



## **SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 23RD OCTOBER 2013 AT 5.00PM**

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**PRESENT:**

Councillor D. M. Gray - Mayor

**Councillors:**

Miss. L. Ackerman, M. Adams, Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, H.A. Andrews, Mrs. K.R. Baker, Mrs. G. Bevan J. Bevan, L. Binding, Mrs. A. Blackman, D. Bolter, Mrs. P. Cook, C.J. Cuss, H.W. David, W. David, H.R. Davies, D.T. Davies, R.T. Davies, N. Dix, C. Durham, C. Elsbury, Mrs. C. Forehead, Ms E. E. Forehead, J.E. Fussell, Mrs. J. Gale, L. Gardiner, N. George, C.J. Gordon, R.W. Gough, Mrs. P. Griffiths, D.T. Hardacre, D. Havard, C. Hawker, A.G. Higgs, G.J. Hughes, K. James, G. Johnston, Mrs. B.A. Jones, G. Jones, Ms. J.G. Jones, S. Kent, G. Kirby, Ms. P. Leonard, A. Lewis, K. Lloyd, C.P. Mann, S. Morgan, Mrs. R. Passmore, D.V. Poole, D.W.R. Preece, Mrs. D. Price, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, D. Rees, K.V. Reynolds, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, Mrs. M.E. Sargent, S. Skivens, Mrs. E. Stenner, Mrs. J. Summers, L.G. Whittle, T.J. Williams, R. Woodyatt

**Together with:-**

S. Rosser (Interim Chief Executive), S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), D. Street (Director of Social Services), N. Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services), G. Williams (Monitoring Officer/Principal Solicitor), C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property), R. Roberts (Performance Manager), D. Regan (Lead Officer - Benefits and Finance - WRA), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.P. Angel, P.J. Bevan, D.G. Carter, K. Dawson, Mrs. D. Ellis, M.P. James, Mrs. G. Oliver, M.J. Prew and J. Taylor.

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

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

#### **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports.

### 3. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2012/13

Consideration was given to the Performance Report (which is a statutory requirement under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and an important part of the Council's performance framework) and Members were advised that the Council is required to assess its own performance and provide the public with a balanced picture of that performance. The report must show how the council performed against the Improvement Objectives it set itself for 2012/2013. The report, and the appendices presented, included the final year performance report 2012/13, improvement objectives for 2012/13 and the national strategic and public accountability measures.

The Head of Performance and Property advised that the Annual Performance Report contributes towards the Single Integrated Plan (Caerphilly Delivers) and to the Council's stated priorities. He advised that the report primarily includes a Director's position statement from each of the four directorates, progress and achievements made against the eight Improvement Objectives and performance statistics with progress comments against the National Strategic Indicators and Public Accountability Measures for 2012/13 for Local Authorities (as prescribed by the Welsh Government).

With regards to the Improvement Objectives, Members were advised that six of the eight have been delivered successfully, one has been deemed partially successful and one has not delivered the planned outcome (I.O.1). With regards to this objective, although good progress has been made over the last 12 months to drive forward the council's Citizen Engagement agenda certain of the planned actions did not occur within 2012/13 and progress was slow. Positive steps are being taken to complete this Improvement Objective.

Reference was then made to the Council's performance against other local authorities in Wales, using the Welsh Government's National Strategic Indicators and Public Accountability Measures. Of the forty four indicators used to create the national picture, thirteen are in the upper quartile in Wales, eighteen are in the middle quartile and thirteen are in the lower quartile (details of each indicator and their respective quartiles were outlined in the report).

During the course of the ensuing debate reference was made to the summary of performance against the national strategic indicators and public accountability measures and Members noted how Caerphilly has performed against those indicators across Wales. The data provided as divided into directorate areas was noted. Reference was also made to the household survey and it was noted that the results had been very positive this year with the satisfaction level in council services rising to 82% (compared to 77% in 2011).

Queries were raised in respect of the percentage of adult protection referrals completed where the risk has been managed (SCA 019) and the % of assessments started on time (evaluation of other performance captured for social service during 2012/13). With regards to adult referrals, the Director of Social Services advised that it is not a service that can be imposed and with regards to assessments started on time he advised that in view of the co-ordination with Health it had not been possible to collate all of the data required. As such, discussions are ongoing to ensure an integrated way of working and providing such information.

A query was also raised in relation to private sector dwellings (PSR004) and, as it remains red, as to how this is to be taken forward. The Head of Performance and Property advised that he did not have the information to hand but would advise the Member accordingly. A similar query was also raised in relation to the percentage of statutory visits to looked after children (SCC025), the percentage of young carers known to social services who were assessed during the year (SCC030a) and the percentage of reviews of looked after children, on the child protection register and children in need carried out in line with the statutory timetable (SCC045). The Director of Social Services advised that he would provide the information and arrange for further discussions at the Health, Social Care and Well Being Scrutiny Committee.

Reference was then made to the rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over (SCA001) and the Director of Social Services advised that Officers are continuing to work with the relevant bodies on the discharge process.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Annual Performance Report 2012/13 be accepted;
- (ii) the priorities detailed in paragraph 3.2 of the report, and as detailed below be approved:-
  - Our Communities must be a safe, green and clean place to live to improve resident's quality of life.
  - We want to improve job opportunities in our county borough, so people can live better lives.
  - Our goal is that every child should have the best start in life, and the opportunity to achieve success as a young person and as an adult.
  - We want to enable our communities to make healthy lifestyle choices to improve citizen's quality of life.
  - Improving accessibility throughout the county borough
  - Transforming council homes, lives and communities.

Members wished to place on record their appreciation to all staff involved in the preparation of the Annual Improvement Report and congratulated Dave Street on his appointment as Director of Social Services.

#### **4. PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT 2014/15**

The report advised Members of the Provisional Local Government Settlement for revenue and capital funding for 2014/15, the indicative allocations from Welsh Government (WG) for 2015/16 (there are no indicative allocations for 2016/17) and gave an update on the medium term financial plan as a consequence of the announcement.

Mrs. N. Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services) advised that the Provisional Settlement was announced on 16th October 2013. The overall average decrease in Aggregate Exchequer Finance for all Local Authorities after adjusting for "transfers in" of former grant funding is a decrease of 3.5%. The overall decrease for the county borough is 3%.

It was explained that the "transfers in" of grant have been historically passported, in full, to service areas to ensure service delivery remains unaffected and details of those areas that are being dealt with as such were outlined. Members were reminded that the 10% shortfall in Council tax reduction scheme 2013/14 was funded by a grant of £1,231k from Welsh Government and that this shortfall has now been included in the Aggregate Exchequer Finance. Members noted that as it is predominantly demand led this is a volatile area of spend and were asked to consider ring fencing any underspends that may occur in respect of Council tax reduction scheme to carry forward.

It was explained that the provisional settlement for 2014/15 (after adjusting for "transfers in") shows a decrease of £8,464k in cash terms and as such, a number of savings options will have to be considered over the next few months as part of the medium term financial plan.

Members noted the revised medium term financial plan as appended to the report and were advised of the assumptions made in certain areas and of the Welsh Government requirement for funding allocated to the Authority's Schools to increase on the 2013/14 allocation by a cash sum equivalent to a 0.9% uplift.

It was noted that the Authority is presently on a sound financial base with all Directorates underspending against their budgetary allocations. However, Members were reminded that there will still be a need to make difficult decisions in the next three years. Savings of £14.53m will be required for 2014/15 with further additional savings of £6.54m for 2015/16 and £7.06m for 2016/17, which will inevitably have significant implications on some parts of the service delivery.

Following the announcement of the final settlement by Welsh Government in December, Cabinet will be required to determine savings to be included in draft Budget proposals during January 2014. A Special Council in February 2014 will consider a revised medium term financial plan and agree the Budget for 2014/15.

Mrs. Scammell then gave a slide presentation "Putting the Budget into Context". She advised that the presentation does not include any specific savings proposals. A seminar on the medium term financial plan will be held on 21st November 2013 that will be used to present a list of savings for Members to consider, prior to special scrutiny meetings scheduled in December and the presentation of a report to Council in February.

The slides advised Members of the controllable budget (general fund), the ratio for the individual directorates, the savings requirement (2013/15 - 8.13%, 2015/16 - 3.66% and 2016/17 - 3.95%) and gave an overview of the saving required for each directorate on a pro rata basis.

Members were advised that it is not possible to take a simplistic approach of a pro-rata allocation of the savings required and a list of proposals will be considered by the respective scrutiny committees in December. Depending on the decision made at that time, some Directorates could take a disproportionate share of the required savings. A number of slides were then produced which were for illustrative purposes only. Other considerations, which will need to be taken into account as part of the process (income, council tax and growth) were also outlined.

Mrs. Scammell then responded to a number of questions raised over and above those which were considered during the course of the presentation (increases in energy costs, use of assets to pay debt, the consultation process, asset management strategy, workforce planning strategy and management of the conflicting demands that the budget will place on manpower budgets over the coming years, the number of services that are provided and which are statutory and non statutory and the use of reserves). With regards to the latter it was noted that it was not possible to balance the budget by using reserves. Mrs. Scammell advised that there would be the opportunity for further discussions on these and other issues at the seminar and dedicated scrutiny committee meetings.

Members thanked Mrs. Scammell for her informative presentation and for responding to questions and issues raised and welcomed the opportunity to be part of the process at both the seminar on 21st November and the special scrutiny meetings scheduled for December 2013. It was noted that the subsequent proposals will form part of the wider consultation with interested parties.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By show of hands this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the medium term financial plan, as appended to the report, be endorsed and the timetable for presentation and consideration of savings proposals approved;
- (ii) any underspend relating to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme be ringfenced.

The meeting closed at 6.20pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 19th November 2013 they were signed by the Mayor.

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MAYOR