



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2014 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor K.V. Reynolds - Leader

Councillors:

Mrs C. Forehead (HR and Governance/Business Manager), D.T. Hardacre (Performance and Asset Management), K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development), G. Jones (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing), Mrs B. Jones (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services), Mrs R. Passmore (Education and Lifelong Learning), D.V. Poole (Community and Leisure Services), T.J. Williams (Highways, Transportation and Engineering), R. Woodyatt (Social Services).

Together with:

C. Burns (Interim Chief Executive), Mrs S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), Mrs N. Scammell (Acting Director Corporate Services and S.151 Officer), Mr D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services).

Also in Attendance:

S. Harris (Interim Head of Corporate Finance), K. Williams (Private Sector Housing Manager), S. Cousins (Principal Housing Officer - Housing Portfolio), M. Donovan (Project Lead 21st Century Schools), M. Williams (Building Consultancy Manager), R. Mclean (AECOM), G. Hardacre (Head of Workforce and Organisational Development), R. Kyte (Team Leader, Strategic and Development Plans), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D.V. Poole declared an interest in agenda items 4 and 6. He is a Council representative on Islwyn Bowls Club Management Board and a private landlord.

3. CABINET

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2014 (minute nos. 1-6; page nos. 1-3) be approved and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED**4. INVEST TO SAVE BIDS**

Councillor D.V. Poole declared an interest in this item. He is a Council representative on Islwyn Bowls Club Management Board.

The Interim Head of Corporate Finance presented the report, which sought Members' views on a range of bids for one-off funding that will either result in on-going revenue savings or address identified unavoidable cost pressures.

The 2014/15 Budget Report agreed by Council on 26th February 2014 identified the potential to use General Fund balances of up to £2.499m for one-off capital expenditure as cost avoidance or Invest to Save schemes. Council approved a recommendation that bids to utilise this funding should be considered on a case-by-case basis by Cabinet.

A number of bids were invited through the Capital Strategy Group but due to a range of new emerging cost pressures and the worsening financial outlook it was not prudent to progress the bids due to the need to maintain adequate General Fund balances.

As an alternative, Heads of Service were invited to submit bids for consideration for funding under the "New Initiatives Fund". This is a separate reserve held by the Authority that has been previously used to provide one-off funding to support investments that generate cashable savings (i.e. an Invest to Save basis). Any funding awarded is subject to Cabinet approval and is repayable over a typical period of five years (in effect it is an internal loan). A total of 13 bids were received, the details of which are summarised in the appendix to the report.

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 set out in the officer's report, Cabinet: -

1. Approved a revenue contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) from anticipated 2014/15 underspends in the Social Services revenue budget to fund the proposed investments of £237k outlined in paragraph 4.5 of the report.
2. Endorsed the recommendation not to support the bid of £275k in relation to street lighting due to options currently being considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
3. Agreed that the bids for Coed Top closed landfill site (£150k) and Park Lane demolition works (£122k) should be funded from 2014/15 projected underspends within Miscellaneous Finance.
4. Agreed that £50k funding in the Capital Programme for 2016/17 is brought forward to 2014/15 to fund the refurbishment of the toilets and conference facilities in Llancaiach Fawr, with the balance of £10k being met from revenue budgets.
5. Agreed that the remaining bids totalling £680,905 should be approved for funding on a repayable Invest to Save basis.
6. Agreed that with the exception of the Islwyn Bowls Club at 7 years, the other approved Invest to Save bids should be repaid over a period of 5 years.

7. Agreed that the difference between Invest to Save repayments and savings generated should be set aside to support the MTFP.

5. IMPROVING GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME UPDATE

The report provided an end of tranche review on the progress of the Improving Governance Programme (IGP) together with a proposal to close the named programme as such in favour of the monitoring of the small number of outstanding recommendations/actions by other established groups or committees, subject to the retention of the IGP Board for a further period to ensure that the follow up CGI is effectively coordinated.

Following consideration and discussion during which Members commented on the excellent progress that had been made against the recommendations/workstreams contained in the action plans, 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 set out in the officer's report, Cabinet: -

1. Noted progress against the action plan resulting from the WAO Public Interest report on the Chief Officers Pay published in March 2013, along with the wider Improving Governance Programme including the action plans resulting from the WAO Public Interest Report on Chief Officers Essential Car Users and Annual Leave Allowance published in December 2013 and the Special Inspection Report published in January 2014 as presented to and approved by Council on 28th January 2014 and Cabinet on 19th February 2014.
2. Approved the handing over of the monitoring of outstanding recommendations and actions to other suitable monitoring bodies as detailed in Appendix 1 but maintain the IGPB to ensure that the follow up CGI is effectively coordinated.

6. HOUSING SOLUTIONS: SOCIAL LETTINGS POLICY

Councillor D.V. Poole declared an interest in this item as a private landlord.

The report was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 30th September 2014. Following a full discussion on the proposals contained therein the Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet that Option 3 i.e. the development of an in-house Lettings Agency be implemented.

The Private Sector Housing Manager highlighted the key issues within the report, which considered the Housing (Wales) Bill and its implications for the Authority in respect of its responsibilities for homelessness prevention, registration and licensing of private sector landlords and the options available for some of the Authority's public and private sector empty properties.

In relation to the activities already in place to address the forthcoming legislation the report put into context the pressures on the Authority to provide a safe, affordable home and proposed the widening of housing options to include a Social Lettings Agency.

Access to affordable housing has become hampered by the reduction in housing supply and the implementation of the Welfare Reform Act for many of the residents in Caerphilly where home ownership is not an affordable option. The report also considered the impact of welfare reform and the limitations it presents for access to the private rented sector.

Members were advised that in going some way to address the problem of an undersupply of affordable housing within the private rented sector, there were potentially 3 options to consider i.e. Making incentive payments to letting agents and private landlords; utilising the services of an external lettings agency or creating an in-house Social Lettings Agency.

Following consideration and discussion, during which Members thanked Officers for all the work they had undertaken in relation to this matter, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations at paragraph 9 in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons set out in the officer's report: -

1. Option 3 i.e. the development of an in-house Social Lettings Agency, as outlined in paragraph 4.6.4 in the report, be implemented.
2. A further report outlining progress to date and the performance of the Social Lettings Agency be submitted to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee within 12-18 months of its commencement.

7. ISLWYN WEST SECONDARY SCHOOL - UPDATE

The report provided an update on the new Islwyn West Secondary School in terms of progress on the development of the design; the programme plan for delivery of the project; roles and responsibilities; the initial cost plan; the appointment of a construction contractor and pending project issues. Mr M. Donovan (Project Lead 21st Century Schools) presented the report accompanied by Mr M. Williams (Building Consultancy Manager) and Mr. R. Mclean (AECOM).

It was noted that good progress had been made and 3 concept designs had been prepared by the Council's Building Consultancy Design Team. AECOM had been appointed as the Council's external Project and Cost Consultants and had identified one of the designs (Option 3) as being the most efficient and cost effective.

AECOM had prepared a programme timetable, which currently shows completion of the school by December 2016 with occupation in January 2016. The timetable is continually being reviewed to identify ways in which the completion date can be brought forward. AECOM had also compiled a matrix of roles and responsibilities to help during the management of the project. Work had also commenced on the appointment of a construction contractor, which will be made using the two stage tender process approved by Cabinet on 4th June 2014.

Members noted that the latest estimates for the school, now that the design team had completed their work were significantly higher than the original estimates set in 2011. However, assurances were received that the Council would be working with the designers and the contractors, once appointed, to deliver the best possible facility within the available funding.

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 set out in the officer's report Cabinet: -

1. Noted that the Initial Cost Plan for the new school is in excess of the budget that is currently available. However work is in hand to review costs with the aim of reducing them to the lowest possible level.

2. Noted that the current anticipated completion of the school is December 2016 with occupation scheduled for January 2017. Opportunities to bring the completion date forward are being explored.
3. Approved that the Concept Design labelled as Option 3 in Appendix 1, as recommended by AECOM, can be used for further consultation with the schools.
4. Approved the use of NEC Option C form of contract, with the flexibility to transfer to Option A. (This is also recommended by AECOM).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

8. WORKFORCE FLEXIBILITIES

The report sought Cabinet approval on the draft policy details and options for a range of schemes to allow workforce flexibility to meet the challenges of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The proposals had been considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 3rd June and 5th August 2014. The Scrutiny Committee endorsed the principle of introducing the schemes.

Members were advised that there would be no automatic right for individuals to access these schemes, which would be entirely at the Council's discretion and subject to a viable business case. The Head of Workforce and Organisational Development stressed that there was no intention to have a general application of the various options or to issue a blanket invitation to staff to be considered for any of the schemes as they were merely options which the Council needs to have in place should the necessity arise in some service areas as the impact of the impending budget reduction takes effect during the next few years.

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

RECOMMENDED that for the reasons set out in the officer's report the schemes be adopted subject to the following criteria: -

1. Early Retirement Scheme
The scheme utilises a provision within the LGPS regulations that permits CCBC as the employer to allow a retirement on mutual grounds in the interests of the efficiency of the service. This is a discretion that exists within the Pension regulations, which CCBC has not to date exercised, and requires Council approval.

Cabinet recommends to Council that this discretion is exercised.
2. Flexible Retirement Scheme
 - The scheme be approved with the following criteria:
 - Where there is a reduction in hours, this be to a minimum of 40% of contract hours;
 - Where there is a reduction in grade, this be to a minimum of 2 grades;
 - The period of flexible retirement is time limited to 6 months (extended by 3 months in exceptional circumstances only).

The scheme utilises a provision within the LGPS regulations that permits CCBC as the employer to allow flexible retirement. This is a discretion that exists within the Pension regulations, which CCBC has not to date exercised, and requires Council approval.

Cabinet recommends to Council that this discretion is exercised.

3. Voluntary Severance Scheme

The scheme be approved with the following criteria:

- Severance payment is set at the level of 60% of a years salary;
- Recommendation to cap the severance payment at the top of the Hay Grade C scale (£53,533) i.e. the maximum possible severance payment would be £32,120.

4. Redundancy Scheme

The scheme be approved to include the revised wording with regard to the payments to employees.

9. CCBC LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (FIRST REVIEW) UP TO 2031: POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD GROWTH OPTIONS

The report, which sought Members' views on the proposed level of population and household growth to be included in the Preferred Strategy to underpin the first review of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan, was considered by the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 16th September 2014. The Scrutiny Committee endorsed the recommendations in the report.

The report detailed key assumptions that determine the future level of population and housing growth to be accommodated in the County Borough, in particular the level of births, deaths and net migration. Members were informed of the stakeholder engagement undertaken to date for the review of the LDP and how this work had influenced the population and household growth scenarios presented in the report.

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.

RECOMMENDED that for the reasons set out in the officer's report: -

1. Population and Household Growth Scenarios A, B, E, H and M be subject to further consideration by stakeholders as part of the pre-deposit public consultation stage of the review process;
2. Population and Household Growth Scenario M be used as the Preferred Growth Option and as a basis to underpin the Preferred Strategy for the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (First Review) up to 2031.

10. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN - ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2014

The report, which was considered by the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 16th September 2014, outlined the contents of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan 2014 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). At the Scrutiny Committee meeting concerns were raised in relation to Recommendation 2 and the impact that it could have on the release of greenfield sites within the County Borough. Officers confirmed that any such potential releases would be determined individually on their merit following a

detailed assessment of the sites against the Caerphilly County Borough LDP and taking into account all other planning and material considerations.

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.

RECOMMENDED that for the reasons set out in the officer's report: -

1. The 2014 Annual Monitoring Report be referred to Council for consideration.
2. The 2014 Annual Monitoring Report be submitted to the Welsh Government before the deadline of 31st October 2014.

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on
15th October 2014.

CHAIR