



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 24TH 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) and L. Phipps (Homes and Places).

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services) and M. S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director - Communities).

Also in Attendance:

C. Jones (Youth Forum Co-Ordinator), J. Carpenter (Finance Manager (Revenues)), L. Lane (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

Imogen Jones - Youth Forum, Luke Parker - Youth Forum and Lorna Mallon – Youth Forum.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection), C. HARRY (Interim Chief Executive) and D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services and Housing)

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr S. Morgan declared a personal and prejudicial in item 5 (To Adopt the Welsh Government (WG) 'High Street and Retail Rate Relief' Scheme 2019/20 – Grant Funding) and left the meeting during its consideration.

3. **CABINET – 10TH APRIL 2019**

RESOLVED that subject to it being noted that Item 9 - Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre (Page 8) should state that the Leader referred to email correspondence received from Mr R. Lloyd, Ms K. Alderson and Ms L. Newman and the issues contained therein had been addressed, the minutes were approved as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

4. JUNIOR AND YOUTH FORUM PRIORITIES

Cabinet welcomed representatives from the Youth Forum who informed Members of the issues raised by Children and Young People via the Youth Services Junior and Youth Forums.

Cabinet were provided with a video and presentation, which outlined the progress made in the last 12 months by the Junior and Youth Forum's against priorities identified last year. In addition, the report noted the priorities voted on that were set out in paragraph 5.2 and 5.3 in the report. It was confirmed that the overall priority issue for the Youth Forum is 'Mental Health' – Services should be improved with young people's help and young people should receive mental health first aid education. The Junior Forum's overall priority issue is 'more awareness of support for drugs and alcohol support'. The process that follows the identification of issues was set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report.

Cabinet thanked the Youth Forum for attending the meeting and delivering their informative and professional presentation. Cabinet assured the Youth Forum that the priorities are taken on board and Cabinet will do all it can to support the Youth Forum. In addition, the Youth Forum as a whole were thanked for their work undertaken around homelessness last year.

Members discussed the priorities from the previous year and praised the holistic approach and work undertaken around tackling bullying and raising awareness and support for the bully as well as the victim. A Member sought clarification on whether some of the issues identified by the Forums, such as Mental Health, Knife Crime and Homelessness were linked. It was confirmed that there are often links and a holistic approach is often required, along with education, which plays a key part in identifying the root causes and tackling issues.

Discussions took place around the current priorities and clarification was sought around Greener spaces and the priority around adventurous play. It was identified that whilst there are a number of local parks in the borough, they often have age and time limitations and are aimed at younger children. There are not enough areas for young people (teenagers) to socialise, which often results in congregating in town centres and parks.

The Youth Forum representative, in noting the effectiveness of education to inform young people and addressing key issues sought clarification from the Cabinet on how the priorities could feed into the new Curriculum for Life. The Cabinet thanked the representative for the question which was taken on board, however as there were no Officers from the Education Directorate with the relevant expertise on the curriculum at the meeting, it was possible to provide a detailed response, however Cabinet gave assurances that the priorities will be considered and taken forward where possible.

Cabinet discussed period poverty, which was raised as a priority for the Youth Forum. It was noted that a Task and Finish Group has been set up with an aim to address the issues associated with period poverty, such as provide access to free products for young people in schools, youth groups and libraries and 2 films have been developed, for use in PSE lessons with the aim to eliminate the stigma and embarrassment. In addition, further consideration is underway around the possibility of a donation scheme and other methods to ensure there is sustainable provision in place for the long-term.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that subject to the inclusion of an additional recommendation whereby the Junior and Youth Forum Priorities also be presented to Social Services Scrutiny Committee 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 and subject to the aforementioned additional recommendation:

- i) the Junior and Youth Forum Priorities be supported by Cabinet;
- ii) the Youth Forum in addressing their Priority Issue of Mental Health, be supported;
- iii) the Junior Forum in addressing their Priority Issue of raising awareness of Drug and Alcohol Support, be supported;
- vi) issues raised by Children and Young People when making decisions which impact upon their lives, be supported;
- iv) that the Junior and Youth Forum Priorities also be presented to Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

5. TO ADOPT THE WELSH GOVERNMENT (WG) 'HIGH STREET AND RETAIL RATE RELIEF' SCHEME 2019/20 – GRANT FUNDING

Councillor S. Morgan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as a commercial property owner and left the meeting during the consideration of the item.

It was noted that the Welsh Government (WG) has announced a new temporary business rate relief scheme, the 'High Street and Retail Rate Relief Scheme' for the financial year 2019/20 only. Relief granted by the Authority under this new scheme is to be reimbursed by WG by way of a specific cash-limited grant but, before any relief is awarded, the Authority must consider and adopt the new scheme.

The report provided details of a new rate relief scheme offered by WG, details of which were outlined within Appendix 1 of the report. Cabinet noted that adoption of the new Scheme is obligatory because WG has prescribed the details for the scheme. The Authority must formally adopt the new Scheme in order to obtain the WG grant funding.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

A Member, in noting the comments under the heading "Hereditaments with a rateable value of more than £50,000", as set out within the guidance, sought further information on the number of businesses that may be eligible for discretionary rate relief (this would be fully-funded by the Council), should the Council exercise this discretion. Officers explained that the vast majority of businesses in the Borough operate at a rateable value below this and there are explicit rules around other businesses, such as Tesco, whom would not be eligible under the all-Wales scheme as the total rate relief, if awarded, would exceed the threshold contained within the de minimis State Aid rules.

Concerns were raised by Members that the scheme was only a temporary relief scheme and therefore cannot provide certainty to business for future planning. Officers explained that there are a number of rate reliefs available to businesses, such as small business rate relief, and as a result, up to 50% of business properties liable to pay rates within the county borough have no rates to pay.

Discussions took place around the application process and it was noted that whilst the Council are aware of the types of properties held in the rating list, the form requests information on the premises' actual use. It is anticipated that the rate relief available under this scheme to businesses operating within the Borough could exceed £1 million, however, it is often difficult to get some businesses to apply for the rate relief, despite the reminders, door knocking, social media and Newline bulletins to encourage take up.

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 'High Street and Retail Rate Relief Scheme' 2019/20 (the 2019/20 Scheme) be adopted with immediate effect, in accordance with the guidance set out at Appendix 1 of the report, and the provisions of section 47(1) (a) and section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The Head of Corporate Finance and S151 Officer will use delegated powers to award the relief;
- ii) for the reasons outlined in 5.5 of the report, the proposals to allow successful applicants for the 2018/19 High Street Rate Relief Scheme (the 2018/19 Scheme) who are eligible to receive rate relief under the 2019/20 Scheme to have the rate relief awarded without the need to make a further application be adopted;
- iii) ratepayers who have not completed an application form for the 2018/19 Scheme be required to properly complete and return an application form for the 2019/20 scheme. Where an application form is required, such a form must be completed by each eligible ratepayer for each qualifying property and returned to the Business Rates Team.

The meeting closed at 11.28 am.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on the 15th May 2019.

CHAIR