



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 26TH JUNE 2019 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Poole - Chair

Councillors:

C. Cuss (Social Care and Wellbeing), C.J. Gordon (Corporate Services), Mrs B. Jones (Finance, Performance and Governance), S. Morgan (Economy, Infrastructure and Sustainability), L. Phipps (Homes and Places) and E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection).

Together with:

C. Harry (Interim Chief Executive), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), D. Street (Corporate Director - Social Services) and M. S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director - Communities).

Also in Attendance:

M. Godfrey (Team Leader – Environmental Health), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services), A. Dallimore (Team Leader – Urban Renewal and Conservation), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), A. Cullinane (Senior Policy Officer – Equalities and Welsh Language), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N. George (Neighbourhood Services) and P. Marsden (Education and Achievement).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. CABINET – 12TH JUNE 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2019 were approved as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

4. HAFOD – YR – YNYS AIR QUALITY FEASIBILITY STUDY - FINAL

The report, which was presented to Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on 25th June 2019 detailed the findings of the public consultation exercise together with consideration of the Final Plan (Appendix 1 of the Report) and preferred option for achieving compliance with the Ambient Air Quality Directive at Hafod-Yr-Ynys.

It was noted that the national nitrogen dioxide air quality objectives are being exceeded at receptor locations on Hafod-Yr-Ynys Road. The continuous nitrogen dioxide monitor at Hafod-Yr-Ynys forms part of DEFRA's national Automatic Urban and Rural Network (AURN). The AURN is a network of continuous monitors throughout the UK that inform a national Pollution Climate Model, which is used for air quality reporting purposes to Europe, to demonstrate compliance with the Ambient Air Quality Directive. Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) are one of two local authorities in Wales that are highlighted in the National Nitrogen Dioxide Plan as having locations that fail to comply with the Ambient Air Quality Directive.

In February 2018 Welsh Government issued an Air Quality Direction to CCBC to undertake a feasibility study for the area and to determine a preferred option or basket of options which will achieve compliance with the Ambient Air Quality Directive air quality limit value for nitrogen dioxide in the 'shortest possible time'. The draft Final Plan identified that demolition of the properties on the south side of the A472 would achieve compliance in the shortest possible time, by 2023 (now anticipated 2022). However, under the 'Do Minimum' option modelling predicts delivery of air quality compliance by 2025.

At its meeting on 27th March 2019 Cabinet expressed concerns at the prospect of residents being pushed into financial hardship by any compulsory purchase process. Cabinet had strong concerns that residents would be unable to buy any equivalent property in the locality, that perhaps retired residents might be forced to take out a mortgage, or that owners might have to turn to rented accommodation. Having regard to the financial wellbeing of the residents of the area and to prevent any further hardship and resultant stress, Cabinet resolved to undertake a public consultation on the 'Do Minimum' option and the draft Final Plan. Welsh Government subsequently confirmed that it would make funding available including the potential for applying the value of a new similar property as opposed to the market value of the house being demolished. The draft Final Plan and proposed preferred option of 'Do Minimum' were the subject of a public consultation undertaken between 4th April 2019 and 11th June 2019. The outcome of the public consultation exercise did not support the 'Do Minimum' option.

Cabinet were asked to note that the Scrutiny Committee supported the Final Plan (attached as Appendix 1) and the proposed preferred option of purchase (at 150% of the valuation) and demolition of the properties on the south side of the A472 at Hafod-Yr-Ynys to achieve compliance in the shortest possible time and recommended to Cabinet for adoption. It was noted that the completed Final Plan and preferred option must be submitted to Welsh Government by the 30th June 2019 at the latest.

Officers explained that Members will have regard to the Equality Duty and as a result of the Equality Impact Assessment undertaken during the process it has been identified that there would be an overall benefit as a result of reducing exposure to air pollution and that perhaps younger people, older people, or those with pre-existing respiratory conditions may see even greater benefits. However, some potential negative impacts had been identified for some groups with protected characteristics such as older people who may experience greater financial hardship and anxiety from having to move home, young people who may have to change school or have longer travel distances, and occupiers of any homes with adaptations for the disabled. The financial package being proposed would serve to mitigate these impacts,

and the overall impact of the proposals is considered to be positive.

Cabinet were asked to note an amendment within the report at page 73 in which the Route Mean Square Area Error should be $4.3 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, not $3.9 \text{ug}/\text{m}^3$. However, Members were assured that this amendment has no effect on the model.

Cabinet thanked the Officers and residents for the exceptional work being undertaken to reach this proposal and were particularly pleased that representations to Welsh Government had been fruitful and resulted in additional funding being earmarked to prevent residents being left in financial hardship, demonstrating that the Local Authority and Welsh Government have worked together, with residents in the forefront of decisions.

A Member, in noting the extensive work undertaken queried whether all residents in the area are happy with the proposals. It was noted that the majority of residents are happy; however there are a small number of residents who have stated that they do not want to leave. Cabinet were assured however that work will continue with residents with an aim to reach a mutual agreement, without the use of Statutory Powers.

Discussions took place around the next steps in the process. Officers explained that the report will be presented to an Expert Panel in July, in which Officers will attend to answer any queries and a response should be provided from Welsh Government in mid August on the steps of which they are supportive of. During this time however, negotiations will continue with residents around voluntary sales and it was emphasised that there are very strict deadlines in order to complete the process.

It was queried whether, should there be a requirement to implement Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO), whether this would have an impact on the timeline. In addition, concerns were raised as to whether vacant properties, not demolished could attract vandalism at the east gateway to the borough. Officers assured Cabinet that there are a number of works and processes that can run alongside of the CPO process, which can take between 6-12 months, and can continue to develop.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report, the findings of the public consultation exercise together with consideration of the Final Plan (Appendix 1) and proposed preferred option of purchase (at 150% of the valuation) and demolition of the properties at 1-20 Woodside Terrace, 1&2 Woodside Shops and Yr Adfa on the south side of the A472 together with re-alignment of the footpath for achieving compliance with the Ambient Air Quality Directive at Hafod-Yr-Ynys be approved.

5. REGENERATION GRANTS – WIDER CONSULTATION

The report provided Cabinet with details following a review undertaken on the revenue and capital grant schemes currently administered by the Council's Regeneration Division, a report was presented to Cabinet on the 27th February 2019 detailing how a new Caerphilly Enterprise Fund could operate to streamline and simplify the process of making a grant application. The Cabinet Report was attached at appendix 1 of the report.

It was noted that further to consideration of the report, officers were tasked with undertaking a consultation exercise in respect of the proposed change set out by Officers in the original Cabinet report. The report outlined the results of the consultation which was undertaken, predominantly with the voluntary sector and community groups, over a week consultation period.

For completeness the report also summarised the potential to combine the five existing grant programmes into a single 'Caerphilly Enterprise Fund' with a refocus towards offering improved support to start up businesses, stimulating economic growth, filling identified supply chain voice and supporting job creation.

A report went before Cabinet on the 27th February 2019, detailing how a new grants regime could concentrate more actively on developing business growth and creating employment opportunities within the County Borough. The report outlined that the primary focus of a new Caerphilly Enterprise Fund (CEF) should be on economic growth.

Although the proposed grant regime would be open for community groups and social enterprises they would in future be required to evidence how their projects encourage economic activity. As the report advocated discontinuing the Community Regeneration Fund to fund the CEF, the recommendations to Cabinet on the 27th February 2019 requested that Cabinet note the contents of the report and approve a wider consultation exercise with the voluntary sector and community groups on the principles set out in the report.

Cabinet were asked to note that in order to reach as many groups as possible, it was considered appropriate to undertake a varied series of consultation exercises including Officer attendance at the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee on 14th March 2019, in which the proposed enterprise fund was explained and feedback provided by the Committee, a webpage questionnaire was set up providing a short consultation on the review of the Grants and posted for 4 weeks and a delegation of voluntary sector organisations were invited to meet with Officers to voice any concerns over the proposals. All feedback received from the consultation exercises were included within the report.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Members, in noting that there is a drive within the new scheme for organisations to demonstrate economic growth, queried whether support would be offered to business start-ups not able to offer this. Officers explained that there is a Grant Finder system that can identify grants available and signpost them and officers in both Regeneration and Planning and the Policy Unit can offer support to individuals in completing applications and submitting evidence.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report:

- i) consultation feedback on the proposals presented within the original report presented to Cabinet on the 27th February 2019 be noted;
- ii) that the existing grants, namely the Commercial Improvement Grant, Business Development Grant, Business Start Up Grant and Community Regeneration Fund be amalgamated to provide a new Caerphilly Enterprise Fund with immediate effect be approved;
- iii) that the existing core grant allocations be re-aligned to provide greater economic outputs within the County borough under the Caerphilly Enterprise Umbrella;
- iv) that the existing Community Regeneration Fund be discontinued;
- v) that Officers request that the geographic boundary for the Oakdale Community Benefit Fund be increased from 1.5 miles to 2 miles but should not be available

outside of the County Borough;

- vi) the protocols outlined within the original cabinet report for determining grant applications be endorsed.

6. ENERGY AND CARBON REPORT

The report, which was considered by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 11th June 2019 outlined progress made in respect of energy conservation and carbon reduction predominantly through its Carbon Reduction Strategy. The report outlined the need for a new overarching plan which will assist the Council in meeting its 'Green energy' ambitions whilst aligning the authority with Welsh Government's and the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) aspirations for decarbonisation. It also demonstrated how the Council can make radical improvements via some key opportunity areas and projects.

The report firstly summarised the positive track record that the authority has through introducing and implementing measures to reduce energy consumption and reduce its carbon footprint. It sets out the benefits attained from that work and outlines how this will be further enhanced by exploring and maximising the Council's assets. The existing Carbon Reduction Strategy period ends in 2019, so there is a need to develop a new overarching strategy for the Council. Part of this process will be the development of an Energy Plan which sets out the overarching objective of being a carbon neutral council and identifies a number of projects that the Council can take forward over the short, medium and long term that will move us towards this overarching aim.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Members were asked to note that the report underpins a number of projects, as outlined within the recently approved new operating model for the Council and #TeamCaerphilly, providing the Authority with a unique opportunity to exploit the energy agenda and link with projects in the CCR, making reductions both financially and in decarbonisation.

Discussions took place around the benefits to the economical outputs and wellbeing benefits and Cabinet were referred to sections 5.19 to 5.28 within the report, outlining a number of benefits as a result of reducing the Council's carbon footprint.

Cabinet were pleased to note the developments within the report and in particular the extensive benefits to the local environment. In addition, it was noted that there is a drive for change within the authority, and whilst austerity and financial prudence is a priority, the environmental benefits of change are also a top priority.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report:

- i) the volume and diversity of work on carbon conservation that has already been undertaken as outlined in Appendix 1: Summary Report on Initiatives to date be noted;
- ii) the views of Scrutiny regarding the proposed overarching aims of the new Energy Plan to make us a carbon neutral Council, and the associated proposed projects that will assist in delivering that aim be noted;
- iii) the next steps in development of the Energy Plan be considered and offer Scrutiny consideration once a draft is developed.

7. **WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019 AND THE ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY 2017-2022**

The report informed members and sought their endorsement of the progress made during the financial year 2018-2019 against four strategic areas of Welsh language work, as required under the regulatory framework for implementing the Welsh Language Standards.

The report will then be published online by the deadline date of 30th June 2019, as required by Welsh Language Standard 158.

The report also provided an update on the 5 Year Welsh Language Strategy 2017-2022 as requested by Cabinet.

It was noted that the Council has a statutory duty to produce an annual monitoring report on implementing Welsh Language issues under current legislation and in compliance with Standard 158.

The information required for 2018-19 covers four required key areas; complaints from the public, staff language skills, Welsh medium training provision and recruiting to empty posts.

In addition, there is also an Annual Progress Report on the Welsh Language Strategy 2017/22, as requested by Cabinet when it was approved in January 2017, which was appended to the report at appendix 1.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and sought further information around the table in 2.2 of the report. Officers explained that 4 formal complaints have been received and 5 formal Welsh Language Commissioner Investigations. Of the 4 formal complaints received, 3 became Welsh Language Commissioner Investigations. It was noted that all complaints were responded to within corporate deadlines and were upheld. Cabinet were pleased to note that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of staff who have Welsh language skills compared to previous years' figures and a further increase in the number of staff participating in learning Welsh. Finally, it was noted that there have been 632 vacancies advertised in total, 6 of which were Welsh essential, 1 where Welsh Language skills needed to be learnt and remainder were assessed as Welsh desirable. It was apparent however that Chief Officer posts and apprentice posts, not managed by People Services have not followed the mandatory Welsh Language assessment. As a result, this was raised with People Services and with a view to using the same recruitment process for all posts in future and therefore complying with Standard 136 fully.

A Member queried whether training opportunities in Welsh are also available to Members. Officers explained that training is available for both Members and Officers; further training for Welsh Language and British Sign Language (BSL) will be made available shortly.

Cabinet were pleased to note the extensive work undertaken year on year and the increase in take up of courses. It was also noted that there has been an increase in use of Welsh Language in frontline services, with more services using Welsh with customers.

Finally, Officers provided Cabinet with an example of some of the work undertaken in partnership with the Welsh Language Forum to promote Welsh Medium education, which is a booklet for parents called *Becoming Bilingual in Caerphilly County Borough*.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report:

- i) the content of the annual report be noted;
- ii) the publication of the annual report, as a record of progress towards, and compliance with, the relevant Welsh Language Standards be endorsed.

The meeting closed at 11:14 am.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on the 10th July 2019.

CHAIR