



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 30TH JANUARY 2013 AT 5.00 P.M. (REARRANGED FROM TUESDAY, 22ND JANUARY 2013)

PRESENT:

Councillor H.W. David - Chairman
Councillor Mrs J. Summers - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

L. Binding, C.J. Cuss, Mrs. D. Ellis, C. Hawker, G. Kirby, A. Lewis, C.P. Mann, S. Morgan,
D. Rees, J. Taylor

Also Present:

Cabinet Members: Councillors K. Reynolds (Corporate Services) and D.V. Poole (Community
and Leisure Services)

Together with:

N. Barnett (Deputy Chief Executive), S. Couzens (Head of Housing Services), P.S. Evans
(Head of Information, Communications and Technology), G. Hardacre (Head of Human
Resources and Organisation Development), C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property),
G. North (Public Sector Housing Manager), D. Perkins (Head of Legal and Governance),
N. Scammell (Head of Corporate Finance), L. Allen (Group Accountant, Housing), S. Isaacs
(Principal Rents Officer), R.J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D.G. Carter, J.E. Fussell, R. Saralis,
Ms. J.G. Jones

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the following minutes be approved as correct records and signed by
the Chairman:

- (1) Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 13th November 2012 (minute nos. 1 - 10, on page nos. 1 - 6); and
- (2) Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee (Performance Management) held on 22nd November 2012 (minute nos. 1 - 3, on page nos. 1 - 3).

3. MATTERS ARISING

Notice of Motion - Public Sector Pay (Minutes dated 13th November 2013, Minute No. 8)

Members were advised officers were yet to correspond with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Chief Secretary to the Treasury and local MPs.

4. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There were no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

5. CABINET REPORTS

The Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had not been requested to be brought forward for review at the meeting.

6. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBERS

Councillor K. Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, gave a verbal report to Members and made reference to the draft budget proposals for 2013/2014, that had been approved by Cabinet on 29th January 2013. He advised Members that all groups had been invited to attend group meetings to review the proposals and they had been circulated to Trade Unions as part of the consultation process. Formal responses were required by the Deputy Chief Executive by no later than 18th February 2013. The Cabinet Member encouraged Members to examine the documents and forward any comments.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised Members that the Labour and Plaid Cymru groups will be meeting officers on 11th and 18th February respectively, and a meeting had taken place with Trade Unions that morning.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for his presentation.

7. NOTICE OF MOTION

Members were asked to consider the Notice of Motion received from Councillors C.P. Mann, Mrs A. Collins, J.E. Fussell, M.J. Prew and J. Taylor in respect of the UK Government's cut to Council Tax Benefit.

Members discussed the Notice of Motion and acknowledged the need for it to be amended to reflect the Welsh Government's recent announcement and the decision of Council taken on 29th January 2013. An amendment was proposed that the second paragraph of the Notice of Motion be revised.

The Scrutiny Committee considered, and agreed with those Members who had penned the original Notice of Motion, and were present, to amend the content as follows:-

Caerphilly CBC strongly opposes the UK Government's cut to Council Tax Benefit and expresses concern at the consequences of this cut on the Authority's finances and additional financial burden that will be forced upon thousands of council tax benefit recipients in this borough.

Caerphilly CBC welcomes the Welsh Government's recent announcement that it will fund the 10% funding shortfall caused by the UK Government's cut to Council Tax benefit for 2013/14, and notes that Welsh Government's action will help to alleviate likely financial hardship for low income households in Caerphilly County Borough.

The Scrutiny Committee fully supported the revised Notice of Motion, and referred it to Council for consideration.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT CHARGES – 2013-2014

The report sought Members' endorsement to Cabinet to agree proposed increased charges that are to be effective for the Housing Revenue Account in 2013-14.

Members were asked to note that final figures from the Welsh Government which includes Caerphilly's individual guideline rent are yet to be confirmed, but in order to ensure the Council's business plan remains viable, an increase of 4% is necessary and proposed. In addition, if appropriate increases in all charges, as proposed, (with the exception of rent which is outside of the Authority's control) are implemented, there will still be a shortfall of financial resources to cover the costs of some of the services listed. However, a review of these services will be undertaken and a separate report submitted at a later date.

Members discussed the report and officers responded to general questions. In particular, Members noted and welcomed that the review of older peoples' accommodation was nearing completion and it was commented that a key outcome was to achieve service equality across the county borough.

The Scrutiny Committee endorsed the contents of the report and recommended to Cabinet that:-

- (a) an average rent increase, based on Welsh Government guidelines, be agreed of 4% (£3.00) per property from April 2013;
- (b) the service charge at sheltered complexes with communal facilities be increased to £22.14 over a 48-week basis from April 2013;
- (c) the service charge in the four sheltered schemes without communal facilities be increased to £15.37 over a 48 week basis from April 2013;
- (d) the service charge at sheltered complexes with communal facilities be increased to £22.14 over a 48-week basis from April 2013;
- (e) the service charge payable by residents of Tredegar Court be increased to £61.50 over a 48-week basis from April 2013;
- (f) the meal cost at Tredegar Court be increased to £33.84 based on a 48-week basis from April 2013;
- (g) the utility charges in sheltered housing schemes, where tenants currently pay a standard charge, be increased to £17.03 based on a 48-week basis from April 2013;
- (h) the guest room charge at sheltered housing complexes are not increased from April 2013;
- (i) the charges at Ty Croeso to be determined at a later date;

- (j) the community alarm charge for council and non-council tenants increase to £3.10 based on a 48-week from April 2013; and
- (k) the garage charges for Council and non-council tenants increase to £7.50 based on a 48-week basis from April 2013.

9. YSTRAD FAWR SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

The report updated Members on the progress of the above project.

Members were reminded that the construction of a playing field on the former Ystrad Fawr hospital site was a requirement of the Section 106 agreement for the development of Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr. In addition to the Section 106, the Council agreed to provide a full size 3G rugby and football pitches, laid to national and international standards.

Officers reviewed the report and highlighted ongoing activities to progress the sports development, including negotiations with third parties to use the facilities and the necessary funding arrangements.

Following discussion on the content of the report, the Scrutiny Committee received assurances that the works were being adequately monitored and progressing well. It was clarified that Leisure Services had a Policy in relation to the usage of the facilities by professional/local clubs and that charges were apportioned appropriately. The new facility would also be used to educate youths and would act as a sports academy.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the progress of the project.

10. REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

The following requests for reports to be prepared for consideration at future meetings of the Scrutiny Committee were made as follows:

1. Councillor G. Kirby requested a report on work force succession planning.
2. Councillor C.P. Mann requested a report to clarify the financial implications to the Authority following Council's decision on 17th January 2013, relating to senior officer remuneration.
3. Councillor C. Cuss requested a report to highlight salary differences between staff and their respective supervisors/managers following the Authority's implementation of the living wage. Officers advised that the Authority's pay scales were available on-line and that a report on the Pay Policy will be presented to Council in March containing this information. As a result, Councillor Cuss withdrew his report request.

11. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following reports were received and noted without discussion:

- (1) Workforce Information Report;
- (2) Housing Revenue Account and Capital Budget Monitoring 2012-2013;
- (3) Budget Monitoring 2012/13 – Corporate Services and Miscellaneous Finance;
- (4) Whole Authority Budget Monitoring 2012-2013;
- (5) Summary of Members' Attendance (Quarter 3);
- (6) Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme;

- (7) Minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held on 19th November 2012;
- (8) Minutes of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (Welsh Housing Quality Standard) held on 25th October 2012;
- (9) Minutes of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (Welsh Housing Quality Standard) held on 6th December 2012;
- (10) Minutes of the Pensions/Compensation Committee held on 5th December 2012.

The meeting closed at 6.05 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 5th March 2013, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN