



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 13TH JULY 2022 AT 1PM

PRESENT:

Councillor S. Morgan – Chair

Councillors:

J. Pritchard (Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration & Climate Change), N. George (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Property), Mrs E. Stenner (Cabinet Member Finance & Performance), S. Cook (Cabinet Member for Housing), E. Forehead (Cabinet Member for Social Care), P. Leonard (Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection) and C. Morgan (Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure & Green Spaces).

Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director - Social Services and Housing), M. S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment) and R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services).

Also in Attendance:

L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), N. T. Williams (Head of Housing), J. Morgan (Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager), F. Wilkes (Housing Services Manager), M. Jennings (Principal Housing Strategy Officer), R. M. Evans (Principal Housing Officer), S. Isaacs (Rents Manager), L. Allen (Principal Group Accountant – Housing) and M. Afzal (Committee Services Officer).

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Leader reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. J. Simmonds (Cabinet Member for Highways & Transportation), C. Harry (Chief Executive), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer) and S. Harris (Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr C. Andrews declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to **Agenda Item No. 7 - Housing Revenue Account Rent Policy Review** in that her father is a council tenant and as

such she would leave the meeting when the item was considered and take no part in the debate and vote.

Cllr. J. Pritchard declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to **Agenda Item No. 7 - Housing Revenue Account Rent Policy Review** in that his grandparents are council tenants and as such he would leave the meeting when the item was considered and take no part in the debate and vote.

Cllr S. Morgan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to **Agenda Item No. 8 - Enforcement & Compliance Of The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards In Private Rented Domestic Properties (MEES) Procedure** in that he is a private sector landlord and as such he would leave the meeting when the item was considered and take no part in the debate and vote.

Cllr E. Forehead declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to **Agenda Item No. 8 - Enforcement & Compliance Of The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards In Private Rented Domestic Properties (MEES) Procedure** in that her partner is a private sector landlord and as such she would leave the meeting when the item was considered and take no part in the debate and vote.

Cllr E. Stenner declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to **Agenda Item No. 8 - Enforcement & Compliance Of The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards In Private Rented Domestic Properties (MEES) Procedure** in that she is private sector landlord and as such she would leave the meeting when the item was considered and take no part in the debate and vote.

M. S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment) declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to **Agenda Item No. 8 - Enforcement & Compliance Of The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards In Private Rented Domestic Properties (MEES) Procedure** in that he is a private sector landlord and as such he would leave the meeting when the item was considered and take no part in the debate and vote.

3. CABINET – 29TH JUNE 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2022 be approved as a correct record.

4. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE

Cabinet was provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports until 27th July 2022.

Members were advised that an additional three items (Additional Fee Increase For Small Residential Home Providers For 2022/2023, Response To Increase Fuel Costs For Community-Based Staff Employed By Independent Sector Providers and Withdrawal From Ty Pontygwindy) had been added to the Cabinet agenda for 27th July 2022.

Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and thus 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.

5. MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP FEES - REGISTRATION SERVICE

Consideration was given to the report which sought determination of the fees to be charged for the administration of wedding and civil partnership ceremonies by the Registration Service for the next two years.

Cabinet was advised that the Authority had proposed a reasonable increase, especially when compared to other authorities and that the changes were essential to avoid a substantial increase to the ceremony fees in the coming years. A member sought clarification on the likelihood of additional revenue ensuing from the fee increase. Cabinet was advised that the increase could generate an estimated additional £6,900 per annum. However, the returns would be used to meet the costs of delivering the service as part of the Council's cost recovery programme. Members were assured that the Authority would not profit from the proposed increases.

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: -

- 1) The content of the report and recommendations made by the Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on the 28th of June 2022 as detailed in section 11 be considered and the proposed increases in ceremony fees, effective from 1st September 2022 be approved.
- 2) A two-year ceremony fee review cycle subject to any significant change in circumstances be approved. Also, ceremony fees be considered annually in the light of any generic increase in non-pay inflation (fees and charges) approved by full Council when considering budget proposals each year.

6. GYPSY & TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT 2022-27

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval for the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2022-27 (GTAA). The report also sought approval to submit the assessment to Welsh Government for scrutinization, as per the statutory requirement. Members were advised that the report had received cross-party support at the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the 25th of June 2022.

Clarification on the GTAA was sought, with one Member querying whether additional needs such as education were taken into consideration as part of the Assessment. Cabinet was advised that the Assessment focused on the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers residing or travelling through the County Borough. However, it was possible to acquire educational and healthcare needs via a well-being assessment through the Environmental Health Team.

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: -

- 1) The findings of the 2022-27 Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment be approved.
- 2) It be agreed that officers submit the 2022-27 Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment to Welsh Government for scrutinization.

7. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT RENT POLICY REVIEW

Cllrs C. Andrews and J. Pritchard having declared personal and prejudicial interests left the meeting.

Consideration was given to the report which sought the views of Cabinet on the new Rent Policy following its presentation to the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the 9th of June 2022.

Further information on the Rent Policy was sought, with one Member querying the percentage of residents in receipt of a rent reduction. It was advised that the numbers had increased in recent months, with 78% of residents now in receipt of some form of reduction, due to an increasing number of residents becoming eligible for support and the work the Authority had undertaken in informing residents of their entitlements.

With the potential for additional revenue being generated from an increase in rents, clarification on the implications on the service was sought. Cabinet was advised that a separate report would cover the implications for the annual rent increase and the Committee were assured that the effects of any increase would be subject to a comprehensive examination. If implemented, it was hoped that the increase would have a positive impact by driving initiatives such as the Authority's New Build Programme- Caerphilly Homes -, the second stage of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and the forthcoming Renting Home Wales Act, a policy change which would require additional revenue to implement. Cabinet was assured that any revenue generated through an increase in rents would have positive implications for service users.

A Member queried how the Authority's rent charges compared to councils across Wales. The Member was referred to rent levels from previous years as the latest information was due to release in the coming months. Figures from previous years demonstrated that rents, and rates of increase across the Brough were on the lower end despite the Authority holding a higher percentage of Council stock. Cabinet was advised that the latest figures would be confirmed once Welsh Government had released the information.

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: -

- 1) The JRF Living Rent model be included as part of the existing rent policy, using the JRF model to benchmark at least every 2 years against the current rent policy to ensure affordability levels are evidenced.
- 2) Any variances outside of the benchmark Living Rent model be reported to members as part of the annual rent increase report with appropriate recommendations.
- 3) An average household earnings approach be adopted to the JRF model rather than based on earnings over 24 Middle Super Output Areas in Caerphilly County Borough. This would maintain the current basic 14 property rent types as opposed to 336 basic property rent types.

8. ENFORCEMENT & COMPLIANCE OF THE MINIMUM ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS IN PRIVATE RENTED DOMESTIC PROPERTIES (MEES) PROCEDURE

Cllrs S. Morgan, E. Forehead and E. Stenner and M. S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment) having declared personal and prejudicial interests left the

meeting. Cabinet was advised that the Deputy Leader – Cllr. J. Pritchard would take over proceedings.

Consideration was given to the report which requested Members to consider and take a view on the adoption of the enforcement approach and protocol set out in Appendix 1 to satisfy the requirements under the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015, as amended, regarding rented domestic properties, following its presentation to the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 9th June 2022.

The Officer was requested to elaborate on the impact of the funding which had been secured following a successful application to a compliance and enforcement competition organised by the Business, Enterprise, and Industrial Strategy Department.

It was confirmed that the Authority had been successful in obtaining the £60,000 grant and the funds had been used to recruit an Energy Compliance Officer and an Administrative Support Officer. Members were advised that promotional work in respect of the legislative requirement was also carried out, and staff across the Private Sector Housing Service were brought up to speed with the requirements under the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 through training sessions.

Furthermore, compliance work was undertaken in partnership with Rent Smart Wales to identify private rented sector housing in breach of the legislation. Members were advised that 125 out of 130 were made complaint and work was underway to ensure that the remaining 5 were brought in line with required standards.

It was highlighted that the funds had been used to conduct research into the implications of the improvements. Cabinet was advised that the first 100 properties on which the Authority had undertaken improvements had saved a total of £111,000 per year in their energy bills.

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: -

- 1) The Enforcement Protocol in Appendix 1 be agreed and adopted as the Council's approach to dealing with identified non-compliances, including the use of Compliance Notices and Penalty Notices where appropriate.

- 2) The Enforcement & Compliance of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in Private Rented Domestic Properties (MEES) procedure be periodically reviewed and updated in line with Welsh Government Legislation to reflect the maximum values of penalty permitted and the minimum Energy Performance Rating required under the regulation.

The meeting closed at 1.57pm.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 27th July 2022.

CHAIR