



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 27TH OCTOBER 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:

D. Street (Acting Chief Executive) R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services) G. Jenkins (Acting Corporate Director Social Services) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment).

Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), J. Roberts-Waite (Strategic Co-ordination Manager), S. Harris (Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

And:

Councillor C. Mann

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

An apology for absence was received from C. Harry (Chief Executive).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. CABINET – 13TH OCTOBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 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 until the 8th December 2021. 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 the Cabinet Forward Work Programme be noted.

5. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SIX MONTH UPDATE 2021

Consideration was given to the report which presented Cabinet with the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) which is part of Council's new Performance Framework following the presentation of the Directorate Performance Assessments to Scrutiny. It was noted that the Corporate Performance Assessment provides a summary of information and analysis for the 6-month period October 2020 to March 2021 and forms part of the overall Council 'self-assessment' activity.

Cabinet referred to section 5.7 of the report which detailed the Directorate Performance Assessment reports route to the various scrutiny committees and Members welcomed Scrutiny's involvement in the performance assessment process.

Cabinet were asked to note that the new performance framework came into use during the lock-down period and when considering the data presented it would be mindful to do so within the context of what the Council was able to be deliver during this extraordinary period rather than what was not delivered. Cabinet were very mindful of the added pressures placed on staff during this period and placed on record their thanks to the way in which they had changed working practices and stepped up to the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Members specifically praised the work of Children Services staff who were able to complete child-care assessments as well as keeping looked after children numbers stable throughout this difficult time.

Clarification was sought in relation to Budget Monitoring and the significant underspends reported and how these were linked to the pandemic. The Section 151 Officer confirmed that these related directly to changes in working practices and Welsh Government Grants received late in the year. It was noted that the Housing Revenue Account underspend of £10,017m would be carried forward to support the WHQS programme and General Fund Balances £38,516m had been earmarked to fund one off capital investments as part of the strategic transformation programme.

Clarification was then sought about Freedom of Information Request compliance data the factors that had caused the dip and what was being done to continue the upward projection. Cabinet were advised that this service area had been impacted by the redeployment of staff to front line services during the pandemic and the loss of a key member of the team. Confirmation was given that the upward trajectory reported was continuing, the Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services confirmed that he would circulate updated figures following the meeting.

Cabinet placed on record their thanks to all the staff involved in the collation of the performance data and assessment report.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the Corporate Performance Assessment Six Month Update 2021 was reviewed, discussed and challenged.

6. LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-26

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval on the new Local Housing Strategy 'An Agenda for Change 2021-26'.

Cabinet were advised that Arc4 Ltd had been appointed to assist in the production of the strategy and the robust methodology to complete the various stages of the consultation process were noted to include key stakeholders both internal and external and views of residents were sought via a 9-week public consultation exercise. The strategy sets out the strategic housing priorities of the Council and provides a framework for the Council and its partners to tackle a range of housing needs including homelessness, housing disrepair, lack of suitable accommodation, which prevent people living in safe, good quality, affordable homes located in vibrant and safe communities. It provided a clear vision which focused not only on the provision of new housing but also on those services which support people to access housing and maintain independence to live in their homes for longer, the wider community, the environment and maximising community benefits that can be derived from the investment in housing that will take place over the period of the strategy.

Cabinet were asked to noted that the strategy will be underpinned by an investment plan that would be formulated by March 2022 and a Delivery Plan which would breathe life into the strategy and would be monitored on a biannual basis by the Affordable Homes Partnership and periodically to the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

Cabinet placed on record their thanks to Mark Jennings, Jane Roberts-Waite and Arc4 for all their efforts during the consultation process and for the production of the strategy.

Cabinet noted that the strategy had been considered by the Joint Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 21st October 21 and the comments were summarised. Members were advised that the Joint Scrutiny Committee had been very positive about the strategy, clarification had been sought on the costs for Arc4, the lack of response to the consultation, gypsy and traveller sites and single person accommodation and reassurances to the question raised had been given by Officers to the satisfaction of the Committee Members.

Cabinet welcomed the cross-party scrutinization of the report and the strategy document and appreciated the difficulties that the pandemic had placed on the consultation process but were pleased by the response from the Joint Scrutiny.

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.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the content of the report be noted and the strategy 'An Agenda for Change 2021-2026' be approved.

7. CORPORATE PLAN 2018-2023 REVIEW AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020/21.

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval of the Annual Performance Report for 2020/2021 and the 'refresh' updates to the Corporate Plan.

Cabinet noted that the Annual Performance Report is a current requirement under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 which had been repealed this year, however, as its performance requirements relate to the preceding financial year an annual performance report is required for 2020/21. For the next financial year performance assessment will happen under the new Local Government and Elections Act 2020.

Clarification was sought in relation to Wellbeing Objective 5, Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle, and how COVID had impacted this objective and whether catch-up could be accelerated through additional funding.

Officers confirmed that COVID had a massive impact on sport and leisure services, for large parts of 2020 there was no sport. However, services were working on plans to get people back into sport and into our leisure facilities and restoring this confidence would secure this improvement objective. The Corporate Director felt this to be a matter of marketing rather than external funding and outlined the new facilities that were coming online and the ways in which existing facilities were being enhanced in order to attract people back to the service area.

Cabinet acknowledged that there would understandably be public caution around the return to leisure service use and that this would take time but were confident that this could be achieved. Cabinet welcomed the exciting developments of a Hockey Hub at Sue Noakes and the new 3G Pitch at Idris Davies School.

A Member queried as to how the ending of the Furlough Scheme and increased fuel costs would impact Caerphilly residents. The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that at this stage it was too early to understand the impact of these changes, however a lot of work was being done via the Caerphilly Cares initiatives. The Acting Chief Executive then referred to the outstanding work being done by Sandra Issacs and her Team to generate additional income for families and they were making an incredible difference. Cabinet noted that there were still a lot of people who were not claiming the benefits they were entitled to and this would be a focus moving forward.

Clarification was then sought in relation to Wellbeing Objective 2, Enabling Employment, and the reduction in the number of people engaging in the Employment Programme. However, Cabinet were pleased to see that even during a pandemic 256 people had taken up the programme.

Officers confirmed that Employment Programmes were adapting to DWP requirements and although referral numbers had been reduced because of COVID restriction, now that face-to-face referral meetings were able to take place in libraries numbers were increasing. Cabinet were assured that Employment Programmes were being pushed via Social Media, our Communications Team and through Partner support to get the message out on the kind of support provided by the Council to those seeking employment.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained within the Officer's report be approved and by way of electronic voting this was unanimously approved.

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

1. The Annual Performance Report 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

2. The relevance and continuation of the Well-being Objectives for the four year of the five-year Corporate Plan be endorsed and the 'refresh' updates to the Corporate Plan contained within Appendix 2 be noted.

8. PAYMENT TO COMMISSIONED DOMICILLARY CARE PROVIDERS FROM WELSH GOVERNMENT SOCIAL CARE

It was noted that this report had been withdrawn from the agenda and would not be considered at this meeting.

9. PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

Members considered the Public Interest Test and concluded that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and it was: -

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

10. EXEMPT – URGENT ITEM – PURCHASE OF LAND AT GROVESIDE ROAD, OAKDALE, BLACKWOOD FOR ALTERNATIVE ALLOTMENT PROVISION.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the recommendations at 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 of the Officer's report be approved.

The meeting closed at 11.15 am

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 10th November 2021.

CHAIR