



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 13TH DECEMBER 2017 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT

Councillor D. Poole – Chair

Councillors:

N. George (Neighbourhood Services), C.J. Gordon (Corporate Services), B.A. Jones (Finance, Performance and Governance), P. Marsden (Education and Achievement), 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. Harry (Corporate Director – Communities) and D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services).

Also in Attendance:

R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection), M. Godfrey (Team Leader – Environmental Health), J. Reynolds (Sports & Leisure Facilities Manager), S. Harris (Interim Head of Corporate Finance) and C. Evans (Committee Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C.J. Cuss (Social Care and Well Being) and N. Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services & S151).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C. Gordon declared an interest in the item relating to The Future of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre. Details are minuted with the respective item.

3. CABINET – 15TH NOVEMBER 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2017 (minute nos. 1 - 7) be approved and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

4. HAFOD-YR-YNYS AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

The report provided Cabinet with an update on the development of the Hafod-Yr-Ynys Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) and the final draft AQAP.

Cabinet noted that the national nitrogen dioxide air quality objectives are being exceeded at receptor locations on Hafod-Yr-Ynys Road. The local authority is required to designate any area failing the national air quality objectives as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and produce an AQAP which details measures to bring the pollutant back within limits.

The draft AQAP for Hafod-Yr-Ynys has been through a public consultation process. The 21 responses that were received were detailed in Appendix 2 of the report. Following the consultation process and in light of the responses, the final draft AQAP has been updated and appended to the report. Whilst the consultation responses received have not altered the overall content of the plan, minor amendments have been made.

The Hafod-Yr-Ynys Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was declared in November 2013 following a Detailed Assessment which confirmed that monitoring results were continuing to fail the air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide. A Further Assessment Report was undertaken and submitted to Welsh Government in April 2015. Further air quality monitoring, modelling, and assessment has been undertaken following completion of the £1.3million Crumlin Junction improvements.

An air quality steering group meeting was held with residents of Hafod-yr-ynys and key stakeholders on 9 March 2017 where officers of the authority discussed the contents of the draft action plan. The draft air quality action plan consultation process commenced in June 2017 and concluded on 31 August 2017. The Council received 21 responses to the consultation which was summarised in Appendix 2 of the report. There were no recommendations to remove any proposed options. However, the merits of the suggestion from Public Health Wales that the introduction of a low emission zone be considered are still being assessed.

Welsh Government have recommended that the authority undertake further traffic and air quality monitoring within the area to better refine the air quality model. It was accepted that more detailed air quality and traffic data will bring a better understanding of the current exceedance situation, not only in terms of overall source apportionment, but in terms of the emission profile linked to specific vehicle classes. Consequently, additional nitrogen dioxide diffusion tubes have been placed in the locality and options for an additional continuous air quality monitoring station are also being explored. An emissions monitoring survey has recently been undertaken with a view to providing an analysis of the vehicle types/numbers giving rise to greater concentrations. Proposals for a more detailed survey including detailed speed, queue lengths and fleet composition are also being developed together with a wide scale origin and destination survey to understand the vehicle users of the route and how behaviour could change as a result of potential measures.

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 Hafod-Yr-Ynys Air Quality Action Plan, as appended to the report be noted;
- (ii) that financial support be sought from Welsh Government in order to fund a long-term solution;

- (iii) a further report be presented to Cabinet on the delivery of the Action Plan.

5. THE FUTURE OF PONTLLANFRAITH LEISURE CENTRE

Councillor C. Gordon declared an interest (as he is a Service User at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre) and left the meeting during consideration of this item.

The report, which was presented to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 12th December 2017 provided Cabinet with an update on the outcome of the consultation undertaken with respect to the potential closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and to secure a decision on the future of the centre. Cabinet noted that the report was discussed at length at Scrutiny and the Committee felt that there was insufficient consultation undertaken with Ward Members around the proposed closure. The Committee also recommended that should the bid for 21st Century Schools Funding to provide a 3G pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive School be unsuccessful, alternative sources of funding be explored.

Cabinet considered a report on the 20th September 2017 in which it was resolved to commence a consultation exercise on the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and to consider a further report once the consultation was completed.

It was noted that the consultation process commenced on 9 October 2017 for a period of 4 weeks, which was later extended by a further 2 weeks, following a recommendation from the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee. The consultation process included notices in the Leisure Centre, paper comment forms, notification of the consultation on the Caerphilly County Borough Council website, on-line questionnaire, 2 public meetings were held, meetings were offered with local Ward Members, notification sent to the Town and Community Councils in the area seeking their views, consultation with the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee and discussions with staff and Trade Unions.

The report detailed 3 consultation questions, including the impact of the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre on users, whether alternative provision is available and how the impact of the closure could be further reduced. Cabinet noted that some of the key themes that came as a result of the consultation were that people would have further to travel for alternative services, the loss of the 3G pitch at the site and impact on the teams that use the site for competitive senior matches, impact of housing growth in the area on alternative service provision, impact on elderly users of the facility and impact on fitness classes currently provided.

Officers assured Cabinet that significant work has been undertaken, following the consultation in order to meet and address the concerns raised, such as alternative classes and leisure facilities identified within the local area, as well as ongoing discussions with Newbridge Leisure Centre and Newbridge Comprehensive School in order to accommodate day-time classes. The development of a 3G pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive has been submitted to Welsh Government as part of the 21st Century Schools bid, there is scope to keep the 3G pitch in use until 31st March 2018 and the inclusion of retro-fitted barriers at Islwyn High 3G Pitch in order to host competitive senior matches.

In addition, Cabinet were asked to consider a request from Councillor K. Etheridge to hold a local referendum in the Pontllanfraith and Blackwood area on the closure of the Leisure Centre, due to the strong feeling and public representation for the proposal. Members noted that the proposal was also considered at Scrutiny and was not supported. Following Cabinet consideration, it was unanimously agreed that a referendum would not be appropriate following the extensive consultation process undertaken.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the extensive report and sought assurances that a detailed consultation was undertaken, and all possible alternative provisions have been explored, with particular reference to daytime classes, including Yoga, currently being delivered at the

Leisure Centre. Members were assured that the Yoga class can be accommodated at Newbridge Leisure Centre and further discussions are underway with Newbridge Comprehensive, Islwyn High School and Blackwood Miners Institute in order to accommodate provision. Cabinet were assured that consultation has been undertaken with the users and local community, and, where possible, provisions have been put in place to mitigate impact to service users.

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 recommendations made at Scrutiny and as outlined at the meeting: -

- (i) the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre be agreed;
- (ii) the 3G pitch remain in use until 31st March 2017 and that the site demolition programme be managed to accommodate this;
- (iii) it be agreed that barriers be retro-fitted to the Islwyn High 3G pitch to allow senior competitive matches to be played and that the Communities Directorate Reserve is used to fund this;
- (iv) the transition of the Sports Hall bookings to Islwyn High School with effect from January 2018 be endorsed, subject to final agreement of the Governing Body of the school;
- (v) the development of Cwmcarn Forest Drive be agreed to allow the relocation of the Caerphilly Adventure Service;
- (vi) the works to the Cwmcarn Site (£75k - £85k) be funded from the Communities Directorate Reserve;
- (vii) that, should the bid for 21st Century Schools Funding to provide a 3G pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive School be unsuccessful, alternative sources of funding be explored.

6. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2018-2019

The report sought the agreement of Cabinet for the calculation of the Council Tax Base for 2018/19.

The Council Tax base is the amount required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to be used in the calculation of the Council Tax. The base for discounted chargeable dwellings expressed as Band D equivalents has been calculated at 61,797.95 for 2018/19, which is an increase of 0.43% on 2017/18.

For 2017/18 a collection rate of 97% was assumed and it is recommended that the same rate be assumed for 2018/19. This will result in an adjusted base figure of 59,944.01. Cabinet noted that the Authority proactively pursues Council Tax arrears and that over a period of 2 to 3 years the actual Council Tax collected typically exceeds 99%.

The Council Tax base is one of the factors that will determine the 2018/19 Final Local Government Settlement, the details of which will be announced on the 20th December 2017.

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) the Council Tax collection rate of 97% remains unchanged for 2018/19;
- (ii) the Council Tax Base for the year 2018/19 be 59,994.01, with the Council Tax Base for each community council area as outlined in paragraph 4.4.

7. WHOLE AUTHORITY MID-YEAR REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2017/18

The report provided Cabinet with details of projected whole-authority revenue budget expenditure for the 2017/18 financial year.

Cabinet noted from the table in paragraph 4.2 of the report that a net underspend of £1.243m is projected for the current financial year. However, it was stressed that the majority of this underspend arises from vacant posts being held to support future years MTFP savings requirements in the Corporate Services Directorate, and from a large underspend of £1.311m in Miscellaneous Finance mainly due to borrowing requirements being deferred and improved returns on investments.

Cabinet also noted that overspends are projected in Education and Lifelong Learning and Social Services, which demonstrates that the financial position is now becoming much more challenging. The report provided significant detail on the projected overspends and underspends across service areas and the Interim Head of Corporate Finance highlighted those areas where the most significant overspends are anticipated.

The approved budgets for 2016/17 and 2017/18 included total growth of £6m for Social Services. However, an overall overspend of £1.520m is currently projected for the Directorate. The most significant area of overspend relates to children's placements where expenditure is currently projected to exceed budgets by £2.754m. This forecast assumes all current placements will remain in place throughout the financial year but every effort will continue to be made to identify more cost effective arrangements wherever possible.

Education and Lifelong Learning is currently projecting an overall net overspend of £34k. The most significant pressure is in the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) budget where an overspend of £781k is projected. This provision continues to receive an increasing number of referrals for children with challenging behaviour. An internal review of demand and costs is ongoing but it was stressed that whilst this is a substantial overspend, the cost would be much greater if pupils were placed in Out of County placements.

Overall the Communities Directorate is projecting an underspend of £233k. The main cost pressure in this area is Waste Management and Cleansing Services where a net overspend of £382k is reported.

There is an anticipated overspend in dry recycling treatment of £326k, albeit this has reduced significantly on previous years due to the commencement of the new dry recycling contract in July 2017.

There is also a projected overspend of £126k in relation to Civic Amenity Sites, primarily due to increased tonnage of waste and running costs. Vehicle running costs for all the collection rounds are showing a £265k overspend in relation to repairs, cover vehicles and fuel. These overspends will be partly offset by an anticipated reduction in vehicle acquisitions this financial year and a net staffing underspend of £362k primarily due to vacant posts in street cleansing.

There is a one-off corporate contingency reserve of £800k to provide temporary support for cost pressures in waste management. This funding is not currently being released as the Communities Directorate is projecting an overall small surplus on its revenue budget for 2017/18.

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, cabinet note the information contained therein.

EXEMPT ITEM

Members considered the public interest test and concluded that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and it was: -

RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 14 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

8. WRITE OFF OF DEBTS OVER £20,000 – NNDR ARREARS

On 15th September 2009, Cabinet approved a revised write-off procedure for debts that are material, where the individual debt is greater than £20,000.

The report sought the approval of Cabinet to write-off an outstanding debt exceeding £20,000.

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 recommendation contained in 10.1 of the report be approved.

The meeting closed at 3.05 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 31st January 2018.

CHAIR