



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER 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. Harry (Interim Chief Executive), D. Street (Corporate Director - Social Services and Housing), M. S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director - Communities), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services).

Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director – Children’s Services), M. Jones (Interim Financial Services Manager and E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. CABINET - 10TH JULY 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 10th July 2019 (minute nos. 1 - 11) be approved and signed as a correct record.

4. CABINET – 1ST AUGUST 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st August 2018 (minute nos. 1 - 3) be approved and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

5. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

With the approval of the Chair the report on the Cabinet Forward Work Programme was brought forward on the agenda.

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet endorsement of the Forward Work Programme for the period September to December 2019. It was noted that the programme sets out the key reports that Cabinet expects to receive in the coming months and is updated on a weekly basis.

Reference was made to the items scheduled for the meeting on the 2nd October 2019 and the report on the Hafodyrynys Air Quality Direction – Compulsory Purchase Order Process, it was confirmed that Officers were still awaiting further information from Welsh Government on this matter and as such a request was made that it be removed from the programme for this date, to a date to be confirmed once discussions with Welsh Government had been concluded.

It was moved and seconded that subject to the aforementioned amendment the Cabinet Forward Work Programme as attached in Appendix 1 be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the removal of the Hafodyrynys Air Quality Direction – Compulsory Purchase Order Process report from the 2nd October 2019 to a date to be confirmed the Cabinet Forward Work Programme be approved.

6. SOCIAL SERVICES RESERVES

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval for a range of proposals for the use of Social Services service reserves.

The report identified around £734k of social services reserve balances that were earmarked for specific purposes in earlier years which, as a result of recent investment in the Social Services revenue budget by both Welsh Government and Caerphilly County Borough Council, were no longer required for their original purpose.

Consequently, it was proposed to re-invest those earmarked balances to enable a range of one off investments and time limited arrangements to address some immediate workload pressures, relieve increasing demand for social care or to improve outcomes for service users. The report also proposed that a £281k service reserve that was earmarked for “social services invest to save schemes” should be used to pilot a scheme which will provide additional support to families with parents with learning disabilities which is expected to reduce the likelihood of children becoming looked after. The funds would also be used to purchase specialist equipment that will enable certain home care calls to be undertaken by a single carer rather than requiring two carers, thereby reducing the demands on the domiciliary care market and reducing costs.

Additionally, the report confirmed that the transfer £242k from Social Services general reserves approved by Cabinet on 30th May 2018, to create an earmarked reserve to fund the 2018/19 implications of increases in foster carer fees was no longer necessary. However, it was proposed that this £242k is used to create an additional earmarked reserve for capital works to be undertaken at Adult Services direct care establishments to improve bathroom facilities and Wi-Fi capabilities.

It was noted that the report considers Social Services Service reserves only and the proposals would have no impact on the Council's general fund balance.

Cabinet paid tribute to the sound financial management undertaken by the Corporate Director of Social Services and the Interim Financial Services Manager which led to the surplus balances which could now be redirected to address service area pressures.

Clarification was sought in relation to the nature of the specialist equipment that would be purchased. Officers confirmed that the equipment would be utilised by Occupational Therapy services to assist service users with increased dependency levels, primarily those currently requiring double handed calls in order for them to be moved safely. The right equipment would allow a single carer to safely move the service user freeing up the other carer, who can then be used in another area, thereby ensuring a more efficient and effective use of resources and so reduced costs.

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 proposed re-direction of Social Services reserves set out in the report and summarised in Appendix 1 be approved.

7. WELSH GOVERNMENT – LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN REDUCTION EXPECTATIONS

Consideration was given to the report which advised Cabinet of Welsh Government's expectation on all Council's to safely reduce the numbers of children Looked After in Wales and sought their endorsement of the proposed actions to be undertaken in Caerphilly in response.

Cabinet were advised that the First Minister for Wales made a manifesto pledge to reduce the numbers of children Looked After in Wales by 2022 and in February 2019, Welsh Government confirmed that they would be visiting each Local Authority to discuss local plans to reduce Looked After numbers.

Their visit to Caerphilly took place at the end of March 2019 and the Council was invited to submit a reduction plan to Welsh Government by the end of April 2019. Subsequently, Welsh Government amended the report template and the final version that was submitted in July is attached for information at Appendix 1.

In recognition of the challenges facing Local Authorities, Welsh Government announced additional Integrated Care Funding (ICF) specifically focussed on supporting the reduction of the number of Looked After Children.

Reference was made to the meetings with Welsh Government in this regard and the Cabinet Member for Social Services confirmed that it had been emphasised that Caerphilly County Borough Council were committed to reducing the number of Looked After Children but only when it was safe for the child to do so.

Clarification was sought in relation to the number of out of area placements and it was confirmed these placements were only used when it was the best option for the individual child.

Concern was expressed that this directive from Welsh Government would become another league table and it was accepted that this was a realistic possibility however Cabinet were assured that the safety children would be of paramount importance and no target would be achieved at the expense of children's safety.

Paragraph 5.2.1 of the Officer's report was highlighted as it outlined the fact that the actions required to comply with the Welsh Government Directive were likely to lead to criticisms from the Judiciary and CAF/CASS if the authority subsequently have to issue court proceedings and Members acknowledged the associated risks.

Cabinet were referred to recommendation 3.3 of the Officer's report which asked that consideration be given to including the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After within Wellbeing Objective 6 of the Corporate Plan, given that the Plan has only just been updated and is subject to approval by Council an amendment to the wording of that recommendation was requested. The recommendation to read 'at its next review the Corporate Plan be amended to include the 'Safe Reduction of Children Look After' within Wellbeing Objective 6: Support citizens to remain independent and improve their wellbeing'.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to the aforementioned amendment the recommendations 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) the content of the report and the Welsh Government Template attached at Appendix 1, be noted;
- (ii) the service developments detailed within the report aimed at achieving an overall reduction in Looked After numbers by the end of March 2022, be supported;
- (iii) at its next review the Corporate Plan be amended to include the 'Safe Reduction of Children Looked After' within Wellbeing Objective 6: Support citizens to remain independent and improve their wellbeing.

8. WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to the report that advised Cabinet of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements within Caerphilly County Borough Council undertaken in May 2019 and report on the implementation of an action plan in response to the recommendations made by the Review.

The WAO undertook a follow up review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements for Children in Caerphilly in May 2019. The subsequent report was presented to Corporate Management Team for approval in June 2019 and the Performance Audit Manager from WAO also presented the report findings to the Corporate Safeguarding Board in June 2019.

Cabinet were referred to the Review report as attached at Appendix A, the Management Response at Appendix B and the Caerphilly Corporate Safeguarding Board Action Plan at Appendix C. In relation to the Action Plan it was confirmed that it would be regularly monitored with further updates provided to Members on the progress made.

One of the areas highlighted in the Review was the need to develop a tracking system for training and DBS checks, to accurately capture and draw down data and Members were advised that unfortunately the current ITrent system was incapable the level of functionality needed to produce reports of this nature. The Officer confirmed that it had become apparent that a specialist system was required in order to secure the data needed and advised they were currently working with colleagues in Digital Services in order to secure the best way to bring all this together and a further report would be presented to Cabinet on the best options to take forward.

It was emphasised that this was a review of the corporate governance of safeguarding arrangements and did not consider safeguarding children practice and procedure.

Having considered the recommendation at 3.1 it was agreed that Cabinet's endorsement of the Review and Action Plan was required rather than its noting, therefore it was agreed that the recommendation be reworded to replace the word 'note' with the word 'approve'

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

RESOLVED that that subject to the amendment to the wording of the recommendation 3.1 in the Officer's report to replace the word 'note' to 'approve' and for the reasons contained therein, the content of the WAO Review report and the progress made in implementing the recommendations detailed in the Council's Action Plan, be approved.

The meeting closed at 11:05am

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on the 2nd October 2019.

CHAIR