



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 23RD FEBRUARY 2022 AT 10:30 A.M

PRESENT:

Councillor P. Marsden (Leader) - Chair

Councillors:

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

Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director, Social Services and Housing), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment) and S. Harris (Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer).

Also in Attendance:

L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer), J. Roberts (Strategic Co-ordination Manager), J. Carpenter (Finance Manager), N. Williams (Head of Housing), C. Boardman (Development Manager), D. Jones (Construction Project Manager, Willmott Dixon) C. Jones (Partner at Holder Mathias Architects), M. Harris (Committee Support Officer/Chauffer) and M. Afzal (Committee Services Officer).

And

Cllr. C. Mann.

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 C. Harrhy (Chief Executive), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer) and R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer) declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to **Agenda Item No.5 - Residential Development Proposal - Former Oakdale Comprehensive School**, in that her husband is an employee of Willmott Dixon and as such she would leave the meeting when the matter was considered.

3. CABINET – 9th FEBRUARY 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2022 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 until the 6th of April 2022. 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. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL – FORMER OAKDALE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer) having declared a personal and prejudicial interest left the meeting.

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the proposed Caerphilly Homes development opportunity at the former Oakdale Comprehensive School site and sought approval in principle to develop the site for Caerphilly Homes' first, flagship, mixed tenure residential development (subject to receipt of a detailed cost plan, to be presented via a separate report in Autumn 2022). Cabinet noted that the site would seek to accommodate a minimum of 100 homes, 50% of which would be social/affordable and that the development would comply with the Authority's ambition to deliver a zero-carbon Borough by 2030.

It was highlighted that the report had been discussed by the Special Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 10th February 2022 where a comment pertaining to the MUGA (Multi Use Games Area) was raised, Members noted that this community facility would need to be moved from its current location as part of these proposals and the Scrutiny Committee had requested that this be replaced as soon as possible. The Officer confirmed that the Caerphilly Homes team would be working with the developer to resolve this as soon as possible.

The Officer mentioned that an indicative value had been received from the District Valuer and that the value currently stood at £715,000. It was confirmed that the team were still waiting on the full report.

A detailed outline of the project was presented by Wilmott Dixon and Holder Mathias. The presentation detailed the proposed composition of the development on the former Oakdale Comprehensive School site which would provide a mix of private and affordable, social rented homes in a sustainable, high quality, development which would be sensitive and sympathetic to the existing street scheme and new homeowners.

Illustrations of the site proposals were shown, and Cabinet were asked to note how the steep change in levels would be sensitively managed as the site was developed. Drone footage and ariel photographs were used to show the different levels and the site as it is currently.

Mr C. Jones expressed his excitement and pride in this truly collaborative venture which would be an exemplar for place making, taking a holistic approach that would provide a high quality, low carbon homes for the people living there. The whole project from the design team to the

construction team would be working hand in hand with Caerphilly Homes on this flagship development.

The typography of the site was outlined, Cabinet noted that this would be a challenge for the development design, but they would be able to achieve one cohesive integrated site and one community which would seamlessly integrate into the existing street scene making the proposed development immediately part of the wider community.

The presentation then moved on to site access and how vehicle movements would be controlled within the site from one access point on Oakdale Terrace. Cabinet noted that as the geography of the area moved from a tight urban grain to semi urban this would be reflected in the site's concept. Cars and parking provision would consider the Council's Active Travel Plan and the sustainable footprint of the development. The site would see a lot of green and mature trees retained along with new planting, there would be no over-looking in terms of the street screen and an illustrated site plan was presented showing how existing woodland, retained trees and topography would enhance the site. Sectional typography was shown and 3D views given and the importance of the roofscape was noted. The play area and lagoon area were also illustrated, and Members were asked to note that parking would be achieved on plot on in discreet bays and the playground would not be overlooked and would provide a safe environment for residents. Cabinet were assured that this would be a development for people, putting people first.

Achievements and next steps were outlined, and Cabinet were assured that what was being presented today was completely achievable.

In concluding the presentation, the mix of homes and details of possible designs were highlighted and would include features and mixed materials. Finalising the MUGA relocation would form part of these next steps. The target timeframe for outline planning approval was confirmed and it was noted that from this the commercial model would be developed further with Caerphilly and would be followed by a reserved matters application in the Autumn of 2022.

It was noted that the application would come before the Planning Committee at its meeting on the 23rd March 2022 which would be an important step forward, that will enable the drawn down of the Social Housing Grant.

Members thanked the team for their efforts in bringing the scheme to life and welcomed the exciting development for Caerphilly. Clarification on the post construction carbon footprint of the new houses was sought. The Officer confirmed that the issue was being explored and that work was ongoing to test the ability to achieve net zero carbon not only on the construction element which includes the same steel frame envelope as used in the Trecenydd and Trethomas pilot developments but also on the in use of the properties.

Cabinet welcomed the development and that the new homes were designed to be energy efficient and affordable, and sought clarification on the real term benefits for residents in relation to the reduction of energy bills. It was stated that there would be significant reduction in energy bills and that the reduction was backed by recent research.

Cabinet was pleased to note that there would be no gas provision on this site and that residents in these homes would be much better off than in any other home that they could move it to. Furthermore, it was noted that intelligent technology had been incorporated within the fabric of the buildings in the pilot sites to monitor the efficiency of the buildings and that learning would be applied to the Oakdale site.

Members welcomed the design development of the proposals, that this development did not seek to squeeze in as many properties on a plot as possible, here there would be room for a community to develop and this was applauded.

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: -

1. The content of the report be considered, and the development of the former Oakdale Comprehensive School site by Caerphilly be approved in principle, subject to the receipt and presentation of a detailed cost plan.
2. The principle of appropriating the site from the General Fund to the HRA at a cost to be determined by the District Valuer be approved.

6. PROPOSED RE-DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER TY DARRAN CARE HOME, RISCA

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the proposed Caerphilly Homes development opportunity at the former Ty Darran care home site and sought approval in principle to develop the site as an innovative later living scheme for older persons. It was highlighted that the report had been discussed by the Special Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 10th February 2022

It was stated that the development would set the standard for the future provision of older person's accommodation. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the development would include a minimum of forty homes which would be built using modern methods of construction and fabric first approach to achieve net-zero carbon.

The re-development of the site was described as a 'flagship development' for those residing in sheltered schemes which were due to be decommissioned. An emphasis was placed on the net-zero carbon aspect of the re-development as well as the communal aspect. It was stated that the proposed re-development was important as it would facilitate community interaction with residents. The Officer confirmed that the Authority had received the Valuation Report from the District Valuer and the appraisal of the site had amounted to £800,000.

Cabinet were pleased to see the progress outlined in the report, noting the many obstacles encountered in bringing the proposed re-development forward. The re-development was described as 'life changing' for older persons, a 'fantastic opportunity' for Risca and the Lower Sirhowy Valley.

A detailed outline of the next stages of the Scheme was presented by Pentan Architects, including the procurement route and the appointment of a construction partner. It was anticipated that the project would progress quickly, and the existing trees onsite would be preserved.

It was highlighted that the proposed re-development was designed to encourage social interactions between residents and thereby improving their well-being. The Architect highlighted that the development would include play areas for grandchildren, library reading spaces, workshop craft spaces and community garden spaces, with the aim of making the site feel as homely as possible.

It was noted that the proposed re-development had moved away from the former institutional models of double loaded corridors with no daylight or natural ventilation. With regards to the environmental sustainability aspect, it was stated that discussions had taken place with the Strategic Coordination Manager for Housing and the wider team and that discussions centred around embodied carbon assessors as well as operational carbon assessors. In terms of the construction methods, it was stated that carbon consumption would be kept to a minimum.

Cabinet welcomed the outstanding designs and commended the team including the architects for their excellent work.

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: -

1. The content of the report be considered and the in-principal development by Caerphilly Homes of the former Ty Darran site be approved, subject to the receipt and presentation of a satisfactory cost plan.
2. The decision to appropriate the site from the general fund to the HRA in principle at the cost to be determined by the District Valuer be approved.
3. The proposal to move to the next stage of the project in order to determine the most suitable procurement route for the detailed design and construction phase of the project be approved.

7. WELSH GOVERNMENT LEASE SCHEME PROPOSAL

Consideration was given to the report which informed members of the current request from Welsh Government for Local Authorities to express an interest in the Leasing Scheme Wales (LSW) in meeting their duties under Part 2 of the Housing Wales Act 2014. Members were requested to consider whether the Council should express an interest in the Leasing Scheme Wales or to decline the expression of interest and remain with its current Private Sector Scheme – Caerphilly Keys.

The officer explained that the LSW scheme had been fully considered and compared with the current Caerphilly Keys Scheme, the details of which were set out in the report. Cabinet were advised that there were over 100 properties currently within the Caerphilly Keys scheme. Officers approached the landlords of these properties to discuss the options, and many felt the incentives were not sufficient enough for them to participate in the LSW scheme, which would in turn result in those landlords leaving the scheme. As a result, officers confirmed their preferred option was not to express an interest with LSW on the basis that the Council has a successful scheme in place with Caerphilly Keys. 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: -

The report be considered and the interest in the LSW be declined on the grounds that CCBC has a successful PRS Scheme in place with Caerphilly Keys.

8. WELSH GOVERNMENT RETAIL, LEISURE & HOSPITALITY RATE RELIEF SCHEME 2022/2023

Consideration was given to the report which provided details of the new 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme' offered by WG for 2022/23. Cabinet were asked to endorse the new Rate Relief Scheme in accordance with the guidance set out at Appendix 1 and the provisions of section 47(1) (a) and section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to obtain Welsh Government grant funding.

The Officer confirmed that there was a 50% reduction to the rate relief for retail, leisure and hospitality businesses with a £110,000 cap across all properties occupied by the same business across Wales, but the relief matched that offered in England for the 2022/23 financial year. With regards to the requirements for businesses to claim the relief, the Officer confirmed that

businesses would be made aware of the new rate relief in the coming weeks via email and where the Authority did not have contact details, the availability of the scheme would be relayed through the Council's social media channels and website. The Officer advised that an online declaration form was being developed and that it would be made available to businesses in a similar way to Business Support Grants. The importance of relaying the changes to businesses through a variety of different channels were recognised by Cabinet members.

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: -

1. The 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2022-23' (the 2022/23 Scheme) be endorsed in accordance with the guidance set out at Appendix 1 and the provisions of section 47(1) (a) and section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
2. Delegated powers be used by the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer to award the relief.
3. The proposal set out in paragraph 5.7 be supported in order to assist ratepayers and minimise administration costs for the Authority, it is proposed that the declaration process will involve each eligible business completing and submitting an online form via the Council's website, with the Council's Business Rates Team aiming to process all declarations forms received as quickly as possible and issue amended bills to eligible ratepayers in accordance with the WG Guidance
4. It be noted that Officers of the Authority will make the business community aware of the 2022/23 Scheme through its usual channels, including its website and social media. In addition, it be agreed, as set out in paragraph 5.8. that, due to the proximity of this report to the 2022/23 annual billing processes, the Business Rates Team will, where an email address is held for a business that is receiving this relief for the 2021/22 financial year, email those ratepayers informing them that the 2022/23 rate bills will be issued without showing this relief. The email will refer them to the Council's website so they can read the WG guidance before submitting a declaration form.

9. WHOLE-AUTHORITY REVEUNUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (MONTH 9)

Consideration was given to the report which provided details of projected whole-authority revenue budget expenditure for the 2021/22 financial year. The report also sought Cabinet approval of proposals for the ringfencing of underspends for a range of specific purposes.

It was noted that the report was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 22nd February 2022 where clarification on social services and education underspends was sought. It was confirmed that Members of the Scrutiny Committee noted the report and endorsed the proposed ring-fencing of underspends totalling £2.535m.

Additional one-off funding linked to the 2021/22 Financial Settlement announced by the Welsh Government within the last week was brought to the attention of Cabinet Members. It was stated that the funding would allow the Authority to manage forthcoming financial pressures in a more flexible way. The Officer mentioned that the funding was due to be approved by the Senedd in March and that Caerphilly CBC's share is anticipated to be circa £2.9m. It was acknowledged

that the additional funding would increase the level of projected underspend presented in the Whole-Authority Revenue Budget Monitoring Report.

The Officer felt that it was important to stress that the Authority was experiencing unusual levels of underspends and that the underspends were linked to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant financial support provided by the Welsh Government.

The Officer also advised Members that an update would be provided in the 2021/22 Provisional Revenue Budget Outturn Report that will be presented to both Cabinet and Council in July. This will present a further opportunity for the ring-fencing of underspends aligned to the council's priorities and ongoing recovery from the pandemic.

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

1. The content of the report be noted.
2. The proposed ring-fencing of underspends totalling £2.535m as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report be agreed.

10. BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2022/23 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval of the 2022/23 budget proposals prior to final determination by Council on the 24th of February 2022. The report also provided an update on the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

It was noted that Cabinet had endorsed the 2022/23 Draft Budget Proposals based on the Welsh Government (WG) Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement for 2022/23 at its meeting on 19th January 2022.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and talked Members through some of its key proposals including the £9.6m of new investment in key services. It was confirmed that £5.7m of this funding would be targeted specifically at social care services, including a pledge to pay the Real Living Wage. £250k will be made available for new apprenticeships and it was further noted that the Authority was making significant investment in public protection services and the flood prevention team.

The original draft budget proposals presented to Cabinet on the 19th of January included a proposed Council Tax increase of 2.5%, which is well below the rate of inflation and the lowest increase for a number of years. However, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the concerns of residents had been listened to and that the final budget proposals now include a lower proposed increase in Council Tax of 1.9%. This equates to a 45p weekly increase for a Band D property.

The Cabinet Member drew Members' attention to the WG COVID-19 hardship fund which is due to cease on 31st March 2022. It was stressed that Local Authorities would be required to meet ongoing financial pressures arising from the pandemic through the funding provided in the Financial Settlement. It was anticipated that additional costs will continue to be incurred in the short to medium-term and that income levels will take some time to recover. Thus, it was recommended that the Authority's Covid-19 Earmarked Reserve be topped up to £5m.

Reference was made to Appendix 5 of the report which provides details of the updated medium-term financial outlook and shows a potential savings requirement of £9.759m for the two-year period 2023/24 to 2024/25. It was confirmed that a further report would be presented to Cabinet in early Autumn, detailing proposals in terms of savings requirements moving forward.

Cabinet Members welcomed the budget proposals and stressed that this was a no cuts budget with significant investment in a number of key areas. The additional investment in young people through the apprenticeship scheme was particularly well received.

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

1. The revenue budget proposals for 2022/23 of £395.071m as detailed throughout the report and summarised in Appendix 1 be endorsed.
2. The movements on the General Fund in Appendix 3 and the current projected balance as at the 31st March 2022 of £14.516m be noted.
3. The General Fund balance be subject to review when the 2021/22 Provisional Revenue Budget Outturn Report is presented to Cabinet and Council in July 2022.
4. The proposed Capital Programme for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 4 be endorsed.
5. The proposals for the use of £3.8m capital grant funding recently announced by the Welsh Government as detailed in paragraph 5.8.4 be endorsed.
6. The proposal to increase Council Tax by 1.9% for the 2022/23 financial year to ensure that a balanced budget is achieved (Council Tax Band D being set at £1,253.95) be supported.
7. The updated MTFP in Appendix 5 showing an indicative potential savings requirement of £9.759m for the two-year period 2023/24 to 2024/25 be noted.

The meeting closed at 11:56am.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 9th March 2022.

CHAIR