



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY 13TH JULY 2016 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor K. V. Reynolds – Chair

Councillors:

C. Forehead (Human Resources and Governance/Business Manager), D.T. Hardacre (Performance and Asset Management), D. Havard (Education and Lifelong Learning), K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development), D.V. Poole (Housing) and R. Woodyatt (Social Services).

Together with:

C. Burns (Interim Chief Executive) and C. HARRY (Corporate Director Communities).

Also in Attendance:

C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property Services), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director – Education) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor N. George, Mrs B. Jones, T. Williams, D. Street and N. Scammell.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A Declaration of Interest was received from Councillor D.V. Poole in respect of Agenda Item 5, Federation of Schools. Details are minuted with the respective item.

3. CABINET – 13TH JULY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2016 (minute nos. 1 - 9) be approved and signed as a correct record.

4. PROPERTY SERVICES – STATE OF THE ESTATE REPORT – 31ST MARCH 2016

The report presented the first Property Service's State of the Estate report to Cabinet.

Members noted that for some time the Welsh Government (WG) has produced an annual report on the “State of the Estate” relating to property in their ownership. The report is very useful and has been widely circulated by WG.

The report, along with a Member query, has prompted Property Services to prepare a similar report for the Council. The main driver for that being introduced now is to reflect on the significant changes that have been made to better manage, rationalise and consolidate the council’s property portfolio.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued. Members noted that there has been a significant amount of work undertaken by Property Services, which was highlighted within the report, with particular reference to the rationalisation of office buildings and the impact this has had on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Members noted that this is the first of further annual reports and can act as a benchmark and demonstrate the performance of the Council.

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: -

- (i) the State of the Estate Report – 31st March 2016, as outlined in Appendix 1 be noted;
- (ii) the principles of completing a phased transfer of responsibility for the maintenance of all property (excluding schools and public housing) into a central corporate portfolio managed by Property Services together with the maintenance budgets as described in paragraph 4.1 of the report be endorsed;
- (iii) subject to the views of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 4th October 2016, the State of the Estate Report be communicated across the authority.

5. FEDERATION OF SCHOOLS

Councillor D.V. Poole declared an interest in this item as a Governor of Pengam Primary School and left the meeting prior to its consideration.

The report, which was considered by Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on 5th July 2016 provided background into the Welsh Government’s policy on the federation of schools and proposed using this arrangement for 3 groups of schools already working together.

Members noted the benefits of federation set out in the report and the proposed arrangements between Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary Schools; Pengam and Fleur De Lis Primary Schools; and Cwmfelinfach and Ynysddu Primary Schools. The Officer highlighted that Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary have agreed to proceed with formal federation proposal and a draft consultation document has been drafted and are therefore eager for the process to commence, however, Pengam and Fleur De Lys Primary Schools, whilst they have agreed to explore moving to the next stage, have insisted that the Schools retain their individual and financial identity, are not forced to federate with other schools without prior approval of the governing body and that the Local Authority will take full responsibility for managing the introduction and integration of the proposed federation.

In addition Members noted that Cwmfelinfach and Ynysddu Primary Schools have accepted an offer to trial federation following a meeting of the Joint Governing Body in March 2016. Both existing governing bodies agree that the process of Federation will be conducted in an open and transparent way to all parties that may be affected by the process

(i.e. parents/carers, staff and governors), and are to be provided with an information letter/leaflet explaining the process and benefits of Federation.

It was noted that there are some implications for the Parent and Community Governors as there would be a reduction in numbers under Federation.

Members discussed the report at length and concerns were raised as to the number of School Governors. Officers explained that clarification has been sought from WG in reference to some concerns. A response has not yet been received.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the item be deferred for further information. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

DEFERRED for further information.

The meeting closed at 2.51pm

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 27th July 2016.

CHAIR