



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 26TH FEBRUARY 2020 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor B. Jones- Presiding Chair

Councillors:

N. George (Environment and Neighbourhood Services), C.J. Gordon (Corporate Services), S. Morgan (Regeneration, Transportation and Sustainability), L. Phipps (Homes, Places and Tourism) and E. Stenner (Finance, Performance and Planning).

Together with:

C. Harry (Interim Chief Executive), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services and Housing), M.S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director – Communities).

Also in Attendance:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), P. Warren (Learning, Education and Inclusion Services), A. West (21st Century Schools, Admissions and Exclusions Manager), E. Sharma (Consultation and Public Engagement Officer), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), A. Dallimore (Regeneration Services Manager), T. McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy) S. Harris (Interim Head of Business Improvement Services and Acting S151 Officer), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

J. Fabes (Lead Officer – Post 16), L. Jarvis (Headteacher – St. Martins Comprehensive School) and C. Parry (Headteacher – Lewis School Pengam).

Councillor K. Etheridge (Leader of the Independent Group).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor P. Marsden and M.S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director – Communities).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C. Cuss declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 - Post 16 Collaboration Arrangements as a LEA appointed governor at Idris Davies School.

3. CABINET – 12TH FEBRUARY 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12th February 2020 were approved as a correct record.

4. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE

Cabinet were provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports from 12th January 2020 to 7th October 2020. Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and therefore subject to change.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the Forward Work Programme be noted. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the aforementioned amendment, the Cabinet Forward Work Programme be noted.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

5. NEW PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2020

The report provided Cabinet with a new Performance Framework for the Council that is fit for purpose and supports the developments of future operating models.

It was noted that the Council's Performance Framework has been in its current format for several years and has formed a foundation stone of the Council's governance arrangements. As the Council embarks on its ambitious Transformation Programme, Team Caerphilly, alongside the emergence of new legislation such as the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill 2019, it is both timely and opportune that the Framework is redeveloped and enhanced.

The report introduced the key components of the new Performance Framework, how the components interrelate and the reporting arrangements that have been established to embed the framework into operational use.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

It was noted that the new Performance Framework will provide a more modern and flexible framework, able to adapt to the requirements of all services, for example seasonal performance data, threats and risks such as Winter Maintenance and Salt stocks.

A Member sought clarification around the Action plan Programme at Appendix B of the report, and the Actions listed as "Not Started". Officers explained that whilst there has been significant progress in a number of areas surrounding the Transformation Agenda, due to the employment and imbedding of the Transformation Managers and Formalisation of Performance Methodology, some actions are currently in progress but not yet complete.

Discussions took place around the Dashboards and it was noted that these are regularly reported to Corporate Management Team (CMT), which help to identify any risks or challenges, which can easily be addressed in order to mitigate any further issues. The new Performance Framework will permeate throughout the Authority from reporting to CMT, Cabinet and Scrutiny, to the transformation of the Staff Performance Process and will provide a clear and useable monitoring system throughout.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the report be deferred. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report the New Caerphilly Performance Framework 2020 be approved.

6. GATEWAY TO EMPLOYMENT – CAERPHILLY SKILLS AND APPRENTICESHIP ACADEMY

The report sought Cabinet endorsement to develop a pilot model to deliver a sustainable, and framework compliant programme that provides holistic skills, training and apprenticeship provision that includes work experience, placements and apprenticeships and provide work experience and taster opportunities for school pupils as well as provide support, advice and guidance to schools to help those who do not wish to follow a traditional attainment pathway to access alternative provision via an apprenticeship route.

The report sought provision of ring fenced sustainable job opportunities through Caerphilly County Borough Council as an employer, supporting the Well-being Objective 2 of the 2018-2023 Corporate Plan.

It was noted that apprenticeships offer considerable benefits to society and the economy. They provide people with the opportunity to develop job related competencies, technical skills, numeracy and literacy skills and self esteem. They also play an important role in tackling youth unemployment. Skills developed through Apprenticeships contribute to higher value-added economic activity. They are good for growth and social mobility.

A training, skills and apprenticeship scheme within Caerphilly CBC would respond to the Council's emerging workforce development plans, whilst also being synergistic with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and its aim to create a range of apprentice and employment opportunities that satisfy the needs of industry, business and commerce in SE Wales. It will ensure the priority sectors are targeted to maximise opportunities from the Cardiff Capital Region and support the growth sectors in the region, providing opportunities across a range of demographic and socio-economic profiles.

The Academy would provide a holistic mentoring, employment support, training and apprenticeship programme for all ages, to meet the current and future skill requirements of the Council. In addition, it would make a significant impact on reducing levels of inactivity and unemployment amongst local residents throughout the county borough.

Cabinet were asked to note that the Gateway would provide a single referral route, which would help support the agenda.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Discussions took place around buy-in from schools and age range for the programme and it was noted that initial conversations are underway, but there seems to be support from schools, many of which expressing disappointment that these opportunities haven't been available to date.

A Member sought further information around the programme, with particular focus on local employment opportunities. Officers explained that Sectoral Analysis has been undertaken which identifies the strengths within the borough and where the opportunities and growth areas are. For example, it was noted that the North of the Borough has a number of Life Sciences businesses, looking to expand, for which skills are required, and it is hoped that a local workforce can be developed to align with this need. In addition, Sector specific events

have been organised in which local employers are invited, aiming to tailor training with colleges and employers to develop the skills required in Apprenticeship programmes. 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 development of a pilot Caerphilly Skills and Apprenticeship Academy – Gateway to Employment be agreed from April 2020 for initially a year.
- ii) That the £127k additional cost to fund the pilot be funded from the Education and Corporate Services reserves.

7. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2020-2025

The report provided Cabinet with a draft Consultation and Engagement Framework which sets out an approach to further enhance consultation and engagement across Caerphilly County Borough communities and highlighted the continued importance of effective consultation and engagement and the clear strategic link to the decision making process.

The #TeamCaerphilly – Better Together Transformation Strategy, endorsed by Cabinet in June 2019 highlights the importance of engaging and working with our communities as one of its primary themes.

The Council is committed to ensuring high quality, citizen focussed services, and in future proofing these services, recognises the need to ensure effective engagement is central to the decision making process – involving residents in the design of local services and the things that affect them.

In addition, the council is focussing on further strengthening the relationship between it and the community – residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups. Caerphilly County Borough has a vibrant and engaged voluntary and community sector, which offers significant opportunity to maximise community participation.

Through the #TeamCaerphilly – Better Together transformation journey, the council must also continue to be open and honest with our communities in order to manage expectations; communities themselves will need to play a key part in helping shape the transformation process.

The draft Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 sets out our approach to further enhance consultation and engagement across Caerphilly County Borough communities. It highlights principles and standards for how the council will engage- to build clear, shared expectations and a two way ongoing dialogue that enables a focus on what can be achieved.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and following agreement from the Chair, welcomed Councillor K. Etheridge, Leader of the Independent Group to the Meeting to speak on this item.

Councillor Etheridge welcomed the Consultation and Engagement Strategy, but requested Cabinet have consideration for the creation of a Community and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, which can oversee Consultation exercises and remove the barrier between the Authority and the Public, further enhancing the Team Caerphilly agenda. In addition, it was suggested that Councillor be more visible and accessible to the Public. In discussing the View Point Panel, it was suggested that a proforma be completed by each of its Members, outlining their skills and expertise, in order to hold more focus groups and engage more constructively.

It was requested also, that future reports to Policy and Resources Scrutiny include the Leaders of the Opposition Parties, Trade Unions and the Voluntary Sector as Consultees in order to be more inclusive.

Cabinet thanked Councillor Etheridge for his Feedback and question and it was noted that a number of his suggested consultation methods have been already undertaken, however, it was agreed that more could be done to encourage further engagement from the public. Officers added that every report published is available on the Council's Intranet and Internet, which is accessible to all. It was noted that both Leaders of the Opposition Parties are Members of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, and therefore will have the opportunity to discuss the report and the Trade Unions spoke at the relevant Scrutiny Committee on this item. It was added that the Voluntary Sector were consultees on both the Consultation and Engagement Report and an additional report, which will be considered at a later date.

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 the principles and approach, as outlined in the draft Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 be endorsed and adopted.

8. POST 16 COLLABORATION ARRANGEMENTS

The report, which was provided to the Education Scrutiny Committee on 18th February 2020 as an information provided an update to Cabinet on the progress made to date in relation to the post-16 aspects of the Post-16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Review underway within the County Borough, and sought approval to procure and implement the required IT packages that will enhance and support students as they progress toward Post 16 Education and allocate additional funding to resource the review.

It was noted that Cabinet have established a Review Board to oversee the review of Post-16 Provision, Single Sex Education and Surplus Places across Caerphilly, and the report provided an update on as to the current position of the review with a specific focus on the Post 16 element.

While the work of the Board is to develop long term sustainable solutions to the challenges of Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places across Caerphilly, it has identified an opportunity to improve the current provision of post-16 education in the Borough in the short term by refining and enhancing the nature of the collaborations that already exist across Upper Rhymney and the Caerphilly Basin secondary schools.

Cabinet were informed that Secondary school partnerships have been in place in the Caerphilly North (Upper Rhymney Valley Consortium – Heolddu, Idris Davies 3-18, Lewis Girls and Lewis School Pengam) and the Caerphilly Basin (Bedwas, St Cenydd and St Martins) areas for a number of years. The Board have identified the potential for these partnerships to be strengthened through a formal partnership agreement and the establishment of a management board that could ensure effective delivery. The arrangement also has the potential to provide students with access to a broader curriculum and improve the overall costs and outcomes at Post 16.

Support is in place to both partnerships to help make the necessary changes and the new arrangement is on course to be introduced at the start of the academic year 2020-21. In the meantime the Review Board will move forward with discussions on the longer term issues of Post 16, Surplus Places and Single Sex Education. The review of the secondary school estate in the Caerphilly Basin and Caerphilly North and the place of post-16 provision within that will be the focus of the next meeting of the Review Board on 31st January 2020.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and welcomed Mr J. Fabes, (Lead Officer for Post 16), Mr M. Jarvis (Headteacher - St Martins Comprehensive) and Mr C. Parry (Headteacher – Lewis School Pengam).

Mr Fabes provided Cabinet with a presentation on the Post 16 Collaboration Arrangements and the Review of Post-16 education, single sex education and surplus places, noting the work undertaken with Heads, Curriculum leads of 6th Form to further develop effective and more formalised sixth-form collaboration through fresh approaches and closer integration. Cabinet noted that there are two Post-16 partnerships, Caerphilly Basin Partnership and Upper Rhymney Valley Partnership (URVP).

Cabinet noted that the key benefits of the collaboration include developing a rich and varied curriculum for learners across both partnerships with higher quality outcomes for learners and better value for money and a more sustainable model of delivery. It was noted that a Memoranda of Understanding has been developed for each partnership, which will formalise the agreements including the aims, governance, management and course provision.

Cabinet were informed of the development of a new website and online joint prospectus, procurement of a system that will provide support, guidance and information on progression pathways.

Cabinet were provided with a brief video, highlighting a recent open evening event held at Penallta House, which provided learners with an opportunity to explore a number of further education options, such as 6th form subjects, colleges and Careers Wales.

Mr C. Parry (Headteacher – Lewis School Pengam) explained that the Collaboration is an important process to schools improvement and whilst the partnerships have been in place for a number of years, the formalisation and memorandum of understanding removes any barriers, helps build on apprenticeships and provides more and clear pathways for learners.

Mr M. Jarvis (Headteacher – St Martins Comprehensive) explained that process allows reflection on the practices currently in place and effective scrutiny, whilst allowing opportunities to support one another and share best practice. of the processes and pra

Cabinet thanked the Officers, Lead Officer and Headteachers for the report, presentation and video.

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 information contained in the report be noted;
- ii) The use of £48k of Education and Corporate Services retained underspend reserve be approved to purchase and implement the required IT systems to support the enhanced arrangements. This would procure the system for 2 years for all 12 Secondary Schools;
- iii) The use of £10k of Education and Corporate Services retained underspend reserve be approved to extend the lead LA Officer until 31 March 2020.

9. FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM) STRATEGY

The report, which was considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee on 24th September 2019 provided an outline of the Education Strategy that aims to further improve the attainment

of pupils in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM).

The report provided a summary of the revised strategy to improve the attainment of this group of pupils. The Strategy recognised the need to accelerate improvement, taking account of local and national data. The document included the following areas:

- Effective use of grant funding;
- The role of schools in raising attainment;
- The role of the Local Authority in raising attainment;
- The role of parents; carers;
- The role of partners.

The Strategy also recognised that some pupils, in receipt of free school meals, attain in line or above the expected level at all stages of education from Early Years to end of Key Stage 5. However, the document aimed to ensure that all pupils, regardless of prior attainment, make very good progress throughout their school education. In addition to sharpening accountability processes in place to monitor, track and evaluate the progress of this group of learner, the document identified the establishment of a new 'Pupil Aspiration Board' which aims to specify and share the very best practice taking place across Caerphilly Schools.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

In discussing the report, it was noted that the BBC news had reported on work undertaken in this area and in particular the work undertaken across Wales.

Cabinet were asked to note that this is a working document, which will act as a guide for provision and work in this area. In considering recent data, Cabinet were asked to note that learners in receipt of FSM have made considerable progress in Caerphilly, better than the Welsh average and are outperforming Nationally in Numeracy, as a result closing the gap between FSM and non-FSM learners.

A Member, in noting the work undertaken to pull together the Strategy, sought further information on the work undertaken to remove the stigma of Free School Meals and increase the uptake. Officers explained that a number of things have been done to raise the profile across both Primary and Secondary, which include improving relationships with parents, building an element of trust, to building a more robust digital system with Secondary Schools, which minimises the stigma. In addition, it was noted that work is underway with Rents and Benefits departments, to consider the dissemination of the Grant through this section, to remove the link to schools, thus reduce the stigma further.

Members were keen to increase the uptake of Free School Meals, for those eligible, which would entitle learners to the adequate support if required, as well as increase grant funding from Welsh Government.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report the Free School Meals (FSM) Strategy be endorsed.

The meeting closed at 11.42am.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 11th March 2020.

CHAIR