



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 21ST JUNE 2017 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT

Councillor D.V. Poole – Chair

Councillors:

C.J. Cuss (Social Care and Well Being), N. George (Neighbourhood Services), C.J. Gordon (Corporate Services), Mrs B.A. Jones (Finance, Performance and Governance), P.A. Marsden (Education and Achievement), S. Morgan (Economy, Infrastructure and Sustainability), L. Phipps (Homes and Places) and Mrs E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection).

Together with:

C. Burns (Interim Chief Executive), C. Harrhy (Corporate Director – Communities), N. Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer) and D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services).

Also in Attendance:

D. Hartevelde (EAS), K. Bevan (EAS), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), J. Carpenter (Council Tax and NNDR Manager), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection), A. Rees (Senior Policy Officer), C. Edwards (Environmental Health Manager) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S. Morgan declared an interest in Agenda Item 5 (National Non-Domestic Rate Relief Grant Funding – WG 'High Street Rate Relief' Scheme 2017/18). Details are minuted with the respective item.

3. CABINET – 7TH JUNE 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2017 (minute nos. 1 - 7) be approved and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

4. EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS PLAN 2017-2020

The report, which was presented to Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on the 7th June 2017, provided Cabinet with an update on the Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2017-2020 and the Caerphilly specific Annex (April 1st 2017 – March 31st 2018). EAS are required to submit their Business Plan to Welsh Government and Cabinet are required to endorse it.

The report outlined the South East Wales EAS Business Plan 2017-2020, which sets out the priorities, programmes and outcomes to be achieved by the EAS on behalf of the South East Wales Consortium. The report also focuses upon the expected outcomes in Caerphilly and the specific programmes that will be implemented during 2017-2018, contained in the Local Authority (LA) Annex, appended to the report.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued. In noting the tables within the Business Plan, a Member sought clarification on the targets, with some being reduced from previous years and requested that future drafts provide detail around this process. Officers accepted the recommendation and highlighted that, a simplified version of the plan was made available. In addition, it was noted that some targets are set on a regional basis, others, for example targets for Key Stage 2 and 3 are set following teacher assessment. Discussion ensued around the target setting process and Cabinet noted that, whilst the Governing Bodies of schools sign off the targets, Cabinet have powers to impose new targets, should they feel necessary.

A Member sought additional information on the support offered to the Schools and take up. It was noted that there are a number of approaches taken, dependent on need. The Sutton Toolkit is one approach, which provides support materials and key engagement to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, it was noted that there are variances when considering Free School Meals, with particular differences at Key Stage 4. Officers agreed that this an area of challenge and that the gap needs to be closed, work with schools and Governing Bodies is to be conducted in order to consider the way in which school funding is allocated to close the gap.

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:-

- (i) the priorities contained within the Business Plan and its Annex and the impact of the plan for communities within its local authority area, be noted;
- (ii) the content of the EAS Business Plan be endorsed and submitted to Welsh Government.

5. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF GRANT FUNDING – WG ‘HIGH STREET RATE RELIEF’ SCHEME 2017/18

Councillor S. Morgan declared an interest in this item as a premises owner and left the meeting during its consideration.

The Welsh Government (WG) Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government has announced a new temporary national non-domestic rate (NNDR), also known as business

rate, 'High Street Rate Relief Scheme' for the financial year 2017-2018 only. Relief granted by the Authority under this new scheme is to be reimbursed by WG by way of a specific cash-limited grant but, before any relief is awarded, the Authority must consider and adopt the new scheme.

Cabinet noted that, in order to qualify for this rate relief, the guidance states that it will be for the local authorities to determine how they wish to administer the Scheme. WG believes this rate relief could be applied directly to eligible ratepayers' bills; however, if this path were to be followed, the guidance sets out a substantial amount of text which it recommends should be incorporated into an award letter/form setting out the State Aid implications. Furthermore, if an eligible ratepayer believes he or she is not entitled to receive this relief, a declaration within the letter/form must be signed and returned to the authority. As a result, an application based scheme would ensure that the actual use of the property would be confirmed in writing by the ratepayer (point 16 of the WG guidance refers to 'a test on use rather than occupation'); secondly, a declaration regarding State Aid could be incorporated into the application form and thirdly, relying on applications rather than directly awarding relief should minimise the chances of potentially eligible ratepayers missing out on the scheme.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued, it was noted that the application form was not provided with the report. Officers explained that the form will replicate that of the Retail Rate Relief Scheme in order to streamline the forms available and make it as user friendly as possible.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained 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) subject to the final grant funding offer being received, the 'High Street Rate Relief Scheme' 2017-2018 be adopted with immediate effect in accordance with the guidance set out at Appendix 1 of the report and the provisions of section 47(1)(a) and section 47 (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The Interim Head of Corporate Finance will use his delegated powers to award the relief;
- (ii) the proposal to require an application form to be properly completed by each eligible ratepayer for each qualifying property be adopted.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

The report informed Cabinet of the progress made during the financial year 2016-2017 against four specific areas of Welsh language work, as required under the regulatory framework for implementing the Welsh Language Standards.

Cabinet noted that the Council has a Statutory Duty to produce an annual monitoring report on implementing the Welsh Language issued under current legislation, which is to be published online by the deadline date of 30 June 2017, as required by Welsh Language Standard 158.

Members noted that the annual report highlights that the number of complaints received has reduced. However, 5 formal Welsh Language Commissioner investigations have been received. The report detailed the complaints and it was noted that 2 have not been upheld, 2 have been upheld and 1 has been partially upheld. A total of 304 vacancies have been categories as Welsh desirable, 4 of which have been deemed Welsh essential and training figures remain consistent, with 59 learners.

Cabinet expressed their deepest gratitude to officers for the exemplary work that has been input in order to implement and maintain the standards and provide the positive report.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report, the report be noted and the publication of the Annual Report 2016-2017 as a record of progress towards, and compliance with, the relevant Welsh Language Standards be endorsed.

7. FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY REPORT ON THE CAERPHILLY FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

The report, which was considered by Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 21st March 2017, presented Members with the finding of an audit conducted by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), in relation to Caerphilly County Borough Council's food law enforcement services. These include the food safety, food standards and communicable disease control functions in Public Protection.

The audit, which took place in January 2016, examined Caerphilly County Borough Council's arrangements for the delivery of official food controls. The final report was received on 21st February 2017.

Cabinet noted the six key strengths, which included Food Hygiene Interventions/ Inspection Reports, Food and Food Establishments Complaints, Advice to Business, Food Establishments' Database, Food Hygiene Sampling and Liaison. Officers provided details of the areas for improvement, which included Officer Authorisations, Food Hygiene and Food Standards Intervention Frequencies, Food Standards Establishment Interventions and Inspections and Food Standards Intervention/ Inspection Reports.

In addition, Cabinet noted that, in relation to the Food Hygiene and Food Standards Intervention Frequencies, this referred to the authority not conducting lower risk food hygiene and medium and low risk food standards interventions at the minimum frequencies required by the Food Law Code of Practice. Officers explained that lower risk establishments included Chemists or non-food serving Public Houses etc., and whilst these are carried out, there have been some priority, high level cases that have taken president. However, Members were assured that, since the Audit, a number of establishments have since been assessed and it is anticipated that all low risk establishments will have been visited by the end of the year.

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

RESOLVED that, in being satisfied that the service is being properly resourced, for the reasons contained in the Officer's report, the findings of the Food Standards Agency Audit be noted and the proposed Action Plan be approved.

The meeting closed at 3.10 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 5th July 2017.

CHAIR