



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 7TH JULY 2021 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

S. Cook (Social Care), N. George (Waste, Public Protection and Street Scene), C. Gordon (Corporate Services), J. Pritchard (Deputy Leader), E. Stenner (Customer, Performance and Property Services), A. Whitcombe (Sustainability, Planning and Fleet) and R. Whiting (Learning and Leisure).

Together with:

C. Harry (Chief Executive) R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment).

Also in Attendance:

S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), R. Kyte (Head of Planning and Regeneration), A. Dallimore (Regeneration Services Manager), I. Evans (Procurement and Information Officer), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), M. Harris (Committee Services Support Officer/Chauffeur) and E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

Councillor C. Mann

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Deputy Leader reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here To View](#). He advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Marsden and L. Phipps and D. Street (Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing)

In the absence of Councillor P. Marsden (Chair), Councillor J. Pritchard as Deputy Leader took the Chair for the meeting.

Members and Officers welcomed the Deputy Leader to his first Cabinet meeting and congratulated him on his appointment.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor R. Whiting declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 10, Proposed Community Hall in Ty Sign, Risca in that he is a County Borough appointed Committee Member of the Channel View Community Centre. As such there was no requirement for him to leave the meeting when the item was considered.

Councillor N. George declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No.10, Proposed Community Hall in Ty Sign, Risca in that as well as being a County Borough appointed Committee Member of the Channel View Community Centre he is also personally a Member of the Skate Park Committee and TLC Community Café Committee. As such he would leave the meeting when the item was considered.

3. CABINET – 23RD JUNE 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June 2021 were approved as a correct record.

4. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE

Cabinet were provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports for 21st July 2021. Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and therefore subject to change.

Cabinet were asked to consider the addition of 2 items to the Forward Work Programme for the 1st September 2021 Cabinet meeting, the first to be a report on Car Parking Charges and the second on the COVID Recovery Framework.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to aforementioned additional reports for the 1st September 2021 the Forward Work Programme be noted. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme be noted.

5. PROVISIONAL REVIEW BUDGET OUTTURN FOR 2020/21

Consideration was given to the report which provided details of the provisional revenue budget outturn for the 2020/21 financial year prior to the annual external audit of the accounts by Audit Wales.

Cabinet noted that the report provided an overview of the Council's performance against the revenue budget for the 2020/21 financial year and included proposals for the use of surplus General Fund balances and use of service reserves for a range of one-off purposes.

It was noted that the Authority had incurred significant additional costs due to the pandemic and had also lost income in several key areas. Welsh Government (WG) had provided substantial funding to Local Authorities to offset additional costs and income losses through the Covid-19 Hardship Fund, with the total funding allocated to Caerphilly CBC during the 2020/21 financial year being £24.2m.

Members were referred to Appendix A of the report which provided a summary of the provisional outturn position and showed a net underspend of £38.517m across all services. It was noted that an underspend of £10.070m is reported for schools and consequently school balances have increased from £1.3m to £11.3m. This underspend was greater than projected

due to the receipt of additional grant funding from Welsh Government in the latter part of the financial year. This funding totalled circa £5m and supported expenditure that the schools had originally anticipated funding themselves.

It was noted that there is an underspend of £10.018m for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and that the majority of this is due to Covid-19. This underspend has been carried forward into the 2021/22 financial year to support the completion of the WHQS Programme.

It was also noted that the level of underspend on Service Directorate Budgets and Miscellaneous Finance is significantly higher than in previous years and that this reflects the unprecedented impact of Covid-19 on changes in working practices, along with the scale of one-off financial support provided .

It was explained that the financial support provided by Welsh Government had been vital to maintain financial resilience during the pandemic but further financial support from the Covid-19 Hardship Fund is currently only confirmed until the end of September 2021. This presents a significant financial risk and the position will need to be closely monitored throughout the 2021/22 financial year.

The medium-term financial outlook remains challenging and Cabinet was reminded that the 2021/22 Budget Report presented to Council on the 24th February 2021 included an updated Medium-Term Financial Plan showing a potential savings requirement of £21.1m for the four-year period 2022/23 to 2025/26. However, the underspend for 2020/21 does present an opportunity for significant one-off investments as detailed in the report to support the Council in the delivery of its key priorities, the recovery phase of the pandemic, and the ongoing delivery of the transformation programme.

Clarification was sought as to whether the underspend position was being mirrored across other Local Authorities, and the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer advised that the Society for Welsh Treasurers was currently summarising the position across all Welsh Local Authorities and that this would be shared in due course. However, following conversations with colleagues across the Gwent Region, the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer confirmed that higher than usual underspends are being reported.

The Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer confirmed that despite the significant challenges presented by the pandemic the Council's financial position had been well managed. However, a prudent approach was still required as there was still a requirement for significant savings moving forward.

Members were reminded that decisions in respect of the General Fund Reserve are a matter for Full Council and a covering report would be produced following this meeting for Council's consideration on the 13th July 2021.

Members welcomed the one-off investment opportunities and made reference to those detailed for the Regeneration Board and Cleaning and Greening, which would be welcomed by communities.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The provisional 2020/21 revenue budget outturn position be noted.
2. The £1.122m Council Tax Collection grant received from the Welsh Government (WG) in 2020/21 should be set aside in an earmarked reserve to help mitigate the financial impact of a potential further shortfall in Council Tax collection rates in the

2021/22 financial year be agreed.

3. Recommend to Council that it maintains the General Fund balance at £11.047m, representing 3% of the 2021/22 net revenue budget.
4. Recommend to Council that the proposed use of surplus General Fund balances totalling £9.215m as detailed in section 5.9 of the report be approved.
5. The use of service reserves totalling £1.773m that have been agreed by Officers using delegated powers as detailed in Appendix C be noted.
6. The proposed use of service reserves totalling £2.441m as set out in section 5.10 of the report be approved.

6. SOCIAL VALUE POLICY AND THE ADOPTION OF THEMES, OUTCOMES AND MEASURES FRAMEWORK

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Social Value Policy and TOMs Framework for endorsement and implementation. Cabinet noted that the report had been presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 25th May 2021 and were referred to the consultation section of the report and comments from the Scrutiny Committee contained therein.

The Social Value Policy sets out a proposed approach to further enhance and build upon the successes that have been achieved to date by the Council in relation to Social Value. It brought together a number of different legislative requirements, policy initiatives and aspirations into a single coherent framework underpinned by five key objectives with 'Caerphilly Cares' at the centre.

The five key objectives were detailed, and it was explained that the TOMs Framework would be an effective and efficient mechanism in measuring, recording and monitoring Social Value and Community benefits. It was noted that the Council's Programme for Procurement had set an increased focus on the delivering and recognising the value of using procurement to support wider cultural, social, economic and environmental objectives in ways that offer real long-term benefits for the community and the people of Wales, whilst balancing the issues of value for money.

The Corporate Director for Corporate Services and Education placed on record his thanks to Ian Evans and Procurement Services for the considerable work undertaken in producing the TOMs Framework which would make a real difference to communities. He also expressed his thanks to Liz Lucas for all her efforts in relation to Social Value, her hard work and dedication saw Caerphilly leading the way in relation to its procurement practices and procedures delivering maximum value for the Caerphilly pound and continuing to demonstrate that Caerphilly cares.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Social Value Policy and TOMs Framework be endorsed and implemented.

7. STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING – PROPOSED CHANGE TO ADD/RENAME/ REMOVE A RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY NAME

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to introduce charges for adding, renaming, removing a name to an existing residential property.

Cabinet noted that a comprehensive street naming and numbering service was already provided by the Council however there was currently no charge levied for this, despite the fact that this discretionary service requires a significant amount of Officer time and effort in terms of consultation, liaison and processing.

Members referred to the proposed charge for this service contained within the Officer's report as £100 and it was moved and seconded that this be amended to £50. Having considered similar charging frameworks it was felt that this amount would ensure that provision of this non statutory element of the service can continue, recover its costs and provide an opportunity for additional income and contribute to the maintenance of the current excellent level of service provided.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to the aforementioned amendment the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

1. A charge for adding, renaming, removing the name of a property be adopted and take effect from 1 August 2021.
2. This charge be set at £50.

8. KICKSTART SCHEME

Consideration was given to report which updated Cabinet on the rollout of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Kickstart Scheme and sought agreement in relation to the Council's engagement with the scheme.

Cabinet were advised that young people had been particularly disadvantaged by the Covid-19 pandemic, in terms of the reduced employment opportunities available to them as a result of the subsequent economic downturn. The DWP Kickstart scheme presented a very real opportunity to address this issue, with the Council being well-placed to offer placements to local young people. The report set out the main considerations for the Council in engaging with the scheme and made recommendations in terms of how the Council could progress as a placement host employer.

It was noted that the six-month placements would allow young people to step forward and gain valuable work experience before progressing on to other options like the Apprenticeship Scheme or long-term employment.

It was noted that the Kick Start Scheme would target 16-24-year olds and when combined with other opportunities provide a springboard to employment. Members noted the successes of the Apprenticeship Scheme and the successful take up by the various Directorates. It was confirmed that without any promotion, 7 Service Areas had already expressed an interest in offering placements.

Reference was made to the Workforce Strategy which had looked at the make-up and age profile of the current work force and had confirmed the need to invest in young people. It was felt that this scheme would form an important piece of a much bigger puzzle and wider work force plan.

Members acknowledged the success of the Apprenticeship Scheme which had provided long term employment with the Council for over 20 young people and welcomed the proposed payment of the Living Wage for those participating in the Kick Start Scheme.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

- a) Engagement with the Kickstart scheme at an authority-wide level, with a commitment to host 10 placements across various departments be agreed.
- b) Placement wages be paid at the Foundation Living Wage rate.
- c) The use of corporate reserves to contribute to the scheme to enable wages to be paid at the Living Wage rather than the minimum wage (the rate funded by the DWP) be endorsed.

9. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL – PROPOSALS FOR ASYLUM DISPERSAL AND AFGHAN RELOCATION

Consideration was given to the report which detailed the recent approach made by the Home Office, working with the Wales Strategy Migration Partnership, and through Welsh Government, for more local authorities to participate in the scheme to alleviate pressures in the asylum system, this role would be shared across other local authorities in Wales.

Cabinet noted that the report had been presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 23rd June 2021 and were referred to the consultation section of the report and comments from the Scrutiny Committee contained therein.

Cabinet noted the implications of the local authority becoming an Asylum Dispersal Area (ADA) and consideration was given to the recommendations detailed to manage the implementation of the scheme and proposed a gradual start and review after 12 months. The report also asked for consideration to be given to the relocation of Afghan nationals employed by the UK Government in Afghanistan, primarily due to the instability caused by the imminent withdrawal of US troops by September 2021 and risks to life.

It was emphasised that asylum dispersal placements would not receive preferential treatment above residents and Council houses would not be used as accommodation.

Officer's confirmed that an extension from 4 months to 12 months had just been announced in relation to the funding for the Afghan relocation scheme and this would give the authority more time to potentially commission an extension to the current contract for refugee support, allowing the authority to participate in this arena.

However, the priority for this report was establishing the systems and mechanisms for asylum dispersal. It was noted that should Cabinet be supportive of the proposals a Multi-Disciplinary Panel would be convened to take this forward and a Frequently Asked Question page would be established on the Council's website.

Cabinet welcomed the proposals as a necessary and good thing to do and reference was made to the successful relocations that had already taken place.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

1. Option 2 be approved – Asylum Dispersal begin with a smaller number (5) family properties and evaluate the success after 12 months.
2. Relocation of Afghan Nationals – request to be revisited within a few months to enable new systems and internal policies for asylum dispersal to be put in place and to reduce additional pressure on private sector housing supply.
3. Cabinet to be advised of the situation for Afghan national relocation over the summer months and support be extended if the capacity of services and available housing supply can absorb this scheme. Any agreement to participate would not be the subject of public reports.

10. PROPOSED COMMUNITY HALL AT TY SIGN, RISCA

Councillor Nigel George having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in that as well as being a County Borough appointed Committee Member of the Channel View Community Centre he is also personally a Member of the Skate Park Committee and TLC Community Café Committee, left the meeting and took no part in the debate or vote.

Councillor Ross Whiting having declared a personal interest only in that he was a County Borough appointed Committee Member of the Channel View Community Centre, remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote.

Consideration was given to the report which informed Cabinet of a proposal presented by Agape Community Church, Ty Sign (ACCTS) to develop a new Community Hall on land at Holly Road, Ty Sign, Risca.

The report sought Cabinet approval for Officers to enter into further discussions and to undertake a full consultation to ascertain what level of support there is within the local community for the additional community facility in the area.

Cabinet noted that ACCTS had identified a number of funding options to meet the estimated costs of a new building circa £550,000 and were seeking a lease of 99 years from the Council at a low, non-commercial rent. It was confirmed that the land in question is currently held by the Housing Revenue Account. Furthermore there are a number of existing community facilities in the locality and the impact on the viability of these of a new facility is not known, neither is the level of support within the community and this is the reason for the request to undertake a consultation with Community Groups and Residents.

Members were advised that as the site was part of the HRA its disposal would be subject to a separate process with Welsh Government approval required. There would also be a public notice process to follow for disposal of land in this way. Officers confirmed that there were several other similar facilities in the area and the impact of an additional facility would need to be considered and community support would need to be established, hence the need for full consultation process. It was noted that ACCTS had undertaken some consultation 2-3 years previously which had been generally supportive of the proposal however it was noted that there was community petition in objection to the proposal currently in circulation.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

1. A full consultation with all Community Groups and residents to establish what support there is within the local community for this proposal for an additional facility in the area be supported.

2. A further report be presented to Cabinet following the period of consultation and associated feedback.

The meeting closed at 11.35am

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 21st July 2021.

CHAIR