



## **CABINET**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN, ON WEDNESDAY, 16TH JULY 2014 AT 2.00 PM**

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#### **PRESENT:**

Councillor K.V. Reynolds - Leader

#### **Councillors:**

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

#### **Together with:**

S.A. Rosser (Interim Chief Executive), Mrs S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), Mrs N. Scammell (Acting Director Corporate Services and S.151 Officer), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services).

#### **Also in Attendance:**

P. Elliott (Head of Regeneration and Planning), T. Shaw (Head of Engineering Services), H. Morgan (Team Leader Integrated Transport Unit), G. Evans (Interim Manager, Community Education), S. Harris (Acting Head of Corporate Finance), C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property), R. Roberts (Performance Manager), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs B. Jones (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services) and Councillor G. Jones (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing).

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 2nd July 2014 (minute nos. 1-8; page nos. 1-4) be approved and signed as a correct record.

## **MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED**

### **4. INTRODUCTION OF CAR PARKING CHARGES AT COUNTRY PARKS**

The report sought approval to proceed with the introduction of car parking charges at five country parks following the advertising of the Caerphilly County Borough Council Traffic Regulation Order. Car parking charges at country parks were agreed indicative proposals as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). They have now been advertised as required by regulations and the report outlines the responses received to the consultation. Given the level of public response it had been decided that the matter should be reported to Cabinet to decide whether or not the charges should be confirmed.

The proposals have been advertised and the public consultation has been completed. On the advice of Legal Services the consultation period was extended by a week to allow for the Easter holidays and to ensure the public had adequate time to respond. Consultation ran between 3rd April and 2nd May 2014. The advertised charges for each of the parks is £1.00 for up to 2 hours or £3.00 for the day. Blue badge holders are allowed up to 3 hours for £1.00, this being in accordance with the concession previously approved by the Council. Season tickets will be available at a cost of £50.00 for 1 year (or £25.00 for 6 months).

The consultation has resulted in a significant number of objections. A total of 7 petitions were submitted (several were the same petition submitted in stages but each with different signatures) signed by over 2,800 persons. In addition there were 124 letters of objection and numerous comments made on social media.

Councillor C.P. Mann had been granted permission by the Leader of Council to address Cabinet on behalf of local objectors to the proposals. Councillor Mann read out a detailed statement prepared by objectors, setting out the reasons why they believed car parking at country parks should be free of charge and requesting further information in relation to the costs of implementing the scheme. Reference was made in particular to the negative impact the proposals would have on the health and well-being of residents and visitors to the area who use the country parks.

Mrs P. Elliott, Head of Regeneration and Planning, presented the officer's report and responded in detail to all the issues raised. It was pointed out that should the car parking charges not be progressed or if they are amended there will be a financial impact on the ability of the Council and service to achieve the required budget savings. Should that be the case, Regeneration and Planning would incur a budget deficit equal to the estimated income of £85,000, which would need to be funded by other means.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons set out in the report, officers proceed with the Road Traffic Order to introduce car parking charges at all country parks (as outlined in paragraph 4.4) as advertised.

### **5. EXTENSION OF BEDLINOG LINE/DOWLAI PARK AND RIDE**

The report, which was presented to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 1st July 2014, informed members of the potential to extend the current freight line between Ystrad Mynach and Cwmbargoed to Dowlais Top to facilitate the potential future reinstatement of a passenger service. Members' views were sought on the proposal to develop and promote the scheme (in conjunction with Merthyr CBC) and ensure it receives due consideration amongst the other rail priorities identified and being developed in South East Wales.

It was noted that the new rail service would open up a greater range of destinations served by rail, including between Dowlais/Bedlinog/Trelewis and Nelson and Members queried the possibility of a station being provided at Penallta. Officers advised that this could be looked at as part of a feasibility study.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet supported the proposal to develop and promote the scheme (in conjunction with Merthyr County Borough Council) and ensure it receives due consideration amongst the other rail priorities identified and being developed in South East Wales.

## **6. RENEWAL OF MAINSTREAM SCHOOL AND COLLEGE TRANSPORT CONTRACTS**

The report, which was presented to the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on 8th July 2014, sought Members' views on the proposed changes to the renewal of mainstream school and college transport contracts. A new framework is being progressed to prepare for the renewal of the existing contracts.

It is proposed that some changes are made to the specification adopted previously to ensure services are maintained within the budget available and no additional pressure is put on the revenue funding that is available for home to school / college transport arrangements.

In order to demonstrate Caerphilly's commitment to improving air quality, Members requested that the next round of contracts will require contractors to invest so that a minimum 5% of their coaches will comply with European Emission Standard Euro III.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved subject to the insertion of 'up to' a maximum of 25 years in the third bullet point. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons set out in the officer's report, the specification for mainstream school transport contract be set as follows: -

- All vehicles are single-decked.
- All vehicles are fitted with seat belts.
- All vehicles used must be up to a maximum of 25 years old at the start of the contract.
- Contracts are limited to a maximum length of 3 years.
- The introduction of a new contract variation clause, rather than annual reviews.
- New contracts will commence in January 2015

## **7. ISLWYN WEST SECONDARY SCHOOL - OUTLINE OF PROJECT PLAN**

The project plan outlines the key steps, milestones and timescales for the design and construction of the new secondary school for Islwyn West. In liaison with the Council's Procurement Team the Client Department have used the Welsh Government's Technical Services Framework for the procurement of the external project managers and cost consultants. The evaluation of tenders was undertaken on 1st July 2014 and the successful consultants are due to commence mid-July 2014. Between mid-July and mid October 2014 the external consultants will validate the in-house design, commence initial value engineering and develop the cost plan. It is envisaged that the construction contractor will be appointed mid-October.

The key timescales for the design of the new school were outlined. Consultation on the design commenced on 26th June 2014. Meetings have been held with school staff and surveys have been distributed to staff and pupils. The outcome of the consultation will be analysed during August 2014.

Following consideration and discussion (during which appreciation was expressed of the professional manner in which officers had progressed this matter), it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and a further report be presented to Cabinet in September. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

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

1. The report be noted.
2. The external project managers prepare a position statement on the project by the end of August and a further report be presented to Cabinet in September.

## **8. CAERPHILLY LIBRARY SERVICE STRATEGY 2014-2017**

The report was considered by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on 8th July 2014. The views of the Scrutiny Committee were reported to Cabinet.

Mr G. Evans, Interim Manager Community Education, presented the report, which outlines the County Borough Library Service's Strategy for the next three years i.e. 2014-2017. The Strategy focuses on managing the anticipated organisational changes required as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and upon delivering in two key areas i.e. 'Reading Together' and 'Digital e-Services'.

The 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards comprises 18 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators. Library Service performance against both entitlements and indicators will be mapped to a range of outcome and impact measures in a departure from earlier Frameworks that focused largely on a set of Standards and Performance Indicators to assess Council attainment. The areas of the 5th Quality Standards Framework 2014-2017 that may present the greatest challenges for the Authority in their retention or future attainment, in light of possible MTFP pressures, are highlighted in Table 1 in paragraph 4.2.5 of the report.

Following consideration and discussion (during which Members expressed their appreciation of all the work undertaken by the officers involved in preparing the strategy), it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons set out in the report, the Caerphilly Library Service Strategy 2014-2017 be endorsed.

## **9. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF GRANT FUNDING - WG SCHEMES**

The report provides details of two new rate relief schemes. The first scheme, the 'Wales Retail Relief Scheme', aims to provide assistance for eligible occupied retail non-domestic properties with a rateable value of £50,000 or less by offering relief up to £1,000 on the business rate bill for the financial year 2014/15 only, subject to State Aid limits.

The second scheme, the 'Local Needs Scheme' aims to provide rate relief for the financial year 2014/15 to support those businesses most negatively impacted by the postponement of the 5-yearly rating revaluation from 2015 to 2017 but may also be used to provide support for other local economic development priorities subject to State Aid limits. Full details of the

schemes, including the qualifying criteria, are included in the resolutions in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. There are no direct financial implications to the Authority as the Authority will be reimbursed by Welsh Government for any relief granted.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons set out in the report, the resolutions detailed in Appendices 1 and 3 be adopted by the Authority with immediate effect and the resolution in Appendix 2 be not adopted for the reasons stated in paragraph 4.7 of the report.

## **10. UPDATE ON MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) agreed by the Council on 26th February 2014 identified an estimated savings requirement of £6.5m for 2015/16 and £6.9m for 2016/17. This was based on an indicative reduction in WG funding of 1.34% for 2015/16 and in the absence of further guidance from WG, an assumed reduction of a further 1.34% for 2016/17.

The Acting Head of Corporate Finance drew attention to the letter dated 24th June 2014 from the Minister for Local Government and Government Business attached as Appendix 2 informing all local authorities in Wales of a significant shift in the likely financial settlement for 2015/16 and beyond.

Appendix 3 to the report summarises the impact for Caerphilly CBC of potential cuts in WG funding of 3% and 4.5% for both 2015/16 and 2016/17. This reflects the same assumptions in respect of growth and inflationary/pay award increases as agreed in the MTFP in February. It was noted that the potential also remains for further considerable cuts in 2017/18. The level of potential savings required for future years (on top of the £14.2m already agreed for 2014/15) takes the Authority into uncharted territory.

Following consideration and discussion on the challenges facing the Authority, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendation be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons set out in the report and at the meeting, the serious challenges and implications for the Council arising from the updated potential savings requirements for 2015/16 and 2016/17 be noted.

A further report would be presented to Members in the early Autumn when the position has been examined in more detail.

## **11. STRATEGIC FACILITY FOR WASTE TRANSFER AND BULKING OF RECYCLABLES**

The report had been considered by the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 1st July 2014. The views of the Scrutiny Committee were presented to Cabinet.

The Chief Executive explained that there was no need for this report to be presented to Council at the present time as the intention was only to seek Cabinet endorsement of the preferred site. Following this further preparatory work would be undertaken (including appropriate consultation) and a further report would be presented to Members with a final proposal. At that stage a recommendation to Council may be required.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendation be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons set out in the report Members agreed that Duffryn House be selected as the preferred site for the waste transfer station and a further report be submitted in due course.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**

### **12. CORPORATE PLAN 2013-2017**

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out its Priorities for 2013-2017 and its Improvement Objectives for 2014-2015. Whilst there is no requirement to publish a corporate plan, it is the chosen vehicle for publishing the Council's longer-term priorities and will include its Improvement Objectives. The Improvement Objectives were published by the end of June as part of discharging the Council's statutory duty. The fuller Corporate Plan including the IO's will be published by the end of July 2014 subject to Cabinet and Council agreement.

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

RECOMMENDED that for the reasons set out in the report, the Corporate Plan for 2014/15 be endorsed and referred to Council on 22nd July 2014 for approval.

### **13. REVISED BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD (WHQS) BY 2019/2020**

The report advised Members of a revised Business Plan in respect of the delivery of the WHQS programme, which requires Council approval for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to prudentially borrow up to £55m.

The Business Plan is constantly updated to reflect any changes in its original assumptions to ensure that it remains viable. All changes work on the basis that the £200 m programme must be completed in 2019/20. To date, all changes made to the Plan have not led to a requirement to exceed the borrowing limits of £61.3m (£22m General Fund, £39.3m HRA) originally agreed by Council on 11th October 2011.

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

RECOMMENDED that for the reasons set out in the report, unsupported borrowing for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of £55m be drawn upon to ensure WHQS can be achieved by 2019/20 and the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) can be released by Welsh Government.

The meeting closed at 3.32 pm.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 30th July 2014.

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CHAIR