



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN, ON WEDNESDAY, 30TH APRIL 2014 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor H.A. Andrews - Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs C. Forehead (HR and Governance/Business Manager), D.T. Hardacre (Performance and Asset Management), K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development), G. Jones (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing), Mrs R. Passmore (Education and Lifelong Learning), D.V. Poole (Community and Leisure Services), K.V. Reynolds (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services), T.J. Williams (Highways, Transportation and Engineering), R. Woodyatt (Social Services).

Together with:

S.A. Rosser (Interim Chief Executive), N. Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services & Section 151 Officer), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services), T. Maher (Assistant Director Planning & Strategy).

Also in Attendance:

K. Williams (Private Sector Housing Manager), F. Wilkins (Principal Housing Officer - Private Sector), G.T. Hardacre (Head of Workforce and Organisational Development), S. Pugh (Communications Manager), M. Donovan (Project Lead 21st Century Schools), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

346. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Mrs S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive).

347. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D.V. Poole declared an interest in agenda item 4(1) and left the meeting during its consideration.

Councillor D.T. Hardacre declared an interest in agenda item 4(4) and left the meeting during its consideration.

348. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meeting be approved and signed as a correct record: -

1. Cabinet held on 16th April 2014 (minute nos. 333-345; page nos. 168-174).

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED**349. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY**

Councillor D.V. Poole had declared an interest in this item and left the meeting during its consideration. The report had been presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 15th April 2014. The views of the Scrutiny Committee were reported to Cabinet.

At the Cabinet meeting on 16th October 2013 Members took the decision to introduce a moratorium on selective Home Improvement Grants whilst officers carried out a review of the Authority's Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy. The report outlines the findings of the review and offers a number of options for Members' consideration.

It was noted that Welsh Government is developing a private sector housing loans scheme that should be made available for use by Welsh Local Authorities during the summer. The current proposals indicate that local authorities will be afforded flexibility in the manner that these loans can be delivered and that any Private Sector Housing Renewal Policies may be tailored to utilise the national scheme in a manner as best befits local needs. Further details will be included in a future report to Members and if endorsed will form an intrinsic part of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.

Following consideration and discussion, the recommendation in the report was moved and seconded. By a show of hands it was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the officer's report, a revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy be implemented in line with the proposals outlined in Option 3 of the report, namely:-

- To continue to provide assistance via Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants.
- To continue to provide assistance via Relocation Grants.
- To continue to provide assistance via re branded Minor Works Grants.
- To permanently withdraw assistance via Home Improvement Grants.
- To introduce a new form of assistance via Home Improvement Repayment Loans.
- To continue to provide assistance via Conversion Grants.
- To withdraw assistance via HMO grants and replace it with assistance via an HMO Repayment Loan.
- To continue to provide assistance via Group and Block Repair and to introduce a Renewal Area grant.
- To withdraw assistance via Property Appreciation Loans.
- To further amend the means test for discretionary grant aid.

350. NO SMOKING POLICY

The report had been presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 15th April 2014. The views of the Scrutiny Committee were reported to Cabinet.

It is proposed to amend the Council's current No Smoking Policy to take account of the introduction and usage of electronic cigarettes in the UK. Officers have undertaken a thorough review of the current policy with a view to making it an employment policy to prevent smoking by Council employees and Agency workers on Council premises and in Council vehicles. In addition a new Smoke Free Premises Policy will be developed as a matter of urgency in conjunction with all other relevant parties.

Following consideration and discussion, the recommendation in the report was moved and seconded. By a show of hands it was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the officer's report, the revised 'No Smoking Policy' be approved and adopted.

351. ONE VOICE - CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The report had been presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 15th April 2014. The views of the Scrutiny Committee were reported to Cabinet.

A new Corporate Communications Strategy has been developed which sets out the Council's approach to delivering its communications activity and outlines the principles that will underpin this work.

Local Authorities across Wales face unprecedented financial challenges over the next three years and effective communication along with extensive community engagement will form a key part of managing this difficult process. There is also a need for modern local government communication to reflect the new media landscape. The One Voice Strategy will enable the organisation to adopt a more joined up approach to communications and will help position effective communications at the core of all the Authority's work.

Following consideration and discussion, the recommendation in the report was moved and seconded. By a show of hands it was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the officer's report, the 'One Voice Communications Strategy 2014-2017' be approved and adopted.

352. INTERMEDIATE CARE FUND

Councillor D.T. Hardacre had declared an interest in this item and left the meeting during its consideration.

In December 2013 Welsh Government announced the creation of an Intermediate Care Fund across Wales. The aim of the fund is to encourage integrated working between local authorities, health, third sector and housing. The fund is made up of £35m revenue funding and £15m capital. The fund has been primarily created to support frail elderly people in their own home and to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions or inappropriate admissions to care, as well as preventing delayed discharge from hospital.

In January 2014 Welsh Government advised that the intermediate care fund is only available for 2014-2015 and funding would be allocated on a regional footprint based on NHS boundaries. The total funding allocated to the Gwent region amounts to £7,958,100. The Corporate Director Social Services, who is the Programme Manager on behalf of the Gwent region, advised that a total of 25 bids totalling £7.9 million were submitted to Welsh Government by the deadline of 7th March 2014. On 2nd April Welsh Government confirmed that all 25 schemes had been approved. In view of the timeline it had not been possible to bring details of the proposed schemes to Members prior to their submission to Welsh Government.

A quarterly monitoring regime has been put in place by Welsh Government to track spend and service progress. Partners have the ability to undertake variations of up to 10% between the schemes and there is potentially the opportunity for further funding bids from any underspends as the year progresses.

Following consideration and discussion, the recommendation in the report was moved and seconded. By a show of hands it was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the officer's report, the creation of the Intermediate Care Fund by Welsh Government and the schemes laid out in Appendix 1 that will support older people across Gwent, were endorsed.

353. STATEMENT OF INTENT FOR OLDER PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

Welsh Government issued draft guidance in October 2013 requiring health and social care partners in Wales to develop draft proposals to integrate service planning and delivery for older people with complex needs, within health board boundaries.

The Statement sets out the baseline position and direction of travel for meeting the health, social care and well-being challenges for older people with complex needs, where alignment of resources and service integration is anticipated. A significant element of integration for Older People is delivered through the Gwent Frailty programme but the Statement seeks to extend into core services as well as prevention and early intervention activities.

The joint governance framework brings together a range of regional partnerships that are already well established with a new Director led officer group being formulated to ensure co-ordination of activity across the whole system.

Following consideration and discussion, the recommendation in the report was moved and seconded. By a show of hands it was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the officer's report, Cabinet endorsed the Statement of Intent submitted in response to the Framework for Integration published by Welsh Government in March 2014 and confirmed the Authority's participation in the regional governance framework.

354. SECONDARY RATIONALISATION (PHASE 1) SCHOOL ORGANISATION PROPOSAL

The report presents the outcome of the Statutory Notice in relation to the Proposal. Members were asked to consider the findings of the Objection Report in relation to the Secondary Rationalisation (Phase 1): Islwyn West Region School Organisation Proposal (the Proposal) and subject to consideration of this, to approve the Proposal.

Consultation on the Secondary Rationalisation (Phase 1) School Organisation Proposal commenced on 9th December 2013 and concluded on 31st January 2014. There was only one response, a letter received on 16th March 2014, which was jointly signed by a present Year 11 pupil and a former pupil, a summary of which is set out in paragraph 3.1 of the attached appendix to the report. The response to the objection is set out in paragraph 3.2 of the appendix.

Members placed on record their appreciation of the dedication and commitment shown by all those who had been involved in the process.

Following consideration and discussion, the recommendations in the report were moved and seconded. By a show of hands they were unanimously approved.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the officer's report, Cabinet considered the findings set out in the Objection Report and approved the Proposal as set out below:

- Closure of Oakdale and Pontllanfraith Secondary Schools.
- A new school to be built on the Oakdale Plateau 3 site.
- The proposed new school to be designed with a capacity of 900 pupils plus provision for special needs of around 50 pupils.

355. WORKFORCE STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING THE IMPACTS OF THE MTF BUDGET SAVINGS

The report addresses the need to proactively manage the conflicting demands that the declining budget will place on the Authority's workforce in the future and seeks approval to develop detailed proposals to introduce tools that will allow a reduction in workforce costs with the aim of avoiding compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

In December 2013 a special meeting of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered a report that brought forward a range of issues for consideration in relation to the Authority's workforce as part of a review of the Medium Term Financial Planning requirements.

An extract from the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting is attached to the report together with the views provided by the Trades Unions. It was noted that the Trades Unions had voiced their objections to the proposals referred to in paragraph 4.6.1 - 4.6.3, which are not being recommended as taken forward at this time. In addition they had raised objections to items 4.5.6 and 4.5.7, which have been identified as items that will require future consideration. Members were advised that further correspondence had since been received from the Trades Unions in this respect.

As individual proposals are developed (paragraphs 4.5.1 - 4.5.7 of the report) they will be the subject of further consultation on the detail of the arrangements.

Following consideration and discussion, the recommendations in the report were moved and seconded. By a show of hands they were unanimously approved.

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

1. Cabinet confirmed its agreement to develop firm proposals for consultation and their introduction and implementation.
2. Where appropriate, the principle of cross matching employees under the schemes developed be endorsed, where a business case makes sound financial sense.
3. In terms of the measures outlined in paragraphs 4.6.1 - 4.6.3, Cabinet confirmed that no detailed proposals will be considered at this time.

356. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report sought approval of the updated Cabinet Forward Work Programme for the period May to July 2014.

Following consideration and discussion, the recommendation in the report was moved and seconded. By a show of hands it was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the officer's report, the Cabinet Forward Work Programme as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 21st May 2014.

CHAIRMAN