



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2015 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor B. Jones - Presiding Chair

Councillors:

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

Together with:

C. Burns (Interim Chief Executive), C. HARRY (Corporate Director - Communities), N. Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer).

Also in Attendance:

S. Harris (Interim Head of Corporate Finance), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director – Education), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection) J. Elias (Service Manager – ALN) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors D.V. Poole, K.V. Reynolds and D. Street, Corporate Director - Social Services.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. CABINET – 25TH NOVEMBER 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2015 (minute nos. 1 - 7) be approved and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

4. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2016-2017

The report provided Cabinet with the details of the Council Tax base for 2016/17 for tax setting purposes and the collection percentage to be applied.

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base)(Wales) Regulations 1995 sets out the rules of the calculation of the Council Tax Base. This is the amount required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to be used in the calculation of Council Tax.

The Council Tax base for discounted chargeable dwellings expressed as Band D equivalents has seen a 0.43% increase on the previous year. Members were advised that increases in Band D equivalents may result in a reduced Revenue Support Grant (RSG) when the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement announcement is made in December 2015. Hence at this stage, additional income cannot be factored into the budget setting process for 2016/17.

For 2015/16 a collection rate of 97% was assumed. The collection rates for council tax have steadily increased over recent years; the in-year collection rate for council tax in 2014/15 was 96.7%. The Authority pursues Council Tax arrears which has resulted in the collection rate of 97% being regularly exceeded. This generates a council tax surplus at the financial year end. For 2014/15 the Council Tax surplus was £1.4m. Members noted that the surplus is used to support the Authority's base budget.

Since 2014/15 funding for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) has been included within the Revenue Support Grant at 2013/14 levels. This means that Local Authorities must take account of any additional CTRS costs arising from their decisions about Council Tax levels for 2016/17. Any increase in CTRS expenditure would have to be met by the Authority and therefore it would be prudent to apply the same percentage increase in the Council Tax for 2016/17, to the total funds set aside for the CTRS. An element of the increased revenue from Council Tax would then need to be set aside to fund the increased CTRS costs.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the report:

- (i) the Council Tax collection rate of 97% remain unchanged for 2016-17;
- (ii) Council Tax Reduction Schemes (CTRS) funding be increased by the same percentage as the Council Tax for 2016/17. This will be funded by setting aside funding from anticipated Council Tax Income as outlined in paragraph 4.6 of the Officers Report;
- (iii) the Council Tax Base for the year 2016/17 be 59,575.14, with the Council Tax Base for each community council area as outlined in paragraph 4.7 of the Officers Report.

5. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S ANNUAL LIBRARY STANDARDS ASSESSMENT 2014-2015

The report, which detailed the progress made by the County Borough Library Service in seeking to meet the 5 Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, Core

Entitlements, and Qualitative Indicators, during 2014-15, and provided a guide to the new features contained in the 2014-2017 Welsh Government Public Library Standards Framework, was considered by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on the 3rd November 2015.

Members noted that this is the 1st year of the new Framework that will operate until 31st March 2017 and includes a number of new assessment areas with a focus on outcome and qualitative measures, in addition to more traditional standards of attainment.

Caerphilly County Borough was assessed as meeting 17 of the 18 Welsh Government Core Entitlements for Public Library Service Provision, with one Entitlement met in part. The Borough Library Service was deemed as meeting 6 of the 7 Quality Indicators for Wales with none failed in totality and was described by the Assessors and Reference Panel as being a 'strong performer' within Wales, achieving a number of indicators that other Council have failed to achieve.

It was noted that, the Assessment Group stated that "Caerphilly Library Service is a strong performer and is to be congratulated on its high visits and active borrower figures per capita. It is also meeting several targets which most other authorities are failing".

However, the Welsh Government Public Libraries Standards Reference Group noted a number of areas of performance that were below the average for Wales and required further attention by the Borough Council in order to continue to deliver a strong performing service in the future. These included informal training for customers, increasing the use of Public Computer Services and providing Wi-Fi to customers in the additional one third of static Library bases that do not currently offer the service.

Members thanked the Officer for the positive report and noted that overall, the assessment of the County Borough Council's Public Library Service for 2014-2015 was positive and complementary of the investment and strategic leadership the Authority has provided over a number of years. In addition, it was noted that the lead officer for the Library Service is currently experiencing a period of ill health and as a result was not able to present the report to Cabinet. In response, Members wished it noted that their thoughts for a speedy recovery were expressed.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report and proposed at the meeting:

- (i) the information received from the County Borough Library Service with regard to its performance for 2014-2015 in working towards achieving the 5 Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2014-2017 be noted;
- (ii) the Welsh Government's Public Library Standard Reference Group assessment of this performance (as detailed in the appendices to the report), and the Authority's attainment of 17 Core Entitlements and 6 Quality Indicators that have target levels of attainment be noted;
- (iii) in noting that the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee have endorsed its content, the Welsh Government Public Library Standards Annual Report 2014-2015 be approved.

6. SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RELOCATION SCHEME

The report sought the approval of Cabinet for the Council to participate in the Syrian

Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.

In response to the humanitarian emergency in Syria the UK Government has announced that over the next 4/5 years up to 20,000 Syrians will be accepted into the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. Local Authorities have been asked to consider participating in the Scheme with an additional request for “trailblazer” local authorities to come forward who would be willing to accept some of these families before Christmas.

Local Authorities would be expected to ensure that arrivals are provided with suitable accommodation and that the specific needs of these vulnerable individuals are met. Central Government will meet the costs of the arrivals in terms of orientation support, health and education costs for the first year from arrival. The intention is that properties would be sourced from within the private rented sector in localities where relevant support services and networks can be accessed.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and it was noted that there will now be one family relocated to the Caerphilly County Borough area before Christmas, with the second anticipated into the New Year. In addition, Members expressed their support for the programme and recommended a number of local organisations that may be of some assistance to the families.

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 contained in the Officers report, participation in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme be approved by Cabinet.

7. POLICY ON THE DETERMINATION OF SUITABILITY TO HOLD A LICENCE UNDER THE SCRAP METAL DEALERS ACT 2013

The report sought the approval of Cabinet for a policy on the determination of suitability to hold a licence under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013.

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 (“the Act”) was enacted on the 1st October 2013 and introduced a new licensing system to control site operators and itinerant collectors.

The Act and supporting Regulations are silent upon the issue of responsibility for exercising the function under the Act. Consequently the provisions of S9 (D) of the Local Government Act 2000 are triggered and by default the function is exercised by the Executive.

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 replaced previous registration requirements in respect of scrap metal dealers. The Council is the licensing authority under the Act and is responsible for the issue, renewal, variation and revocation of scrap metal dealer’s licences.

A local authority must determine whether the applicant is a suitable person to carry on a business as a Scrap Metal Dealer and must not issue or renew a licence unless it is satisfied that the applicant is a suitable person to be licensed. Local authorities may have regard to any relevant information in considering suitability, including convictions for relevant offences, previous or impending enforcement action, previous refusal of the applicant or revocation of a licence. A local authority may also require that an applicant provide such other information, as it considers relevant, for the purpose of considering their suitability.

The aim of the policy is to ensure that a person licensed as a scrap metal dealer is a suitable person to carry on said business; the process Caerphilly County Borough Council follow when considering persons suitability is transparent, fair and proportionate and supports and ensures the protection of the public. In addition, it was noted that applications would be determined on individual merits and would have regard to the policy and where the circumstances demand, may depart from the policy.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and, whilst acknowledging the impact the policy has made on metal thefts, sought further information on the terms of the licenses being issued and whether there was an opportunity to review. Officers confirmed that a 3 year license is issued as standard, however, there are a opportunities to review this or revoke a licence, should there be an occurrence of an incident of concern during the period of the licence.

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 contained in the report, the policy be adopted from 1st January 2016.

8. ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS REVIEW

The report, which was presented to the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on the 3rd November 2015, detailed the progress of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Review. The report highlighted the progress made and sought the approval of Cabinet to go out to formal consultation, to close the Specialist Resource Base (SRB) at Hendre Junior School and realign the Social Inclusion Base at Cefn Fforest Primary School.

It was noted that the aim of the ALN review is to identify strengths and areas for development of the current services and to provide options for the delivery of services for children and young people with additional learning needs. The report provided an update on the status of the ALN review and made recommendations for a way forward with regard to two Specialist Resource Base (SRB) provisions.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and sought further information on the impact the proposals would have on any staff within Hendre SRB. Officers confirmed that, due to the reduction in the use of the base, staff have sought alternative employment and therefore there is no impact on staff as a result of this report.

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 in the report, approval be given for the process to commence, in accordance with the procedures set out in the School Organisation Code 2013.

9. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report sought the approval and endorsement of Cabinet of the Forward Work Programme for the period December 2015 to March 2016.

The report outlined the proposed Forward Work Programme for future Cabinet reports, which is updated on a monthly basis to reflect any amendments that are made to it since it was first agreed.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons in the Officers report, the Cabinet Forward Work programme be approved.

The meeting closed at 2.34pm

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 20th January 2016.

CHAIR