



## **CABINET**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 30TH MAY 2018 AT 2.00 P.M.**

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#### **PRESENT**

Councillor D. Poole – Chair

#### **Councillors:**

C. Cuss (Social Care and Wellbeing), N. George (Neighbourhood Services), Councillor C. Gordon (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services), Mrs 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:**

M. S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director – Communities), D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director – Children’s Services), S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), D. Whetter (Interim Head of Regeneration), A. Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal and Conservation) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from C. Harry (Interim Chief Executive).

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

#### **3. CABINET MINUTES - 16TH MAY 2018**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 16th May 2018 were approved and signed as a correct record.

#### **MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED**

#### **4. FUTURE REGENERATION PROJECTS - NEW PROJECT GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

The report sought Cabinet approval to introduce a new Governance structure for the development of Regeneration Projects and to agree the proposed Membership of the Regeneration Project Board and its Terms of Reference. This was the second report

presented to Cabinet relating to the development of Regeneration Projects. Cabinet agreed on the 11th April 2018 to earmark £300,000 of community directorate reserves as a project development fund to facilitate the development of regeneration projects to a “shelf ready state”.

It was explained that with the advent of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal and the endorsement by full Council on 28th March 2018 of the Joint Working Agreement Business Plan, presents significant opportunities for Caerphilly County Borough Council to lever in funding for regeneration projects. In addition to the CCR opportunities there are a number of other Welsh Government regeneration initiatives such as the Valleys Task Force and Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme which may lead to significant capital funds being made available for local projects in the future. At the meeting of Council, Members debated the role of the Membership in terms of oversight of projects to be developed.

Cabinet were referred to the Terms of Reference (appended to the Officer's Report). The proposed Membership for the Regeneration Project Board was highlighted. This comprises the Interim Corporate Director (Communities), relevant Heads of Service/Service Managers and relevant Cabinet Members for (Regeneration, Infrastructure and Sustainability) and (Environment and Public Protection). Additional elected Members will also be included on the Board and this will be politically balanced. Cabinet discussed the Membership and requested that the word 'Ward' be replaced with 'Representative' from the Membership list (Part 1) relating to the political parties.

It is anticipated that the Regeneration Project Board will provide strategic direction and set tasks which will be completed by a group of key service Officers (the “Project Team”). The Board will provide reports to Cabinet and/or the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee, as appropriate. It was noted that the Board is not a decision making body.

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 Officer's Report, the new Governance Structure and associated Terms of Reference for the Regeneration Project Board, be agreed subject to the word 'Ward' being replaced with 'Representative' from the Membership list within the Terms of Reference (appendix 1).

## **5. FLAT ACCOMMODATION AT RIVER ROAD, PONTLOTTYN AND THE GROVE, FOCHRIW**

The report sought Cabinet approval to demolish the block of flats known as 1 to 9, River Road, Pontlottyn and to take 3 to 6, The Grove, Fochriw, out of the Housing stock with a view to demolition of the block in future years.

Cabinet were advised that 1 to 9 River Road comprises a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bed flats, and 1 to 6, The Grove comprises two active shop units at ground floor, trading as a single business, with two 2 bed flats located on each of the upper floors. Both blocks have been affected by high levels of antisocial behaviour, crime and substance misuse. In addition, the flats are very hard to let due to their location and property mix, in recent years have largely been home to transient households, and are not conducive to community cohesion. Both blocks are currently vacant and have been secured, and surveys have identified that significant investment is required due to the external and internal fabric and boundaries in order to bring them up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

It was explained that issues associated with lack of demand are being experienced by all partner landlords with housing stock in the Upper Rhymney Valley. Whilst there is unmet need for single person accommodation throughout the county borough, demand for two and three bed flats in the Upper Rhymney Valley is low with waiting lists regularly exhausted. The

report proposed the demolition of both blocks, but that in recognition of the presence of a successful business operating out of The Grove, the demolition of that block be deferred until such time as the current lease expires or other arrangements transpire. It was noted that consultation had been carried out with the local and neighbouring ward Members and police, who had actively supported the proposal.

Cabinet discussed the general store operating from The Grove and expressed the need to protect its occupants and maintain local amenities and services in the village. It was confirmed that the leaseholders are supportive of the proposals, and it was noted that there are approximately 22 years left to run on the lease. It was explained that the Council recognises the value of the store to the community and are seeking to provide alternative accommodation for the occupants, although there are limitations to what funding can be obtained for commercial premises. In addition, Cabinet requested an additional recommendation and for Officer's to explore opportunities to provide a new commercial premise to facilitate the demolition of the block of flats at 1 to 6, the Grove, Fochriw at the earliest opportunity.

The report had previously been presented to the Caerphilly Homes Task Group and Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, the Members at each meeting unanimously supported the recommendations set out in paragraph 10.1.

Clarification was sought in relation to consideration being given to remodelling the blocks of flats. An example was provided to replace the communal entrance flats with 2 or 3 bedroom flat with their own access and with back gardens and available parking. It was confirmed that the lack of demand is the main concern for Officers and there are sufficient properties available in the Fochriw area. The demand for existing two bedroom houses is already extremely limited. Amongst other concerns is a large retaining wall at the back of one of the block of flats that would need to be considered and the costs associated with this.

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

RESOLVED that subject to an additional recommendation in paragraph 10.1 to include, Officers to explore opportunities to provide a new commercial premise to facilitate the demolition of the block of flats at 1 to 6, the Grove, Fochriw at the earliest opportunity and for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report: -

- (i) the block known as 1 to 9 River Road be demolished;
- (ii) the principle to proceed with demolition be agreed in respect of 1 to 6, The Grove, Fochriw, but that the demolition be deferred until the current lease of 1 and 2, The Grove expires, a suitable alternative premises is identified for the business currently operating out of the block or the ongoing liability incurred by the Council in maintaining the mothballed building is no longer considered financially viable;
- (iii) Officer's to explore opportunities to provide a new commercial premise to facilitate the demolition of the block of flats at 1 to 6, the Grove, Fochriw at the earliest opportunity.

## **6. FOSTER CARER FEE LEVELS**

The report sought Cabinet's support for the implementation of a revised fee structure for Caerphilly Foster Carers, which will bring the Council in line with other Local Authorities in South Wales and will assist Children's Services to recruit additional Foster Carers.

Cabinet were reminded of the service pressures faced across Children's Services with the increased complexity of difficulties being presented by families, the significant increase of over 100 Looked After Children, the relentless demands of increased Court Proceedings and the

resultant budget overspend. These pressures have been compounded by the availability of sufficient in-house Foster Care placements. Given the increase in looked after children, Children's Services have to commission foster care placements from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), which adds to the cost pressures placed on the Authority. In addition, and despite continuous recruitment activity, Caerphilly has experienced a net loss in the total number of available placements over the last few years and the age profile of existing carers suggests that more will be retiring over coming years.

Reference was made to the Radio Campaign undertaken to raise awareness of Fostering in Caerphilly, which has had a positive impact. However, it has become apparent that a number of potential applicants are choosing to apply to other Councils or the IFAs based on the remuneration packages offered, and therefore a need for Caerphilly Council to offer more competitive placement allowances has been identified. The current payment structure was outlined and it was noted that the fee comprises of either a mainstream or career allowance, together with a child allowance. These fees were last reviewed in 2004 and places mainstream Carers at a disadvantage compared to career Carers and those Carers in other Local Authorities.

It was therefore proposed to streamline the fee structure in line with the age bandings for the National Minimum Allowance (NMA) set annually by Welsh Government. This will equalise payments to mainstream and career Carers. Further details of the proposed structure were set out in the report. The report also proposed an annual fee increase in line with the Council's agreed pay award percentage, and that a Birthday Allowance of £100 and a Christmas Allowance of £200 be implemented. It was explained that the Foster Care Forum were very keen to re-introduce these allowances and this was verbally reported to and supported by the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the 1st May 2018.

Cabinet were also asked to note that two weeks annual leave allowance will be payable across the board for all Carers. As it has been recognised that a number of existing career Carers will be at risk of detriment with the implementation of the new fees due to the ages of the children currently in placement, the report proposed that existing fee levels for those Carers are protected for the duration of the current placement or until the transition through to a higher age band (whichever comes first).

Cabinet were advised that consultation has been carried out with Caerphilly's Foster Care Forum, with mainstream Carers supportive of the level of equality that will be set via the standardised fees. There has been some apprehension amongst career Carers but they are satisfied with the level of fee protection offered. Both parties appreciate the recognition of their efforts arising from the annual leave allowance and annual fee increase.

In terms of costs identified, Cabinet were referred to paragraph 7 in the Report. It was explained there are significant financial implications involved with addressing the remuneration challenges and the use of Service Reserves will be monitored for 2019/2020.

Councillor Cuss placed on record his thanks for the hard work and commitment of the staff within the Fostering Team. Cabinet fully supported the recommendations in the report and requested that a review update be brought in twelve months' time that will monitor any progress as to the impact of increased fees. Emphasis was placed on the importance of retaining experienced Carers and it was wholly supported that Caerphilly Carers should be brought in line with other Local Authorities.

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

RESOLVED that subject to an additional recommendation in paragraph 10.1. to include a review update be brought back to Cabinet in twelve months' time that will monitor any progress as to the impact of increased fees, be supported and for the reasons contained in the Officers report: -

- (i) the revised fee structure as detailed in the report be implemented;
- (ii) Birthday and Christmas Allowances be reintroduced;
- (iii) fee payment protection for those career carers with younger aged children in placement be applied;
- (iv) the use of service reserves to fund the proposals for the remainder of 2018/19 be approved;
- (v) the level of savings achieved as a result of placements returning to Caerphilly carers be monitored throughout 2018/19 and be used to fund the recurring impact of the revised fee structure from April 2019 onwards;
- (vi) the revised fee structure be approved, and arrangements will be made to implement the payments with immediate effect from 1st June 2018;
- (vii) a review update be brought back to Cabinet in twelve months' time that will monitor any progress as to the impact of increased fees, be agreed.

## **7. EXEMPT MATTER**

Members considered the public interest test certificate from the Proper Officer and concluded that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information. By show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of 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 identified in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **8. OAKDALE BUSINESS PARK PLATEAU ONE - POTENTIAL SALE OF COUNCIL OWNED LAND TO WELSH GOVERNMENT**

The report sought Cabinet's approval for the potential sale of Council owned Land to Welsh Government.

Following consideration and discussion and subject to an additional recommendation at paragraph 11.3, as agreed at the Meeting, 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 Officer's Report, the recommendations at paragraph 11.1 and 11.2. with an additional recommendation at 11.3. as agreed at the meeting, be endorsed.

The meeting closed at 2.35 pm.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 13th June 2018.

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CHAIR