



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER 2017 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT

Councillor D. Poole – Chair

Councillors:

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

Together with:

C. Burns (Interim Chief Executive), C. Harrhy (Corporate Director – Communities) and D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services).

Also in Attendance:

S. Harris (Interim Head of Corporate Finance), M. Lloyd (Deputy Head of Programmes – WHQS), M.S. Williams (Head of Community & Leisure Services), R. Harris (Internal Audit Manager/ Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), S. Richards (Interim Head of Service – Education, Planning and Strategy) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.A. Marsden (Education and Achievement) and N. Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services & S151).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. CABINET – 1ST NOVEMBER 2017

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

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

4. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2018/19

The purpose of the report is to present Cabinet with details of draft budget proposals for the 2018/19 financial year to allow for a period of consultation prior to a final decision in February 2018.

Details of the Provisional 2018/19 Local Government Financial Settlement were announced on the 10th October 2017 and this showed an increase of 0.7% in the funding for Caerphilly CBC. However, after adjusting for the transfer in of specific grants and for funding for new responsibilities, this equates to a net cash reduction of £2.965m compared to the 2017/18 financial year. This, along with a number of whole-Authority cost pressures and inescapable service pressures that require funding means that savings of £7.205m will be required to ensure that a balanced budget can be delivered in 2018/19. Cabinet noted that this position assumes a 4.52% increase in the Council Tax.

The report outlined that the draft budget proposals assume no growth for Schools in 2018/19 i.e. a cash flat position. There is no requirement in the Provisional Settlement to protect Schools and they will therefore be required to manage their own pay and non-pay inflationary increases in 2018/19, along with other emerging cost pressures. This, in effect equates to a real term cut of 1.68% for Schools compared to a savings requirement of 3.24% for other services across the Council.

Details of whole-Authority cost pressures totalling £8.867m were detailed within the report, along with details of inescapable service pressures totalling £2.310m.

The most significant service pressure relates to further proposed growth of £1.5m for Social Services. Members noted that significant growth has already been provided in this area totalling £6m for 2016/17 and 2017/18. This growth has been necessary to fund increases in fees for external care providers, due, in the main to the introduction of the National Living Wage, and additional costs arising from increasing demand for services in both Adult and Children's Services.

Cabinet noted that a review is ongoing in respect of the Schools PFI contracts and that a potential growth requirement of £700k has been identified. This figure may reduce as part of the ongoing work being undertaken with Local Partnerships, and a separate detailed report on the PFI review will be scheduled for Cabinet prior to final 2018/19 budget proposals being presented to both Cabinet and Council in February 2018.

The report provided a summary of the proposed savings for 2018/19 totalling £7.205m and details were provided in Appendix 1 and 2 of the report. Members noted that savings totalling £4.682m have been identified for 2018/19 that do not have a direct impact on the public. These proposals consist mainly of vacancy management, budget realignment and minor changes to service provision.

The 2018/19 draft budget proposals will be subject to a period of extensive consultation, and as part of this consultation process, a series of Special Scrutiny Committee meetings will be held throughout December.

In terms of the financial outlook for future years, the Medium-Term Financial Plan presented to Council in February 2017 showed a potential savings requirement of circa £22m for the three-year period 2019/20 to 2021/22. This assumed a cash flat position in terms of the Welsh Government (WG) Financial Settlement for each of the three years. As part of the Provisional Financial Settlement, WG has provided an all-Wales indicative reduction of 1.5% in Local Government funding for the 2019/20 financial year. This would increase Caerphilly

CBC's savings requirement by a further £3.9m for 2019/20 alone. If this is replicated in 2020/21 and 2021/22 then further savings of £7.9m would be required. This would result in a total savings requirement of circa £34m for the three-year period 2019/20 to 2021/22.

The indicative reduction of 1.5% will be reviewed by WG following the Chancellor's Autumn Budget Statement and the Final 2018/19 Local Government Financial Settlement due to be issued on the 20th December 2017, which may include a revised indicative figure for 2019/20. An updated Medium-Term Financial Plan covering the period 2018/19 to 2022/23 will be presented to both Cabinet and Council in February 2018.

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 draft 2018/19 budget proposals, including the proposed savings totalling £7.205m, be endorsed;
- (ii) the proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.52% for the 2018/19 financial year be agreed, in order to ensure that a balanced budget be achieved (Council Tax Band D being set at £1,057.70);
- (iii) the draft budget proposals be subject to consultation, prior to the final 2018/19 budget proposals being presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2018.

5. THE MANAGEMENT OF TREES

The report, which was presented to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 1st November 2017 and sought Members views on current tree management arrangements, the formal adoption of a tree strategy and the current resources (staff and budget) linked to this function.

Members were reminded of the initial report detailing the management of trees and draft strategy, which was presented to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 13th December 2016. At that meeting, Members were supportive of the recommendations and agreed to consider resource requirements to ascertain if the draft strategy can be delivered before progressing further. Since that time, and following further examination of the strategy, Officers have made a slight amendment, which introduced a risk rating to underpin the inspection frequencies included in the original draft.

The latest report set out the position following a review of staff and budget resources, and outlined funding proposals to enable the safe management of its tree stock in line with the proposed Tree Strategy (set out in Appendix 1 of the report) and its resultant zones/inspection frequencies. Officers explained that due to the escalating number of service requests and the subsequent workload pressures, there is a need to employ an additional Arboricultural Officer and maintenance team to deal with highway tree maintenance on strategic routes. Also appended to the report was a list of the main legislation and guidance outlining land owner's responsibilities in relation to trees and duty of care.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and requested that an additional recommendation be included, to alert the public to their responsibility and liability for privately owned trees on their premises.

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 and as outlined at the meeting: -

- (i) the current tree management arrangements set out within the report be endorsed;
- (ii) the proposed draft Tree Strategy at Appendix 1, and the frequency of proposed proactive inspections be endorsed;
- (iii) the funding proposals set out in the report to meet the associated costs in delivering the tree strategy and complying with the Authority's Health and Safety liabilities be endorsed;
- (iv) the Public be advised of their own responsibility for privately owned trees on their premises.

6. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2020

The report, which was presented to Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on 7th November 2017, provided Members with the draft Caerphilly Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-20 and sought approval of Cabinet, prior to its publication.

The WESP was developed locally but with a collaborative strategic approach through the Education Achievement Service, allowing for local authority development and accountability. There is a strong local emphasis on outcomes 1, 2 and 6 with outcomes 3, 4, 5 and 7 being more regionally directed.

The WESP fulfils the local authority's duty to monitor and improve standards of Welsh language, education attainment and it directs the appropriate use of the Welsh Education Grant funding, which is regionally administered.

Individual WESPs must be submitted to fulfil the legal duty of each local authority. However, regional collaboration must be identified within individual plans.

The WESP is updated and monitored termly by the Caerphilly Welsh Education Forum, as well as through the Strategic Regional Welsh Education Forum.

Statutory consultation was undertaken between 21st October and 13th December 2016 and responses were reflected in the revised draft proposal for submission to the Welsh Government for comment/ approval. Recommendations from Welsh Government have been addressed in the amended plan and highlighted in the body of the report.

The WESP contains an analysis of the current provision, highlights best practice and includes targets for continuing improvement and provision. The local authority remains committed to supporting parental choice through equitable support in both Welsh and English medium schools.

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 and following Ministerial recommendations, the final draft of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-2020 (WESP) be noted and approved.

URGENT ITEM - NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN

7. FREE CHRISTMAS PARKING PROPOSAL FOR CAERPHILLY TOWN

In accordance with the Council's Constitution the Mayor has agreed that the decision proposed is reasonable and has agreed that the decision should be treated as exempt from Call-in.

Members were asked to note that the report was deemed urgent on the basis that Caerphilly town businesses have cited that the Pwllypant Roundabout improvement works have had a detrimental impact on their trading figures, as a result of reduced footfall and visitor numbers within the town. A significant amount of their annual trade is undertaken in the run up to Christmas.

In order to demonstrate the Council's continuing support for trader in Caerphilly town in light of the impact of the ongoing A468/A469 Pwllypant roundabout highway improvement works and the still challenging economic climate, it is proposed to introduce the 2 hour free parking period in the town's pay and display car parks for two weeks in the run up to Christmas 2017 in an effort to support and increase trade in the town.

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 proposal to implement free parking in Caerphilly town for up to 2 hours with no return for 2 hours, in the two weeks before Christmas 2017 (from 9th to 23rd December 2017), be approved.

The meeting closed at 2.45 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 13th December 2017.

CHAIR