



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor P. Marsden (Leader) - Chair

Councillors:

S. Cook (Social Care), N. George (Waste, Public Protection and Street Scene), C. Gordon (Corporate Services), L. Phipps (Housing), J. Pritchard (Infrastructure and Property), E. Stenner (Performance, Economy and Enterprise), A. Whitcombe (Sustainability, Planning and Fleet) and R. Whiting (Learning and Leisure).

Together with:

C. Harrhy (Chief Executive) D. Street (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment).

Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), L. Lucas (Head of Customer and Digital Services), M. Harris (Committee Services Support Officer/Chauffeur) and E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The 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](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. CABINET – 21st JULY 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 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 29th September 2021. Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and therefore subject to change.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that 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. CAR PARKING CHARGES

Consideration was given to the report which updated Cabinet on the latest position on the economic impact on town centres caused by the coronavirus pandemic and to seek a Cabinet steer on a further period of free car parking to support the local economy.

Cabinet was advised that many businesses within the County Borough had faced significant challenges as a result of Covid-19 and the lockdown and/or trading restrictions that have resulted. This included many town centre businesses and particularly the town centre hospitality sector. In moving the report Cabinet welcomed the proposals for a Task and Finish Group which would allow all political parties to contribute to any future proposals.

A further recommendation at 3.1.5 of the report was proposed in that Officers bring back a report that sets out proposals to manage the interface between business and customer parking at Twyn Car Park, Caerphilly and Blackwood High Street, Car Park having consideration for the 12 month period of the decision and was seconded.

The Leader of Council emphasised that the proposals within the report were set within the context of the COVID recovery framework which set out the next steps over the next twelve months and was a continuation of the Councils COVID response with the continued aim of supporting the recovery of Town Centres and was not a long term or permanent decision and was time bound until September 2022. It was noted that one of the recommendations moved was for a further report to come forward on the long-term future of town centre car parking charges scheduled for the end of next summer. The Leader emphasised again that what was under consideration today was not a permanent decision but an extension.

With the permission of the Leader, Councillor J.E. Fussell made representations to Cabinet in relation to car parking in Caerphilly Town Centre. Councillor Fussell detailed the issues in relation to the Twyn Car Park and the need to address the impact of town centre parking in terms of the regeneration of specific areas of the town. The Member referenced previous proposals in relation to the reconfiguration of car parking meters for limited free parking hours to support the local shopping environment. The additional recommendation was welcomed but the Member emphasised that this work needed to be timely in order to have any impact on already struggling retailers and felt that consideration also had to be given to the impact of traffic disbursement once the Twyn Car Park was full, particularly into retail loading bays causing issues in terms supplier deliveries and subsequently congestion.

The Leader thanked Councillor Fussell for raising the key issues of concern and confirmed that the report proposed in the addition recommendation would investigate these issues and would be brought forward in a matter of weeks. The Chief Executive urged the Councillor to take up the offer of an Officer/Cabinet Member meeting as part of the report development process and Councillor Fussell welcomed the opportunity for such a meeting if it would inform

the report to Cabinet. The Chief Executive also advised that this process would be mirrored with the Blackwood High Street Car Park.

The Leader then referenced written representations that had been received from Councillor K. Etheridge and Retailers from Blackwood Town Centre and noted the submission of a notice of motion in relation to the abolition of car parking charges, which would be considered shortly by Scrutiny and Council. She emphasised the importance that the review of car parking charges be set alongside the COVID recovery framework and strategic town centre regeneration. The important role that a cross-party task and finish group would play in reviewing car parking was highlighted and the conclusion of its work would be the time to consider any proposals including the possible abolition of charges but within a strategic car park management framework.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report and the additional recommendation at 3.1.5 be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

- 3.1.1 The extension of the period of free car parking in town centres for a further 12 months until 30th September 2022 be agreed.
- 3.1.2 The projected income shortfall of £660k be funded from the previously approved Covid-19 Earmarked Reserve.
- 3.1.3 The Joint Scrutiny Committee Cross Party Task and Finish Group to undertake a further review of town centre car parking changes in light of the effects of the pandemic on the economy of our town centres.
- 3.1.4 Residents' season ticket only use of the three car parks in Blackwood (Gordon Road, Libanus and Highland Terrace) be removed for the duration of the free parking.
- 3.1.5 Officers bring back a report that sets out proposals to manage the interface between business and customer parking at Twyn Car Park, Caerphilly and Blackwood High Street Car Park having consideration for the 12 month period of this decision.

6. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR RECOVERY - PROGRESS

Consideration was given to the report which sought to update Cabinet on the progress made against the Strategic Recovery Framework agreed in September 2020 and to adopt some measures of success that will enable future progress to be assessed.

Cabinet was asked to note that the Covid 19 pandemic had provided an unprecedented set of challenges to the Council and the Communities of Caerphilly since March 2020. During this period the Council had focused on decisions and interventions designed to protect people and places. In September 2020, the Strategic Recovery Framework was adopted and provided an overarching framework through which the Council and its communities could work together to bring about a successful recovery. Now twelve months on, the Council and its Communities were still operating to a large extent in response to the pandemic. Some aspects of recovery had been possible, and the report provided an update on the progress over the last year.

The Leader expressed her admiration and pride in the way in which Council Staff had responded to pandemic, adapting to new ways of working and going above and beyond to deliver services to communities. As the Council transitions into a new normal she saw this as

an opportune time to pause and reflect on the tremendous effort made across every directorate. Cabinet joined the Leader and placed on record their thanks for the herculean efforts of every member of staff.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing provided an update in relation to his Directorate. Cabinet noted that in June 2021, 2 Day Bases were re-opened on a phased basis and further proposals to reshape day services were currently being processed. Montclair had remained open and provided respite care for adults and children with a disability during the pandemic albeit at a reduced capacity and since then other facilities were coming back in to use as detailed in 5.4.3 of the report.

In terms of Housing it was noted that non-emergency repairs, also suspended during the pandemic, were now back up and running as detailed in section 5.44 of the report with staff working hard to clear the backlog. In terms of WHQS it was confirmed that works were in line to meeting the 2021 deadline.

Cabinet were referred to Section 5.7.1 of the report and the Caerphilly Cares initiative and advised that the programme was going from strength to strength and making a real impact in the community. The Corporate Director updated Cabinet on the development of a Universal Gateway bringing access to services into a more holistic model, which would include partners in the 3rd Sector and community-based initiatives. It was noted that Caerphilly Cares had now been included in the self-isolation grant application to provide wider support. Referrals were also being received from Council Tax and Housing Benefit and between April-June £625k of additional income had been gained for residents.

The Corporate Director for Economy and Environment provided an update in relation to his Directorate and he expressed his admiration for the way in which staff had stepped up during the pandemic particularly when taking into account that services were still recovering from the impact of Storm Dennis when the pandemic hit.

Front line services such as waste-collection continued seamlessly throughout the pandemic, redeployed Leisure Staff had provided vital support to the mass vaccination centre and the BuddyScheme. Public Protection Staff had worked 12-13-hour days during the height of the pandemic assisting the Aneurin Bevan Health Board. Trading Standards and Licensing colleagues had undertaken an immense amount of work to ensure compliance with COVID regulations and assisting business and the registrars service had worked tirelessly in very difficult circumstances throughout the pandemic. It was also noted that planning staff had implemented a virtual programme of planning committee meetings and had worked against a backdrop of circa 50% increase in planning applications. In addition regeneration staff had worked tirelessly with colleagues in corporate finance to process Welsh Government business support grants. The Corporate Director was humbled by the how staff had responded and adapted and placed on record his sincere thanks to them all.

The Chief Executive provided an update on behalf of the Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services and expressed how overwhelmed she was by the astonishing depth and breadth of work undertaken.

The phenomenal work of schools was detailed, first as Child Care Hubs for Key Workers, then remote working and finally re-opening despite immense challenges. The level of teamwork this required, and the support given by the Chief Education Officer had been recognised by Wales Audit Office. Free School Meals services via an army of volunteers had delivered healthy fresh produce to the doors of 6500 pupils and had seen FSM take up increase from 68% to 98%.

The redeployment of staff to the Trace and Trace service and the amazing work that they continue to do there was highlighted and the Chief Executive recognised the outstanding work of the Regeneration Team in turning around £55m in grant funding and £5m in other grant schemes.

The Chief Executive expressed her thanks not only to the staff but to the Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team who had worked so closely together in difficult circumstances providing purposeful and honest leadership during an unprecedented period of time and now moving forward into another winter and with COVID still very present there would be more challenges to come. The fact that Caerphilly County Borough Council had been nominated for several prestigious awards was a testament to the all the hard work and commitment over the last 18 months and she expressed her pride in Team Caerphilly.

Clarification was sought as to how the proposed measures would ensure that the Council was progressing in the best way possible. Cabinet was advised that the measures proposed were a starting off point and would be informed by citizen engagement and satisfaction and would evolve and develop as recovery work progressed.

Cabinet Members echoed and endorsed the comments made and the exceptional work done by so many and placed on record special thanks to Youth Services and their work with vulnerable young people, Teachers, Catering Services and made particularly reference to Carers in Residential and Home Care Services who had worked tirelessly at the very front of service provision. It was hoped that the report would help provide the public with a better understanding of the breadth of services provided by the Council and those that had worked so hard throughout the pandemic to provide them.

The Chief Executive re-assured Cabinet that staff wellbeing was paramount, and support was available for anyone struggling, the Corporate Management Team were well aware of the toll that the last 18 months had taken and were 'wrapping their arms around' those that had worked so tirelessly.

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 for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

- a. The progress made against the Strategic Recovery Framework for Caerphilly in the last twelve months be noted.
- b. The proposed measured of success for monitoring progress as set out in paragraph 5.9 of the report be agreed.

7. MANAGING BUILDING AND SERVICE RISK AT ALERT LEVEL ZERO

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet endorsement for an evidence-based risk model to be adopted as a basis for undertaking Council building assessment in a consistent and methodical manner, while also enabling the different risk factors and therefore overall risk, at individual settings to be considered.

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 for the reasons contained in the Officer's: -

1. the Hierarchy of Controls Template set out in Appendix 1 as the mechanism by which the reintroduction of in person services can be assessed be endorsed.
2. The planning for the reopening of Reception and Customer Services at Ty Penallta can now begin in accordance with the controls set out in Appendix 2 under the elimination and substitution controls be agreed.
3. Relevant Heads of Service, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member,

assess all remaining Council buildings currently closed to the public using the template at Appendix 1.

4. The receipt of a supplementary report at its meeting of the 29th September 2021 that sets out which of those council buildings should now be reopened and under what conditions and controls be agreed.
5. Cabinet to receive reports that outline any further changes that need to be made should the guidance or risk level change again.

The meeting closed at 11.50am

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 15th September 2021.

CHAIR