



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER 2013 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor H.W. David - Chairman
Councillor Mrs J. Summers - Vice Chairman

Councillors:

L. Binding, D.G. Carter, C.J. Cuss, Mrs D. Ellis, C. Hawker, G. Kirby, A. Lewis, C.P Mann,
S. Morgan, R. Saralis, J. Taylor

Cabinet Members:

Mrs C. Forehead (HR and Governance/Business Manager), G. Jones (Housing),
K.V. Reynolds (Corporate Services).

Together with:

N. Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer), G. Hardacre (Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development), S. Harris (Acting Head of Corporate Finance), C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property), L. Jones (Acting Head of ICT and Customer Services), S. Pugh (Corporate Communications Manager), E. Rogers (HR Service Manager), N. Akhtar (Group Accountant), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Ed Hunt (BT – Superfast Cymru, Programme Director), Sara-Jayne Byrne (Pricewaterhouse Coopers).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.E. Fussell, Ms J.G. Jones and D. Rees.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting. Councillor K.V. Reynolds queried whether he was required to declare an interest in relation to Cabinet Report Item 5(3) - Aberbargoed Primary School – and was advised that

as there had been no requests to bring the report forward for discussion, there was no need to declare an interest as the report would not be discussed at the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 1ST OCTOBER 2013

Subject to the amendment of Cabinet Member K.V. Reynolds' title to read 'Cabinet Member for Corporate Services' on Page 2, it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st October 2013 (minute nos. 1 - 14, page nos. 1 - 7) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

5. CABINET REPORTS

The Cabinet report listed below was requested to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting:-

5(13) Sale of Outstanding Landsbanki Claim (EXEMPT) – 30th October 2013

This was discussed as an exempt matter as the last item on the meeting agenda and further details are minuted with the respective item.

6. VERBAL REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBERS

Councillor C. Forehead, Cabinet Member for HR and Governance/Business Manager, presented her report and referred to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and the challenges ahead in meeting the financial savings. Members were informed that a detailed report regarding the options available to the Authority would be presented at a special meeting of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 4th December 2013.

Members were informed that good progress was being made with the Passport Programme initiative, with a presentation to be received later on in the meeting. The Cabinet Member also referenced work being undertaken with employees from the former Remploy factory, which had resulted in several of the employees achieving employment with CCBC. This news was welcomed by Members.

The Cabinet Member also referenced press coverage in relation to "zero hour contracts" and assured Members that those Council staff on such contracts did not face employment restrictions.

Councillor K.V. Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, then presented his report and reiterated the difficult financial situation faced by the Authority. Members were encouraged to attend the Medium Term Financial Plan Members' seminar on 21st November 2013 and that the situation would be addressed at the special meeting of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

Members were updated on a number of developments in the Authority's Information, Communication, Technology and Customer Services departments. Members were informed of upgrades to the corporate telephone system to ensure continued support, better performance and increased functionality. A Viewpoint Panel on Public Services and the One

Beat event was recently facilitated by staff from the Communication Team. New Records Management and Information Risk Management policies had been approved to strengthen information governance arrangements for the Authority. ICT preparations were underway for the move of the Authority's Contact Centre from Ty Dyffryn to Bargoed, and also for the future move of staff and pupils from the Ebbw Vale site back to Cwmcarn High School.

Members discussed the upcoming Medium Term Financial Plan Members' seminar and the Chairman thanked the Cabinet Members for their reports.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports:-

7. BT BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT - PRESENTATION

Ed Hunt, Programme Director for the BT Superfast Cymru project, gave a slideshow presentation to Members, which detailed the programme of works planned by BT to bring superfast fibre broadband to businesses and communities across Wales.

Mr Hunt explained to Members that the project is focused on rural Wales and areas of Wales that had not benefitted from the general rollout of fibre optic broadband. Mr Hunt outlined the aims of the Superfast Cymru programme and explained that the programme would assist in economic growth and increased productivity for businesses, and would also assist in creating sustainable jobs and reducing social exclusion.

Mr Hunt detailed the commercial roll-out plans, with the aim to roll out a cost-effective network to benefit as much of the Welsh population as possible, and explained that several priority areas had already been identified by the Welsh Government. He clarified the scope and timescales of the project, with Superfast Cymru aiming to connect around 23,000 businesses in total. Works are due to commence in Spring 2014, with approximately 18,000 premises to be connected by Christmas 2014 and an estimated completion date of Spring 2015.

Mr Hunt explained that there was a requirement for superfast broadband due to the increasing needs of users and the variety of applications and services available via the Internet. He outlined the benefits of superfast fibre broadband to businesses, including more efficient use of social media, various interaction methods, flexible working, video use, data security, sharing of a single connection point by multiple staff members, and a reduction in costs by using "cloud-based" business applications.

Members were also informed of the funding basis behind the Superfast Cymru scheme and the commitment of BT to deploy a best value, completion-ready network to as many people as possible, whilst using Welsh-based suppliers wherever possible.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hunt for his presentation and questions were invited from the Scrutiny Committee. Members queried the specific type of cable to be used and the average rollout time, and it was clarified that the majority of connections would be via fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) with fibre to the premises (FTTP) available on demand, and that the time taken to introduce fibre broadband in certain areas would depend on the underlying structure. Mr Hunt also clarified the timetable in relation to engineer works and the way in which these works are allocated to local authority areas.

Mr Hunt took questions in relation to funding and clarified that the Welsh Government would only make payment upon completion of BT reaching minimum broadband speed targets. Members made reference to areas of Wales that would not be covered by the Superfast Cymru project and Mr Hunt explained that the coverage situation was constantly changing and that he would be happy to return in the future to update Members on the progress of the project. Arrangements were made for Members to be provided with a copy of the

presentation.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Hunt's offer to return at a later date and Members noted the contents of the presentation.

8. RESULTS OF THE JUNE 2013 HOUSEHOLD SURVEY – REPORT AND PRESENTATION

Stephen Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager, presented the results of the Household Survey to the Committee. Members were reminded that in June 2013, a consultation exercise took place across the county borough to determine the level of satisfaction with Council services, with a detailed survey distributed to approximately 10,000 households.

The survey highlighted a number of clear improvements in many areas in comparison to the 2011 Household Survey. 82% of respondents were satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council, and there were high levels of satisfaction in a number of service areas. Members were informed that the results of the Household Survey would feed into the Corporate Improvement Plan and assist in determining the way forward in relation to Council services.

Mr Pugh clarified a number of queries from Members in relation to response levels and confirmed that the number of surveys was set at 10,000 for consistent benchmarking purposes. Members were pleased to note the improvement in satisfaction levels, and in particular the increased satisfaction level within the Lower Islwyn area. Members queried how the results of the Household Survey compared to other authorities across Wales and it was arranged for data comparing the level of public satisfaction with Council services across Wales to be provided to Scrutiny members.

Mr Pugh confirmed that a report would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee on 4th March 2014 with actions resulting from the findings of the Household Survey, together with a review of Public Engagement activities over the 2013/14 period.

The Chairman thanked Mr Pugh for his presentation and Members noted for information the detailed analysis of the results of the 2013 Household Survey.

9. PASSPORT PROGRAMME UPDATE - PRESENTATION

Gareth Hardacre, Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development, and Elizabeth Rogers, HR Service Manager, presented a slideshow update on the Passport Programme.

Mrs Rogers explained to Members that the Passport Programme consisted of a 3-tier structure incorporating a programme model, with participants involved in different tiers depending on their capabilities. Funding is currently made up of contributions from CCBC, the European Social Fund and Flexible Support Funding via Job Centre Plus. The targets and outcomes of the Programme were outlined, with the aim to create a large number of work experience, apprenticeships and employment opportunities per year and reduce the number of young people unemployed and claiming Job Seekers Allowance. Mrs Rogers detailed the multi-agency approach to the Programme and provided Members with a number of successful case studies involving participants of the Programme.

Members were informed that the Passport Programme had recently undergone an European Social Fund Audit with a very successful outcome. To date, the Passport Programme had received 463 referrals, with 154 of these resulting in placements, and of these, a large number had subsequently achieved some form of education, training or employment. So far this year, there had been 112 placements resulting in 19 apprenticeships and 77 employment opportunities, leading to a reduction in the number of young people claiming Job Seekers Allowance. Members were informed that there had been an improvement in targets and

outcomes and that the Passport Programme team were on track to achieve their goals for the year.

Members extended their thanks to all those involved in the Passport Programme and clarified a number of particulars relating to the Programme. It was confirmed that the Programme included provisions for participants with specific needs and that its success could act as a model for other authorities to follow. It was confirmed that a written report summarising the results of the Passport Programme would be presented to Members at the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 15th April 2014. Arrangements were made for Members to be provided with a copy of the presentation

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their presentation and Members noted the contents of the report.

10. NOTICE OF MOTION – FORMER NELSON BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB

The report detailed a Notice of Motion, received by the Interim Monitoring Officer from Councillor Anne Blackman.

Councillor Blackman introduced the Notice of Motion, which requested:

- “That Council agrees to take the land and buildings of the former Nelson Boys and Girls Club out of Property Services and transfers it to Education and Leisure, so that it can be retained as leisure facility for the community of Nelson.”

Councillor Blackman informed the Committee that the Notice of Motion should refer to Education **or** Leisure, and reiterated her belief that there was a need to provide a youth facility for the young people of Nelson.

Colin Jones, Head of Performance and Property, then presented the report, which provided Members with background information to the extant Cabinet decision in relation to the Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Blackman. Mr Jones referred to the recommendations contained in the report and advised Members that the recommendation should state:

- It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee make a recommendation to Cabinet not to **accept** the Notice of Motion.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee then clarified a number of points with Councillor Blackman in relation to the consultation process undertaken with local residents and the Nelson Development Trust.

Members discussed and considered the report addressing the Notice of Motion and, by a show of hands and for the reasons contained within the report, unanimously recommended to Cabinet that the Notice of Motion should not be accepted.

11. NOTICE OF MOTION – SKY LANTERNS

The report detailed a Notice of Motion received from Councillor Andrew Lewis.

Councillor Lewis introduced the Notice of Motion, which requested that the Council resolves as follows:-

- That the Council recognises the fire hazard associated with the use of sky lanterns (also known as Chinese lanterns), which can potentially lead to the loss of life, damage to property and increase the pressure on the police, fire service and medical emergency

services.

- That the Council agrees to ban the sale and use of sky lanterns from any of its premises or property.

Councillor Lewis reiterated his belief that sky lanterns could potentially lead to a loss of life and increase pressure on the emergency services. Councillor Lewis also referenced letters of support received by the Authority since the Notice of Motion was submitted, these letters being from Alun Davies AM, the Welsh Government Minister for Natural Resources and Food, and the Farmers' Union of Wales.

Members discussed and considered the Notice of Motion and, by a show of hands and for the reasons contained therein, unanimously recommended to Council that the recommendations contained in the Notice of Motion be supported.

12. REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

There were no requests received for future agenda items.

13. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following report was brought forward for discussion at the meeting:

- (4) Minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee – 17th June 2013.

In relation to the Care First Service referenced in the minutes, the Members sought clarification on the total number of Care First contacts generated and the number of individuals making use of the service, and this information was clarified by Officers.

The following reports were received and noted without discussion:

- (1) Caerphilly County Borough Council – Settlement Agreements;
- (2) Treasury Management and Capital Financing Prudential Indicators Monitoring Report – 1st April 2013 to 30th September 2013 - Quarter 1 and Quarter 2;
- (3) Summary of Members Attendance – Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 - 9th May 2013 to 30th September 2013;
- (5) Minutes of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group – 5th September 2013;
- (6) Minutes of the Caerphilly Local Service Board – 17th April 2013;
- (7) Minutes of the Pensions/Compensation Committee – 28th October 2013;
- (8) Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

14. EXEMPT MATTER

Members considered the public interest test certificate from the Proper Officer and concluded that on balance the public interest test in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and it was

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure to them of exempt information as identified in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

15. CABINET REPORT – SALE OF OUTSTANDING LANDSBANKI CLAIM (EXEMPT) - 30TH OCTOBER 2013

Following a request from Councillor C.P. Mann, the report was brought forward for discussion at the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee. A copy of the exempt report was tabled to Members.

Nadeem Akhtar, Group Accountant, presented the report, which contained information about the current consultations and negotiations regarding the proposals in relation to the sale of the outstanding Landsbanki claim, and details and information regarding the background to this matter.

Members discussed the content of the report and Officers responded to a number of queries raised during the course of the debate. Contingency plans in relation to the nominated Officers dealing with the matter were clarified, and Members noted the arrangements contained in the report.

The meeting closed at 7:30 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2014, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN