting that The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on local authorities to set out a petition scheme, including electronic petitions, providing an outline of the scheme.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans, Chair of the Democratic Services Committee noted that the draft protocol was considered by the Democratic Services Committee and also considered by the Constitution Cross Party Working Group, and that the committee was fully supportive of the protocol which provides clear direction which is useful for the Council.

Councillor Keith Evans enquired as to the requirement for the e-petitions to be bi-lingual, and it was confirmed that this would be required as it is hosted on the Council's website, however the onus would be on the individuals to provide this information with support from officers.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to

- a) Approve the draft revised Petitions Protocol
- b) Recommend that the current document in the Council's Constitution is replaced with the revised protocol.

12 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Legal and Governance upon Amendments to the Constitution

Councillor Matthew Vaux, Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection presented the report to Council noting that the proposed amendments had been considered by the Constitution Working Group at its meetings dated 26 September 2023 and 14 November 2023, and providing an outline of the content of each document.

The Corporate Lead Officer for Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer noted that the amendment to document 3.5J did not go to the Constitution Working Group. However, this information is duplicated in document P.

It was also noted that information had been omitted in Appendix 10 which should specify Overview and Scrutiny x 5 Members and Governance and Audit Committee x 2 members and 1 Lay member – it was confirmed that the omitted information would to be inserted completed before publication.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd noted his appreciation that attention was drawn to developments post-consideration by the Constitution Working Group.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Approve the changes to the Constitution (at Appendices 1 – 10); and
- b) Authorise the Monitoring Officer to update the Council's Constitution to reflect the changes.

13 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services upon the Chair's Announcements

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation presented the report to Council noting that during a meeting of Group Leaders, a proposal was put forward to amend the 'Personal Matters' item on the Council Agenda to 'Chair's Announcements'. This matter was referred to the Democratic Services Committee for consideration and also reviewed by the Cross-Party Constitution Group. He noted that the list of personal matters can sometimes be extremely long, and that a review of practice at other authorities have also been considered, noting a recommendation that items are presented to the Chair at least 2 working days in advance to be presented by the Chair, with the Chair having a final discretion on these matters.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans, Chair of the Democratic Services Committee noted that this proposal was considered by the Democratic Services Committee at its meeting dated 9 June 2023, and by the Constitution Cross Party Working Group at its meeting dated 26 September 2023. She noted that several Members had raised their concerns with her regarding the time spent on this issue, and the content. She also noted that this proposal was Member driven, and not by Officers, noting that this does not diminish the democratic rights to put forward comments via the Chair.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd, Vice-Chair of the Democratic Services Committee noted that he was supportive of the recommendation by the Democratic Services Committee to bring this proposal to Council in order to hear the views of all Members.

Members noted that the Chair has enough work to do, and that these matters are personal to the local ward Member, not the Chair. If there is a weakness in the process, then Group Leaders should be notified and it can be discussed further.

The Chair acknowledged the comments made, noting that some of the items relate to the Ward as opposed to the County and that several comments have been made by viewers regarding this.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the amendment to the Council Agenda from 'Personal Matters' to 'Chair's Announcements'.

14 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services upon the Single Transferable Vote

The Chair noted that this item is withdrawn from the Council agenda, and that a workshop for Members will be held in January 2024.

15 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Legal and Governance upon the Recruitment of Independent Member to the Ethics and Standards Committee

Councillor Matthew Vaux, Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection presented the report to Council noting that John Weston did not seek reappointment as Independent Member of the Ethics and Standards Committee once the initial six years appointment comes to an end on 21 February 2024, and that the recruitment process for a replacement independent member was agreed by Council during its meeting dated 13 July 2023. He noted that following a recruitment process, Llinos James was selected as Independent / Lay Member to the Ethics and Standards Committee from 22 February 2024 for one term of 6 years, with an option to reappoint for a second term of 4 years.

The Chair thanked Mr John Weston for his contribution and wished him well for the future.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the appointment of Llinos James as Independent / Lay Member of the Ethics and Standards Committee, from 22 February 2024, for one term of 6 years up to 21/2/2030.

16 To confirm the following appointments

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Lay Members to the following roles:

Corporate Joint Committee: Sub-Committee Ethics and Standards:

- Additional Lay Member: Gail Storr

Ethics and Standards Committee:

- Vice Chair from 22 February 2024: Gail Storr

17 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Schools Services upon the appointment of a Local Authority representative on School Governing Bodies

Councillor Wyn Thomas, Cabinet Member for Schools, Lifelong Learning and Skills presented the report to Council noting that Councillor Shelley Childs has been nominated as Local Authority Governor at the request of Llwyn yr Eos Community Primary School.

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm the nomination of Councillor Shelley Childs as Local Authority Governor of Llwyn yr Eos Community Primary School.

18 Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services 2022-2023

Councillor Alun Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Through Age Wellbeing presented the report to Council noting that it is a statutory duty to present the report, which aims to produce a rounded picture of all aspects of Social Services Department in Ceredigion and provide more timely feedback into planning and budgetary processes. He thanked the Statutory Director for Social Services for collating the report, and officers for all their work during the year.

Audrey Somerton-Edwards noted that this report covers her tenure and that of Sian Howys and is reflective of the complexities of the work that they do. She noted that the legislation is changing next year with a focus on a lighter, brighter easy read for the public to enjoy reading about what we do.

The content of the report was noted by Council.

19 Report of the Corporate Lead Officer: Policy, Performance and Public Protection upon the Annual Report of Compliments, Complaints, and Freedom of Information 2022-2023

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation presented the report and the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Letter to Council noting that this is the fourth consecutive report where there have been no Ombudsman investigations commenced or formal reports issued in relation to complains made against the Council. It was noted that work needs to be carried out in terms of recording compliments, that the number of complains is amongst the third lowest in Wales and that there needs to be a focus on reducing the number of complaints which escalate from stage 1 to stage 2 due to time constrains. There have been fewer referrals to the Ombudsman compared to last year, and the main topics of concern relate to refuse and planning; however this is due to the high number of users of these services and is not a reflection of the service.

The report was considered by the Governance and Audit Committee during its meeting dated 27 September 2023, by Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee during its meeting dated 19 October 2023 and by Cabinet during its meeting dated 7 November 2023.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of the Council's Annual Report for Compliments, Complaints and FOI Activity 2022-23 (Appendix 1)
2. To note the contents of the Ombudsman's Annual Letter (Appendix 4)
3. To note the feedback from the Cabinet Committee's discussion regarding these reports on 7th November 2023: ***'Cabinet noted the report and the feedback from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee'***

20 Report of the Chief Executive upon the notification of appointment of Interim Corporate Lead Officer - Porth Cynnal and Statutory Director of Social Services for up to a 6 month period

Councillor Bryan Davies presented the report to Council noting that the post of Corporate Lead Officer - Porth Cynnal and Statutory Director of Social Services had recently become vacant due to the departure of Mr Ricky Cooper. He noted that this is a statutory and critical role for the Council, and as such a proposal to appoint an interim Corporate Lead Officer – Porth Cynnal for up to a 6 month period, via a recruitment agency was accepted by the Appointments Panel, made up of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies along with both Opposition Group Leaders, Councillors Elizabeth Evans and Gareth Lloyd.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd asked for clarification as to whether the 6 month period could be cut short if a successful appointment was made, and it was confirmed that this was the case.

The content of the report was noted by Council.

21 EXEMPT ITEM

This report is not for publication as it contains exempt information as defined in paragraph 12 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007. If, following the application of the Public Interest Test, the Council resolves to consider this item in private, the public and press will be excluded from the meeting during such consideration, in accordance with Section 100B(2) of the Act.

It was **RESOLVED** that the content of the report remain restricted and not to exclude the public and press from the meeting as the document was not discussed in public.

22 Membership of the Council to the Committees of the Council

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm the Membership of the Council's Committees as presented at the meeting.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Council held on 23 January 2024

CHAIRMAN: