



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 29TH 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:

D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services and Housing), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer).

Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), L. Lucas (Head of Customer and Digital Services), F. Wilkins (Housing Services Manager), P. O' Neill (Senior Youth Services Manager), P. Warren (Strategic Leader for School Improvement) 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

An apology for absence was received from C. Harry (Chief Executive).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. CABINET – 15th SEPTEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 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 until 24th November 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. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2021-24

Cabinet noted that the report had been presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 28th September 2021 and the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee had unanimously supported the Strategy without amendment.

Consideration was then given to the report which sought Cabinet approval for the Workforce Development Strategy 2021-24. The Team Caerphilly-Better Together Transformation Strategy was adopted by Cabinet on the 12th June 2021, as part of this Strategy, ten corporate reviews were being undertaken and Workforce Development was noted to be one of these reviews.

The Workforce Development Strategy was an action arising from this review and seeks to support the Council's employees to maximise their capabilities, effectiveness and resilience to aid the re-purposing and re-shaping of our services in response to the many challenges faced by the Council moving forward.

Cabinet noted that the Strategy had been supported by GMB, Unison and Unite Trade Unions.

The Head of People Services updated Cabinet on the Scrutiny Committee's comments and advised that these centred on agile working, return to office, wellbeing including mental health, support and training for those working from home, workforce resilience and support for staff with a disability, as the number of staff reported to have a disability is low.

Cabinet welcomed the Strategy as a positive step in supporting the Council's most valuable assets i.e. it's staff.

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 the Workforce Development Strategy 2021-24 be approved.

6. EMPLOYEE WELLBEING STRATEGY 2021-24.

Cabinet noted that the report had been presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 28th September 2021 and the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee had unanimously supported the Strategy without amendment.

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval for the Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-24. The Team Caerphilly-Better Together Transformation Strategy was adopted by Cabinet on the 12th June 2021, as part of this Strategy, ten corporate reviews were being undertaken and Workforce Development was noted to be one these reviews.

The Wellbeing Strategy was an action arising from this review and details how we achieve our vision: 'Working together to fully support our employees' health and wellbeing.' The Strategy reinforces that our people are at the very heart of everything we do and our continuing success as a Council will be dependent on us promoting and facilitating good health and wellbeing, to enable us to provide excellent services to our communities.

Cabinet noted that the strategy was fully supported by GMB, Unison and Unite Trade Unions.

The Head of People Services referred to the comments of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee when considering the Workforce Development Strategy, in relation to support for staff, particularly regarding wellbeing and mental health, which were acknowledged and addressed in the Wellbeing Strategy. Members referenced sickness absence statistics and sought clarification as to the work being undertaken to reduce absence levels. Scrutiny also sought clarification on Work/Home stress and how these were being differentiated. The Head of People Services confirmed that this was ascertained from information provided by employees. Reference was made to the Staff Survey results and how these would be used to roadmap progress. Cabinet noted that although 25% of responders did not feel the Council were moving in the right direction, 75% of responders felt that the Council were moving in the right direction which was significant and positive. Members felt that further work should be undertaken to explore any underlying issues. Cabinet also noted that 84% felt that they had a good/very good work life balance and felt that this was good to highlight. The positive responses on agile working were welcomed.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing confirmed that the staff survey data was being looked at on a Directorate by Directorate basis in order to identify any potential 'hot spots' and make a comparison with the rest of the Council in order to provide a better overview.

The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services placed on record his thanks to the Head of People Services and her Team for all their hard work in the preparation of both strategies during the most challenging period. Cabinet added their thanks to those of the Corporate Director and recognised the efforts of all those involved.

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 Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-21 be approved.

7. CHRISTMAS CLOSE DOWN ARRANGEMENTS 2021

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval for the implementation of a closedown for Officers over the Christmas period.

Cabinet welcomed the report and its recommendations as a way to recognise the exceptional commitment of staff who had worked so hard during the pandemic.

Clarification was sought as to how staff not on the clocking system would benefit from the 2 hours credit. The Head of People Services confirmed that there was an opportunity for staff whose rotas did not support the credit to have the 2 hours paid rather than the credit so that they did not lose out.

Cabinet felt that the increase in carry over leave for this year only would also be supportive for those staff who for service reasons would not be able to take the day within this annual leave year.

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: -

- 3.1.1. The Corporate Offices close at 12 noon on Christmas Eve and reopen on January 4th, 2022 be agreed.
- 3.1.2. All staff receive 2 hours' credit for Christmas Eve as per the arrangements detailed in the report be agreed.
- 3.1.3. All staff receive an additional day annual leave for 2021 be agreed.
- 3.1.4. Carry over annual leave be increased to 6 days for this year only be agreed.

8. SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT – MANAGING BUILDING AND SERVICE RISK AT ALERT LEVEL ZERO

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval for the reopening of services to the public.

Cabinet noted that each building would differ in terms of the level of available space, required staffing levels, ventilation, and ability to support separate access and egress. As a result, the risks of reopening buildings that are currently closed will differ depending on a range of local factors. Council buildings currently closed to the public have all been individually risk assessed using the agreed template based on a hierarchy of control framework set out within Welsh Governments latest guidance.

Cabinet welcomed this cautious approach to the reopening of services, safeguarding all aspects for staff and the public as we leave the pandemic. The current position in terms of case incident rates were noted to be far higher than this time last year, evidencing the need for appropriate safeguards to be put in place. Cabinet advised that during the pandemic the public had accessed various services via alternative means, and these would continue to be available.

Officers confirmed that the infection rate was currently at 16.7% - 840 per 100,000, which clearly illustrated that the virus was still very much with us and so it was still vitally important to treat the reopening of buildings sensibly and safely in order to safeguard public and staff health. It was noted that based on data modelling the infection peak had been reached and hopefully coming weeks would seek rates decreasing however we were not out of the woods.

Cabinet agreed the importance of a measured and cautious approach and felt the detail with the templates to be vital as we moved forward and were reassured that further reports would be coming forward as progress was made.

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) Reopen the Council premises set out in 5.6 in accordance with the templates and recommended controls set out in Appendix 1 be agreed.
- 2) The premises set out in 5.7 should remain closed in accordance with the templates attached at Appendix 2 be agreed.
- 3) The reintroduction of Customer First and Reception provision at Ty Penallta from the 4th October 2021, in accordance with the template and recommended controls set out in Appendix 3 be agreed.
- 4) The reopening recommendations and timescales set out in 5.11 for the remaining Customer First Offices in accordance with the templates set out in Appendix 4 be agreed.
- 5) Cabinet to receive ongoing reports over coming months that outline any further changes that need to be made should the guidance or risk levels change again.

9. MONTCLAIRE AVENUE STREAM WORKS FUNDING BID

Consideration was given to the report which sought to inform Cabinet of the proposals to address extensive scour and loss of riverbank support immediately behind residential properties along Montclaire Avenue, Blackwood.

Cabinet noted that whilst these properties were historically Council owned, all but 2 properties had been sold to private owners. While the properties were sold, Caerphilly Council chose to retain the riparian ownership and liability of the watercourse including the banks up to the private property boundaries. The scheme comprises headwalls, canalised and culverted constructions to convey the stream's water to mitigate future detriment to the watercourse and neighbouring properties rear gardens.

It was noted that a potential contribution of £65,000 towards the scheme from the private landowner had been verbally offered and should Cabinet be minded to approve the scheme further negotiations would be undertaken in terms of the liability in accepting this contribution.

Officer's emphasised the extremely time sensitive nature of this long-standing issue and the Monitoring Officer confirmed that because of this and with the agreement of the Mayor, this matter would be treated as urgent and therefore the decision would not be subject to call-in but would be added to the next Council agenda for noting.

Clarification was sought on whether an additional recommendation was warranted in relation to the private landowner negotiations, to award delegated powers to Officers to carry out such negotiations, the Monitoring Officer was of the opinion that this was not necessary as long as Cabinet were content that Officers would carry on with the proposals and any negotiations without a further report to Cabinet.

Cabinet welcomed the proposed scheme which would resolve a long-standing issue for residents and local ward members and agreed that no additional recommendation was required.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendation at 3.1 of the report be amended to read that funding of £1,500,019 be made available from the Housing Revenue Account to deliver the scheme at Montclaire Avenue.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to the aforementioned amendment 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 funding of £1,500,019 be made available from the Housing Revenue Account to deliver the scheme at Montclair Avenue.

The meeting closed at 11.20am

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 13th October 2021.

CHAIR