



## CABINET

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 31ST OCTOBER 2018 AT 10.30 A.M.

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#### PRESENT:

Councillor D. Poole – Chair

#### Councillors:

C. Cuss (Social Care and Wellbeing), N. George (Neighbourhood Services), C.J. Gordon (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 Mrs E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection).

#### Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director - Social Services and Housing), M. S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director - Communities), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

#### Also in Attendance:

N. Jenkins and S. Jones (Wales Audit Office).

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from C. Harrhy (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 – 17TH OCTOBER 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2018 (minute nos. 1 - 7) were approved and signed as a correct record.

#### MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

#### 4. ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2017/18

The Chair welcomed N. Jenkins and S. Jones from Wales Audit Office (WAO) to the meeting. They outlined the key messages from their Annual Improvement Report (AIR) (appended to

the Officer's Report) that was issued at the end of August 2018. The AIR makes a judgement as to whether the Council has and whether it is likely to comply with the statutory duty in compliance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement'. For 2017/18 the WAO judgement was "*The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement*".

Cabinet were referred to page 6, of Appendix 1 that provides a brief summary of the work carried out in 2017/18. This includes the 'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' review completed in July 2018. There are 3 Proposals for Improvement in the review. The review was presented and discussed at Scrutiny Leadership Group on the 11th October 2018 and at Audit Committee on the 16th October 2018. The AIR notes that the Council complied with its duty for Improvement Planning and Reporting, through its published Well-being Objectives, and the assessment of performance in the Annual Performance Report for the year 2016/17. The WAO provided confirmation certificates that these duties were met and these were received by Audit Committee as information items on 14th June 2017 and 30th January 2018. Individual reports received are reported to Members throughout the year and the AIR is a summary of those individual outputs. Reference was then made to the schedule of outstanding performance audit work to be completed by the WAO still in progress that will be reported in the next AIR. The areas include a Thematic Review - Service user perspective review, Local Work - Business Improvement Portfolio Review and Local Work - WHQS follow up. The national report recommendations for 2017-18 were set out in appendix 3 that summarised the proposals for improvement relevant to Local Government, included in national reports published by the WAO, since publication of the last AIR.

In concluding, the WAO representatives thanked the Council for working with and co-operating with the WAO throughout the year. In turn, Cabinet thanked the Officers for producing such an extensive report and confirmed the Council is committed to continued improvement in its Scrutiny function.

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 therein, the contents of the report be noted.

## **5. PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN EARMARKED RESERVE FOR INVESTMENT IN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY**

The report sought Cabinet approval to establish an earmarked reserve from the current 2018/19 net projected revenue budget underspend for Education and Corporate Services, to facilitate investment in Digital Technology to effectively transform Customer Services within the Authority.

Cabinet were advised that the Authority currently hosts a number of software packages to support customer interaction with the Authority. In the main these are standalone solutions with limited end to end interaction which therefore entails a large amount of double punching and staff intervention. The Corporate Director confirmed that the current Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution is an in house platform with limited opportunities for enhancement and the solution is currently not fit for purpose. It has been reported that no industry will go untouched by digital transformation. The Authority is currently developing its approach and Digital Strategy. Confidence in digital technology is changing the way Customers wish to interact with the Public Sector. In order for the Authority to develop its digital technology offering and customer experience there is a need to invest in new technology. He advised that the Directorate has achieved agreed one off savings earlier than anticipated and enabled funding to support this earmarked reserve to be released. This has been achieved through proactive vacancy management and improved efficiencies. Officers have recently presented digital solutions which will bring business efficiencies and

transformation to Customer Services. Members were referred to appendix 1 of the report that provided details of a quotation received from G Cloud framework - Abavus Ltd. The proposal is for an enterprise solution that provides for a full suite of applications which support the organisation in its transformation of the Customer Services and Customer engagement programme. The proposal currently estimates costs for full implementation including integration and training. Members noted that in-house staff with the right skill sets and capability within IT Service will undertake some of the integration and training internally with some specialist external support. It is proposed to procure the enterprise licences required for unlimited users for a cost £72.5k per annum for four (4) years at a total cost of £290k. This will leave a balance of £210k on the proposed earmarked reserve and it is recommended that this sum is used to procure the required integration and training as and when required, in consultation with the Director for Education and Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services. In the longer-term it is anticipated that efficiencies generated through improved ways of working will provide the funding to meet annual costs beyond the initial 4 year agreement.

Cabinet discussed the proposals and considered that this strategic direction will enable the Authority to develop a suitable digital infrastructure for Customer Services. This will provide an intuitive application for customers and Officers will explore providing training to Members of the Public. Members requested that all Town and Community Councils are informed of the new application upon implementation.

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 subject to the reasons contained in the Officer's Report, the establishment of an earmarked reserve to fund the following, be approved:

- (i) the initial procurement of the enterprise licences via GCloud at a cost of £72.5k per annum for four (4) years (total cost £290k);
- (ii) £210k for integration and training costs which will be agreed by the Director of Education and Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services as and when required.

## **6. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PLAN REPORT**

The report sought Cabinet's endorsement for the implementation of the new Highway Maintenance Plan (HMP).

Cabinet were advised of the extensive duties that arise from the Highways Act 1980 and the need to have a fully documented and approved maintenance plan and approach. The Act forms a legal basis for management of the highway, claims and litigation. The risks arising from this function are likely to escalate as highway maintenance budgets come under increased pressure through budget reductions. In October 2016 the UK Roads and Liaison Group published a Code of Practice on 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure' which although not mandatory, is evidence of good practice. The implementation date for the new Code of Practice is October 2018 where Highway Authority's should have reviewed their procedures, policies and practices in line with the codes recommendations. Officers explained that Authorities must exercise their own judgement on this Code of Practice, but if they have not followed relevant guidance contained in the Code then they will be expected to give good reasons why they have departed from it. The Highway Maintenance Plan (HMP) provides an overarching document for Carriageways, Footways, Street Lighting and Structures. It sets out the processes and procedures to inspect, report, undertake necessary actions and record the works carried out on the carriageway and footway asset. It also forms the basis of the Council's legal defence against insurance claims, both with personal injury and property/vehicular damage, made on the highway. The HMP has been developed taking into

consideration the recommendations of the new Code of Practice. In addition, all roads throughout the Borough have been assessed during this process.

Members were pleased to note that Caerphilly is the first Authority in Wales to publish a new HMP to comply with this guidance and discussion took place regarding the current and proposed repair timeframes referred to in paragraph 4.12 of the report. The Officer advised that this report had been presented to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 30th October 2018 and the recommendations were unanimously agreed at that meeting.

Cabinet supported the recommendations in the report and extended their gratitude to the Highways Maintenance Manager and the Highways Team for the in-depth work undertaken with the HMP. The grant funding obtained to date was discussed and in terms of exploring future funding, Officers will also work with the Regeneration Project Board for opportunities such as developing 'on the shelf projects' which will assist when new grant funding opportunities arise in the future. The Cabinet Member for Economy, Infrastructure and Sustainability was pleased to inform Members that the Highways Team has been nominated for an Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Award for best highways performer and the ceremony will be held in December 2018.

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 subject to the reasons contained in the Officer's Report: -

- (i) in accordance with the new Code of Practice the use of this methodology for future highway maintenance activities, be supported;
- (ii) the changes identified for the network inspection at Appendix 2, be supported;
- (iii) the proposal identified in paragraph 4.12 to amend the timeframe for repair of non-emergency defects and the timeframe for repair of emergency defects proposed to remain unchanged, be supported.

The meeting closed at 11.00am.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on the 14th November 2018.

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CHAIR