



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor P. Marsden (Leader) - Chair

Councillors:

S. Cook (Social Care), N. George (Waste, Public Protection and Street Scene), C. Gordon (Corporate Services), L. Phipps (Housing), J. Pritchard (Infrastructure and Property), E. Stenner (Performance, Economy and Enterprise), A. Whitcombe (Sustainability, Planning and Fleet) and R. Whiting (Learning and Leisure).

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment).

Also in Attendance:

L. Lane (Deputy Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), J. Roberts-Waite (Strategic Coordination Manager), M. Jennings (Principal Strategy Housing Officer), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), M. Harris (Committee Services Support Officer/Chauffeur) and E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Leader reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here To View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from C. Harray (Chief Executive), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services and Housing), R. Tranter (Monitoring Officer) and S. Harris (Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer) declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 – Welsh Government Prospectus and Programme Development Plan (PDP), in that a family member works for the construction company referred to in the report and would leave the meeting when the item was being considered.

3. CABINET – 1ST SEPTEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st September 2021 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 for 27th October 2021. Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and therefore subject to change.

It was noted that Agenda Item No.10 would now be deferred to a future meeting of Cabinet the date to be confirmed and the forward work programme to be updated accordingly.

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 the Cabinet Forward Work Programme be noted.

5. REGENERATION BOARD – PROJECT PROPOSALS

Consideration was then given to the report which sought Cabinet approval for the allocation of up to £130,000 from the Regeneration Project Board Development Fund towards two recently endorsed and evaluated project proposals namely the Risca – Redevelopment of Strategic Town Centre site (Feasibility and Master Planning) and the Bargoed Empty Property Enforcement Action Plan and also asked Cabinet to note that a further £1.0M of development funding had been allocated to the Regeneration Project Board.

The projects for Risca and Bargoed were outlined, and Cabinet agreed that the proposals would secure positive outcomes for both areas, which would be welcomed by residents and provide opportunities for businesses.

In relation to the project at Bargoed, it was noted that this town centre had the highest empty property rate in the borough and the proposal before Cabinet would provide the resources to allow the Local Authority to work with landlords to bring them back into beneficial use. It would also allow notices to be served on reluctant landlords and for enforcement action taken if necessary and enable the Council to step in and undertake any works needed. The Officer confirmed that £250k of Welsh Government match-funding had also been secured to support this project.

Clarification was sought as to whether this funding was specifically for the Bargoed project or if it could be utilised elsewhere. It was confirmed that it had been identified specifically for Bargoed via the Heads of the Valley Task Force.

Cabinet welcomed the proposals and were pleased to see the measures proposed in relation to absent landlords and the opportunities to bring empty properties into beneficial use.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

- i) The £130,000 of the Regeneration Project Board Development Fund be allocated to progress two project proposals (i) Risca – Redevelopment of Strategic Town Centre site (ii) Bargoed Empty Property Enforcement Action Plan.
- ii) That a further £1.0M funding has been allocated to the Regeneration Project Board to bring forward strategic project development activities be noted.

6. WELSH GOVERNMENT PROSPECTUS AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PSP).

L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer) having declared a personal and prejudicial interest left the meeting.

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet views and approval for the Programme Development Plan (PDP) and the Local Housing Market Assessment Prospectus prior to its submission to Welsh Government. The report would also update Cabinet on the changes that have been made to the way in which the Welsh Government's Social Housing Grant is co-ordinated and allocated amongst partner housing associations and Caerphilly Homes.

Cabinet were advised that the report had been considered by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 7th September 2022. The views of the Scrutiny Committee were summarised, and Cabinet were pleased to note that as individual projects came forward, they would be subject to the full committee process and scrutiny review.

Cabinet were referred to section 5.24 of the report which outlined the 4 schemes included within the PDP and that each would be subject to a separate report to Cabinet as appropriate. Clarification was then sought in terms of funding and the Officer confirmed that it would be part HRA and part match funding.

Cabinet welcomed these ambitious and important projects to bring much needed affordable homes to the area and felt it vital that as many of these opportunities as possible should be explored.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the content of the report, PDP and draft LHMA Prospectus be approved for submission to Welsh Government.

7. PROVISION OF A STAFF BENEFIT AND RECOGNITION SCHEME

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval of a new staff benefit and reward platform that will support the forthcoming Wellbeing Strategy. Cabinet were also asked to agree the proposal to further recognise long service.

Cabinet noted that the MyAdvantages platform by Enderred offered a free to use online benefits services, accessed via the National Procurement Services framework, that makes a wide range of employee benefits, savings, discounts and advice available to public service employees. The platform also enables companies across Caerphilly to promote their

businesses and offers directly to employees and in doing so, provides the opportunity for our staff to access discounts while still shopping local.

Cabinet welcomed the proposals as a way to reward staff and benefit local businesses and sought reassurance that the scheme would be properly promoted in order to maximise take up. Members were advised that once the product was available HR Officers would be working closely with the Regeneration Team to promote and help to support the platform. It was noted that implementation time was approximately 8 weeks, and Officers were therefore keen to have the product available as quickly as possible, so that staff could benefit from its offers in the run up to Christmas.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to an amendment to recommendation 3.1 (2) to read 'the proposal to recognise forty years' continuous Local Government Service for staff that are still in the employment of the Local Authority, the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

1. The implementation of the MyAdvantages platform by Edenred for Caerphilly be agreed.
2. The proposal to recognise forty years' continuous Local Government Service for staff that are still in the employment of the Local Authority be agreed.

8. FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH – OLYMPIC MEDALLISTS

Consideration was given to the report which asked Cabinet to make a recommendation to Council that they admit as Honorary Freeman of the Borough the Caerphilly County Borough athletes who were successful in achieving medals at the Tokyo Olympics 2020, namely Lauren Price, Gold Medallist and Lauren Williams, Silver Medallist.

Cabinet welcomed the opportunity to make this recommendation to Council and fully support the bestowing of this honour as the right and proper way to recognise the hard work, commitment and dedication of Lauren Price and Lauren Williams.

The Leader placed on record her thanks to Councillor Colin Mann, Leader of the Plaid Cymru Group and Councillor Kevin Etheridge, Leader of the Independents Group for their cross-party support for this award.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Council that in pursuance of Section 249 (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council confers upon the following athletes, the Freedom of the County Borough of Caerphilly:

Lauren Price Gold Medallist - Boxing Women's Middleweight (75kg)

Lauren Williams Silver Medallist - Taekwondo Women's (-67kg)

9. PUBLIC INTEREST TEST - EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS SCHEDULE 12A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

The Leader advised that as the Exempt Item would be deferred to a future meeting of

Cabinet, the public interest test was no longer required.

10. EXEMPT ITEM - THE LAWNS, RHYMNEY COST OVERRUN REPORT

The Leader confirmed that this matter would be deferred to a future meeting of Cabinet, the date to be confirmed and that the forward work programme would be updated accordingly.

The meeting closed at 11.08am

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 29th September 2021.

CHAIR