



## **CABINET**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 10TH APRIL 2019 AT 10.30 A.M.**

---

#### **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 E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection).

#### **Together with:**

C. Harrhy (Interim Chief Executive), E. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), S. Street (Corporate Direction – Social Services and Housing) and M. S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director - Communities).

#### **Also in Attendance:**

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), S. Harris (Interim Head of Business Improvement), J. Lougher (Sport and Development Manager), J. Reynolds (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager), S. Richards (Head of Education, Planning & Strategy), M. Williams (Interim Head of Property Services), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

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

There were no apologies for absence received.

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

Councillor C. Gordon declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 9 (Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre) and left the meeting during its consideration. Details of which are recorded with the respective item.

#### **3. CABINET – 27TH MARCH 2019**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th March 2019 were approved and signed as a correct record.

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

### **4. CAERPHILLY CENTRE FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS**

The report provided Cabinet with details of a proposal for the provision of a new centre for children with additional needs, to replace the existing Caerphilly Children's Centre at Energlyn, Caerphilly and sought approval to proceed with a formal consultation exercise with regard to this potential new development.

In October 2016 Cabinet approved the allocation of capital funding to build a new Children's Centre as part of the Capital Programme for 2017/18. Although plans were ready to develop, further discussion with health colleagues around the need to link this to the integrated hubs work and ensure services are future proofed as much as possible, delayed the decision to proceed.

Cabinet noted that the Council are now in a position to progress with the development as a suitable site has been identified, namely the lower plateau of the now surplus Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School. As a result, Cabinet were asked to note this opportunity and allow key officers to proceed with a formal consultation exercise with regard to this potential new development.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing added that the current Children's Centre provides a highly valued service and the report offers an opportunity to further develop on this, providing a more fit for purpose venue, in a more centralised location, with upgraded or additional provision for service users.

Discussions took place around the consultation process and clarification was sought on the partners who would be consulted. Officers explained that all Statutory Partners would be consulted as part of the process, which included Service Users and Voluntary Organisations, as well as information being made available on the Council website and Social Media.

Cabinet Members acknowledged that the Children's Centre is an excellent and valued resource but in need of some upgrades and modernisation and sought further information on the advantages of moving to a new site. Officers outlined that the current Centre is located at the lower end of the valley, and at the base of steep hill, which can be problematic for both access and travel, the new location would be more central within the borough and reduce access issues. It was noted that the Hydro pool is no longer fit for purpose, and there are limited therapy rooms, the new Centre would enable users to access a more state of the art premises, offering a broader range of services.

Discussions took place around the additional funding of £900k, which has been sought from Welsh Government (WG). Cabinet were reassured that the £3.1million, which has been allocated to the project will provide a fit for purpose Children's Centre, however additional funding will ensure future proofing. WG have been contacted, with the support of the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to request additional £900k funding and further information has also been provided, however a response is currently pending. Cabinet noted that the consultation is proposed for a period of 12 weeks and Officers are confident that WG will have provided a response by this time.

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 it be agreed that the Officers proceed with a formal consultation exercise with regard to this potential new development.

## **5. PROGRESS REPORT – RESIDENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE OF THE FORMER CIVIC CENTRE, PONTLLANFRAITH**

The report provided a progress update on the proposed residential redevelopment of the site of the former Civic Centre in Pontllanfraith, which was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 12th March 2019.

Following the decision taken by Cabinet on 3rd October 2018, master planning for a residential development on the site of the former Civic Centre in Pontllanfraith has been progressed in conjunction with Registered Social Landlord, Pobl.

The outline proposals adhere to the Cabinet decision insofar as they are based on the Garden Village model and comprise broadly equal proportions of social rented, shared ownership and market sale and approximately two thirds of the development will be classed as 'affordable'.

Whilst the master planning to date is work in progress it gives assurance that the project is being developed in accordance with the direction given by Cabinet.

With prior approval of the Leader, Mrs Harmer, Local Resident and Granddaughter of Sir Harold Finch, the former MP, was invited to speak in respect of this item. Mrs Harmer provided Cabinet with a detailed background on the memorial park, and raised concerns for the habitat with the park, meadows with protected SSS1 status, local but rare species of birds and wildlife within the woodlands and wetlands area of the site and the potential loss of natural heritage for the area. In addition, Mrs Harmer expressed particular concern for the proposed movement of the memorial stone, which the Council has a duty to protect and maintain.

Officers outlined that previous discussions have taken place with Mrs Harmer in which a number of concerns were addressed.

Cabinet were asked to note that there is no legal covenant in place which would prevent development of the land on proposed footprint and were assured that the principle plans for the housing development site would remain within the footprint of the previous Council Office and car park site, which included a grassed area at the rear of the plot. It was however confirmed that land to the north of the site, including the pond, woodland area and meadows are not part of the footprint for the development. In addition, Officers explained that a proposal has been made to move the memorial stone, along with a time capsule to the new entrance to the park, making the memorial more prominent.

The Leader, in clarifying the purpose of the report, and proposal of the site offered assurances to Mrs Harmer that further discussions between her and council officers would take place, at the point of the planning application stage, in which further consideration would be given for the site plan, however the report at present is to outline, in principle, that a proportion of the site be allocated to Caerphilly Homes as Council housing.

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 in the Officer's Report:

- i) The contents of the report be noted;
- ii) the proposal to transfer the social element of this development to Caerphilly Homes, with the purchase cost being covered from the Housing Revenue Account, be approved.

## 6. IMPROVEMENTS TO THE FITNESS SUITE AT NEWBRIDGE LEISURE CENTRE

The report sought Cabinet approval for the allocation of one-off funding for improvement works to the fitness suite at Newbridge Leisure Centre.

In November 2018, Cabinet approved the Authority's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029, which sets out a future purpose and direction for the provision of sport and active recreation in Caerphilly County Borough.

The Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy describes over 500 different sport and physical activity spaces across the County Borough, including 10 leisure centres with Newbridge Leisure Centre being identified as one of four strategic facilities.

It was noted that a key income stream is being compromised at Newbridge Leisure Centre due to lack of investment and outdated equipment and as a result, an opportunity has been identified to significantly develop and improve the current provision through the conversion of underutilised squash courts.

A Cabinet Member queried the utilisation of the squash courts as part of the proposal, however Officers explained that there has been a significant decline in the take up of racket sports, and an increase in the take up of group exercise, as result, it was felt that the utilisation of this space to allocate for other activities would meet the needs of, and increase opportunity, participation and users.

The National Exercise Referral Scheme was discussed and it was noted that, whilst this is not currently something that has been facilitated with Newbridge Leisure Centre, it could be something that can be accommodated over time. However, it is hoped that prevention work can be undertaken through the project, along with working in partnership with the adjoining school to encourage more young people into activities and fitness, thus reducing the need for the Exercise Referral Scheme in the future.

Queries were raised around the current car parking provision at the Leisure Centre and whether there is scope to utilise some of the space within the School. Officers confirmed that discussions are under way with the School to utilise a number of facilities, including land within the school for car parking.

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 outlined in the Officers Report a one-off investment of £550k to support facility improvement, developments, and equipment purchase in the fitness suite at Newbridge Leisure Centre be approved; funded from the following sources:

- £253k from the Corporate Asset Management capital budget;
- £92k from unutilised capital funding previously allocated for urgent works at Caerphilly Leisure Centre;
- £205k from the one-off rebate received from HMRC in respect of a VAT exemption on the supply of sporting services (as reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 19th September 2018).

## 7. WELSH GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY HUB GRANT 2019/20

The report provided details of the Authority's bid to Welsh Government for Community Hub Grants, to develop a Community Athletics Hub at Rhiw-syr-Dafydd Primary School and in collaboration with Coleg Gwent to provide a Community Sporting Excellence Education Hub (Installation of a 3G multi use all weather pitch with flood lights) on the Risca Community Comprehensive School Site, and sought approval to progress to procurement and construction with immediate effect, if the Business Cases are approved and funding agreed.

At the end of November 2018 Welsh Government (WG) announced a £15 million Community Hub Grant. This grant was accessible to all Local Authorities and Further Education establishments via a bidding process.

It was noted that the primary purpose of the Welsh Government Community Hub Grant is to use capital investment to facilitate the community use of educational assets. This grant can be used to adapt assets in question; or create a fit for purpose space for the community. This is in line with the Welsh Government's 'Prosperity for All' commitment to introduce Community Learning Centres, which provide extended services with childcare, parenting support, family learning and community access to facilities built around the school day; and creation of community hubs.

Two Business Cases were submitted to Welsh Government to access this grant which, if supported, would provide 100% funding for the construction of an Athletics Facility on the school fields located at Rhiw-syr-Dafydd Primary School, the amount of this bid is £755k and; Develop a Community Sporting Excellence Education Hub (Installation of a 3G all weather multi use pitch with flood lights) on the Risca Community Comprehensive School site. This bid has been submitted by Coleg Gwent in partnership with Caerphilly County Borough Council. The project will be on the school site and procured and constructed by the Authority. The 3G facility will meet both rugby and football governing body requirements. The amount of this bid is £900k.

It was noted that these facilities will address both the gap in sporting provision in these areas and will present an opportunity to develop both recreation and competitive sport linking with our local clubs and will align with the Authority's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029, Caerphilly's Wellbeing Objectives 2018 to 2023 and Caerphilly's Education Attainment Strategy.

Cabinet were also asked to note that since the publication of the report, Welsh Government has approved the application for the £755k Athletics facility at Rhiw-syr-Dafydd Primary School. A Community Use Agreement has been developed which will enable local running and athletics clubs to use the facilities. It was however noted that the bid to develop a Community Sporting Excellence Education Hub is currently on a reserve list, and work is underway to determine how this will be taken forward.

Cabinet were pleased to note the report and update and sought further information around the Athletics Facility, which has been designated as a training track. Officers explained that this site will be entirely fit for purpose for training and junior competitions; however, there will not be the required facilities infrastructure to hold senior competitive events, which require stands and spectator accommodation.

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 in the Officers Report:

- i) the proposal to establish a 21st Century Athletic Facility on the Rhiw-syr-Dafydd Primary School Site, subject to Welsh Government approval and allocation of £755k funding (100% funded by Welsh Government) be endorsed;

- ii) the proposal to develop a Community/ Sporting Education Excellence Hub (3G Multi-use all weather pitch plus floodlights) on the Risca Community Comprehensive School site, in partnership with Coleg Gwent, subject to Welsh Government approval and allocation of £900k funding (100% funded by Welsh Government) be endorsed;
- iii) subject to Welsh Government approval, it be agreed for Officers to proceed to procurement and construction and agree the establishment of an earmarked reserve facility in the Education area of the Council's accounts for major maintenance repairs and ultimately renewal of fixed life elements.

## **8. WELSH GOVERNMENT 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION PROGRAMME – 3G MULTI USE ALL WEATHER PITCH AT BLACKWOOD COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

The report provided Members with an update on the 3G multi use all weather pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive School and sought agreement to establish an earmarked reserve facility in the Education area of the Council's accounts, for major maintenance repairs and ultimately renewal of fixed life elements. In addition, the report provided Members with an update on the School 21st Century Schools and Education Band A Programme in relation to Trinity Fields Special School.

It was noted that through effective financial and project management of the 21st Century School and Education Programme Band A, the Council identified an underspend that Members agreed to earmark for a 3G multi use all weather pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive School and remodelling works at Trinity Fields Special School.

The Business Case for Blackwood Comprehensive School facility was agreed by Welsh Government (WG) in October 2018. The scheme is due for completion at the start of the Summer term 2019.

A Community Use Agreement has been signed Blackwood Comprehensive School to ensure maximum usage and engagement on the site. This will generate income to provide sustainability and provide revenue to maintain the 3G multi use all weather pitch in the longer term.

It was noted that the Business Case for the remodelling of Trinity Fields Special School was agreed by WG in November 2018. A working group has been established to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of the project. The project is being undertaken in manageable stages as the majority of the work will be carried out with the pupils in situ or during school holidays. The first priority of the plan is in relation to the additional classroom in order to be able to address the growing demand on the school.

Cabinet were pleased to note the progress within the report and sought reassurance that there would be sufficient funding for the 3G pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive School to be maintained and replaced where necessary. Officers explained that, it has been projected that the income generation opportunity would provide sufficient revenue to maintain the 3G pitch and replace in 12 years, as well as additional revenue.

A Member queried the difference between the 3G pitch, which has been implemented at Blackwood Comprehensive School, and the current provision in the area. Officers explained that there are a number of technical differences between the two, however the latest 3G pitch is a multi-use provision, allowing for both rugby and football at a competitive level to be played.

Discussions took place around the improvements to be made at Trinity Fields Special School and Cabinet were pleased to note the proposals, which would have a significant impact on the

already exemplary work being undertaken at the school.

Finally, Cabinet expressed their gratitude to the Head of Education, Planning and Strategy and her team for the excellent delivery of the Band A Programme and generation of an underspend, which has enabled these improvements to be made elsewhere.

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 establishment of an earmarked reserve facility in the Education area of the Council's accounts for major maintenance repairs and ultimately renewal of fixed life elements of the 3G multi use all weather pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive School be agreed;
- ii) the progress in relation to the investment at Trinity Fields Special School be noted.

## **9. PONTLLANFRAITH LEISURE CENTRE**

Councillor C. Gordon declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as a service user of the Leisure Centre and left the meeting before the item was considered.

The report, which was presented to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 26th March 2019, sought Cabinet approval to close Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre.

It was noted that on 28th March 2018 Cabinet agreed to defer the previous decision to close Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre taken on 13th December 2017 and consider the future of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre later in 2018 after the 10 year Sport and Active Recreation Strategy had been formulated and adopted.

On 14th November 2018 Cabinet approved the Authority's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019 to 2029 (The Strategy) after the adoption of the Strategy had been recommended by the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services highlighted that the Council's Strategy outlines the future purpose and direction for the provision of sport and active recreation in Caerphilly County Borough and establishes the key principles and vision which will inform future decisions and actions.

Members were assured that the Council value the sports and leisure facilities within the area, but Caerphilly has more leisure centres than any other local authority in Wales, and cannot continue to spread its resources so thinly across ageing buildings and facilities. In addition, it was noted that Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre was not one of the 4 strategic sites identified in the Strategy for future investment and, following closure of the adjacent comprehensive school has become even more expensive to run. The impacts of closure on users have been considered and extensive alternative provision is available as outlined within the Officers report. Therefore, it was noted that to keep this leisure centre open would undermine the vision for future delivery set out in the Strategy

With prior approval from the Leader, Councillor K. Etheridge was invited to speak in relation to this item.

Councillor Etheridge sought confirmation that the current bookings for use of the facilities at Pontllanfraith could be accommodated at Islwyn High School or Blackwood Comprehensive

School. Officers confirmed that a Community Use Agreement is in place for the use of 3G pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive School and therefore bookings can be transferred as required. In addition, Islwyn High School has confirmed that they are able to take bookings for the sport hall, and are awaiting further details from the Leisure Centre.

Discussions took place around the tendering process for the demolition of the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre at the site, and it was noted that these tenders have now expired and will have to be re-tendered, however assurances were given that updates would be provided in due course.

Councillor Etheridge referred to section 6.1 of the report, which referred to Assumptions and sought clarification on a number of elements in which exact figures were not provided. Officers explained that there are a number of unknown factors, such as the impact of Brexit, which cannot be quantified but need to be acknowledged as potential issues.

Finally, Councillor Etheridge requested that Cabinet consider and support the recommendations of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee, the petition and a number of objections from local residents and reject the proposal to close the Leisure Centre.

With prior approval from the Leader, Local Resident, Ms J. Taylor was invited to address the Committee.

Ms Taylor raised a number of concerns around the proposal to close the Leisure Centre, which included the cost to decant the Leisure Centre; consideration for Community Asset Transfer of the Leisure Centre; consultation with Head Teachers at Blackwood Comprehensive; Wellbeing and Future Generations Act and additional pressure on services; Impact assessments conducted; implications for transport links and meeting the needs and standards of service users. Officers addressed each concern and it was noted that there were no costs associated with the decanting of the site, as there are already services in place elsewhere, the largest usage impact was around the 3G pitch provision, however these needs have been addressed with the implementation of a state of the art, dual use pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive School, which can be used for competitive games. In respect of the reference to a possible Community Asset Transfer, Officers confirmed this option was not raised by responders during the consultation processes for either the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre or the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy.

Officers confirmed that consultation was undertaken with Blackwood Comprehensive School with both the previous and current Head teacher of the school, along with the governing body, who were in support of the proposals, and have signed the Community Use Agreement.

The speaker was assured that Equalities Impact Assessments were undertaken for both the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-29, and consideration was given to transport links and access for users of the centre.

Finally, Officers addressed the overall concerns for the loss of the centre and highlighted that there is sufficient alternative provision within the area, in respect of private gyms, leisure facilities and community use of school facilities and community centres. Officers reminded Cabinet that Sport and Leisure Services are discretionary services.

Cabinet Members thanked the Speakers and discussion ensued. It was noted that as a result of austerity pressures, decisions to close services are not being taken lightly and the Council are required to deliver services within a balanced budget. However, Members are confident that the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-29 will provide the County Borough with a sport and leisure service that can provide more activity opportunities for more people.

Discussions took place around Heolddu Leisure Centre, which was built at a similar time to Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre but has been identified as a strategic site within the Strategy.



Officers confirmed that the model is based on a number of factors, which include usage and level of facilities in the centre, of which Heolddu has the full range.

A Member raised concerns around the Community Use Agreements and whether the facilities can be accessed at all times. Officers confirmed that there is a Community Use Agreement in place with Blackwood Comprehensive School and it is anticipated that this can be replicated across other schools with community access sport and leisure facilities.

Cabinet discussed the consultation processes for both the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-29 and the Monitoring Officer confirmed that both consultation processes had been perfectly adequate.

Discussions took place around the financial elements within the report and Members sought clarification on the current budget position. Officers explained that, should the closure be deferred, there will be a requirement to source an additional £28k for the running costs budget to keep the Leisure Centre open. In addition, the Leisure Centre previously benefitted from a £26k joint user (school) virement income, which would also need to be replaced. It was noted that one-off spends would also be required to a total of £112k for diverting utilities, £150k in maintenance costs for the building, and £200k-£300k for the existing 3G pitch, which is likely to require replacement in 2-3 years. Finally Members were asked to note that the Council are required to make further revenue savings of £15million in the next financial year.

A Member queried the difference between 3G pitches in Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre, Blackwood Comprehensive School and Islwyn High School. Officers explained that there are a number of technical differences; however it was key to note that the facilities in Blackwood Comprehensive School and Islwyn High School are dual use pitches fitted to both IRB 22 and FIFA Regulation standards with a shock pad underneath the playing surface, enabling both rugby and football to be played competitively. The pitches will be tested on a bi-annual basis to ensure they remain fit for purpose and compliant with standards. However, it was noted whilst Blackwood Comprehensive School is suitable for senior competitive football, Islwyn High School require retro-fitted barriers, which is under consideration.

The Leader thanked Officers, Cabinet, Speakers and Members of the public for their attendance and wished it noted that decisions to close facilities are done reluctantly in order to manage the authority in accordance with the austerity measures in place.

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 in the Officers report, and in noting the recommendations from Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee:

- i) the content of the report be noted; and
- ii) the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre by 30th June 2019 be agreed and, for the period up until closure, Officers be authorised to prioritise the transfer of existing block bookings at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre to alternative facilities, for example Blackwood Comprehensive and Islwyn High School.

The meeting closed at 12:45pm.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on the 24th April 2019.

---

CHAIR