



## COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATION MEETING HELD IN THE CHAMBER PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 19TH JULY 2022 AT 5.00PM

#### PRESENT:

Councillor E.M. Aldworth – Mayor  
Councillor M. Adams – Deputy Mayor

#### Councillors:

A. Angel, C. Andrews, C. Bishop, A. Pettit-Broughton, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, S. Cook, D. Cushing, C. Cuss, D.T. Davies (MBE), N. Dix, G. Ead, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Forehead, E. Forehead, J. Fussell, A. Gair, N. George, C. Gordon, D. Harse, T. Heron, A. Hussey, D. Ingram-Jones, M. James, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, J. Jones, A. Leonard, P. Leonard, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Miles, C. Morgan, S. Morgan, B. Owen, T. Parry, M. Powell, D. Preece, H. Pritchard, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Reed, J. Roberts, J. Sadler, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds, E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas, A. Whitcombe, L. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade, K. Woodland, C. Wright.

#### Together with:-

C. Harrhy (Chief Executive), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services and Housing), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), S. Pugh (Communications Manager), N. Taylor-Williams (Chief Housing Officer), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), L. Allen (Principal Group Accountant), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

#### Also Attending: -

G. Rees (Cwm Ifor Primary School), M. Lewis and L. Jarvis (St Martins Comprehensive School), D. Biddle, L. Jolliffee, C. Mason, K. Sprackling-Jones, Lee Pinney, M. Osborn, R. Holden and C. Edwards

### **RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chief Executive reminded those present the meeting was being live streamed, and 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 Councillors C. Elsbury, G. Enright, S. Kent, L.

Phipps, D. Price, J. Rao, J. Scriven, S. Skivens.

## **2. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor confirmed that since her inauguration she had carried out quite a considerable number of events representing Caerphilly County Borough Council. Particular reference was made to her attendance at a production of Legally Blonde at St Martins School. The Mayor made special mention of the school dog 'Marty' who took on two roles in the production which was excellent.

## **3. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 28(3)**

There were no petitions.

## **4. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS**

### **South Wales Argus School and Education Awards 2022**

The Cabinet Member for Education expressed her pleasure in welcoming Gareth Rees from Cwm Ifor Primary School and Lee Jarvis from St Martins Comprehensive School who had been successful at the recent South Wales Argus School and Education Awards in April this year.

Cwm Ifor School had won the Primary School of the Year Award, with 3 members of staff also winning in the Above and Beyond Award category. St Martin's School were winners in the Secondary School of the Year Award category, going on to also receive the School of the Year Award. Council was advised that Ian Jarvis, also received the Head Teacher of the Year Award. These awards recognised the hard work of each member of staff, who worked together for the benefit of all their pupils. The Cabinet Member asked Council to join with her in thanking them for their dedication and commitment to providing an excellent education, while always encouraging pupils to achieve their best.

The Mayor welcomed Mr Jarvis and Mr Reed to Council and asked Members to join her in congratulating them on the outstanding work of these two schools and congratulated them on these wonderful achievements.

### **GeoPlace Exemplar Awards 2022**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection expressed her pleasure in welcoming 2 Teams within the Authority who have received awards at the GeoPlace's Exemplar Awards 2022. Council was advised that the Address Management Team consisting of Lee Pinney, Myra Osborn and Rachel Holden received a Platinum Award for Address Data and Senior Application Operations Engineer Kathryn Sprackling-Jones also received a Platinum Award for Street Data Management.

The Mayor welcomed Lee Pinney, Myra Osborn, Rachel Holden and Kathryn Sprackling-Jones to Council and asked Members to join her in congratulating them on the outstanding work of this exemplary Team.

### **Regina Kibel Award 2021**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection expressed her pleasure in welcoming Daniel Biddle from the Commercial Services Team in Trading Standards who had been awarded the Regina Kibel Award 2021. Council was advised that in July 2021, Daniel qualified

for the Trading Standards Practitioner Diploma (Stage 2) in the Chartered Trading Standards Institute Professional Competency Framework with the highest average mark among his peers. This is a huge achievement especially given the challenges faced by him and many others, who had a significant lack of face-to-face teaching during the pandemic.

The Mayor welcomed Mr Biddle to Council and asked Members to join her in congratulating Daniel on his success.

### **National LACA School Chef of the Year Competition**

The Cabinet Member for Education expressed her pleasure in welcoming Clair Edwards a School Chef at Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary School who came third at the National LACA School Chef of the Year competition.

Council was advised that in the final, Clair served a stunning sticky Quorn Sausage Skewer in the 'Grab and Go' class, followed by a loaded chapatti bread, served with garlic and coriander cauliflower rice, finishing off the meal with delicious strawberry and lime dessert.

The Mayor welcomed Clair to Council and asked Members to join her in congratulating Clair on this wonderful achievement.

## **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

## **6. MINUTES - COUNCIL – 12<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2022**

RESOLVED that the minutes of Council held on 12<sup>th</sup> April 22 (minute nos. 1-10) be approved as a correct record.

## **7. MINUTES – ANNUAL COUNCIL 19<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2022**

Subject to an amendment to the Members of the Appeals Panel in that its composition should be Councillor B. Miles, W. Williams, and G. Enright and that it be noted that Councillor P. Leonard had been omitted from the Apologies for Absence, it was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting the 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED that the minutes of Annual Council held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (minute nos. 1-21) be approved as a correct record.

## **8. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(4)**

Question to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, Councillor E. Stenner from Councillor K. Etheridge.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance to Councillor K. Etheridge

It would be remiss of me not to mention why there have been underspends with this fund. As explained to the meeting of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022, there are many reasons why certain wards would not have spent their entitlement to the Community Empowerment Fund. We must keep in mind that during the pandemic many of our voluntary groups did not meet and it certainly a new world which greeted them as they exited a

global pandemic. The criterion of the fund remains unchanged. All Members will now be aware that there are three seminars planned to be held to assist Members new and old, with information to aide them when engaging with community groups, to advise them what benefits this can bring. However, I must stress that no community has lost any money, any underspends have been rolled over to the current year and I am confident that all Councillors will work hard, engaging with their communities in the coming months. The fund is routinely monitored, and Officers are on hand for any advice that Members my wish to speak.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change, Councillor J. Pritchard from Councillor A. McConnell.

Can the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Prosperity and Climate Change explain what is being done to support business and town centres?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Prosperity and Climate Chamber to Council A. McConnell.

We need to make sure that we can do everything possible to support businesses and improve our town centres. At the height of Covid, we ensured a total of £64m of Covid – related grants were distributed by the Business Enterprise & Renewal Team. Now we're out of restrictions, we need to alter our focus through a range of different measures.

We've changed the approach to engaging with businesses. The former Town Centre Management Group meetings have now been replaced with breakfast/evening events that focus on information sharing and networking opportunities. By holding the events outside of the working day, business owners/representatives are more likely to be able to attend without impacting upon the operation of their business. The events are being held in locations easier to access for traders' venue within each individual town. So far, we have met with traders from Ystrad Mynach and Blackwood. Bargoed, Caerphilly and Risca will follow shortly. I have arranged meetings with officers after the events, so I can de – brief on the action points raised at the meetings. I've also been able to update some of the businesses and local councillors who attended the meetings.

Having a more visible presence in the town centre is important. Therefore, I'm delighted that we will be employing a Town Centre Manager and support staff next month. Continued engagement with businesses on a day-to-day basis will be something that the corporate and the political leadership of this administration are focussed on.

Whilst engagement with businesses is important, so is investment. Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, we have decided to make some targeted interventions in our town centres. Last month, Cabinet agreed to Establish Town Response Teams to deal with town centre Audit issues across the five main town centres. We also agreed to create a Town response team operational budget. This will ensure more resources are provided to the front line, where residents visit on a regular basis.

Last month, Cabinet agreed to significantly expand the Caerphilly Enterprise Fund. The additional £1m investment for business will mean more businesses are able to access the grant funding to assist their development, which is particularly crucial during this period of rising cost pressures and inflation.

We need to be joined – up in our approach to supporting businesses and improving our town centres. This means not being scared to make decisions and having a clear vision of where we need to be in the short, medium and longer term.

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

## **9. NOTICE OF MOTION – GOVERNMENT CUTS**

Consideration was given to the notice of motion which was received from Councillor Sean Morgan.

It was noted that the Mayor had agreed to allow the motion to be dealt with at Council without being first considered at an overview and scrutiny committee in order to expedite business.

The motion asked Council to write to the UK Government on behalf of Elected Members to ask for a full increase in funding support for Local Authorities, commensurate with real terms increase for staff in order to restore some sustainability back into the system. Because without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the Council services our residents rely on would not be delivered.

In support of his motion Councillor Morgan outlined the background to the motion and asked Council to note that the Local Government Association had identified a decrease in UK Government funding of almost 60% for Local Authorities in England and Wales between 2010 and 2020. Over the last two years, Council's have led the way in efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a huge range of services and support for communities, often putting themselves at risk and have shown how indispensable Local Government is. But this has also led to a massive increase in expenditure and loss of income and as we emerge from the pandemic, Local Authorities and schools need far more financial support from Westminster.

The Local Government workforce has endured years of pay restraint and by the autumn of 2017 public sector pay had fallen behind private sector pay for comparable work. With staff facing the worst cost of living crisis in a generation, many are faced with the choice between food and heating.

Councillor Morgan highlighted that the notice of motion was supported by the Joint Trade Unions.

Councillor Whittle, as Leader of Plaid Cymru Group advised Council that his Group would have and do support the notice of motion but wondered if a letter was a strong enough representation to make as it could be easily overlooked. Councillor Whittle proposed that an all-party delegation to London would be a better way to take this forward and suggested that the WLGA could be approached to lead such a delegation on behalf of all 22 Authorities to London. The Member acknowledged that a face-to-face meeting with the Minister could not be guaranteed but it would clearly illustrate the shared strength of feeling.

Councillor Etheridge, as Leader of the Independents Group confirmed that his Group would also have formally supported the motion had it been presented to all groups and would be supporting its proposals.

Councillor Morgan thanked the Group Leaders and Members for their support and felt that a letter in the first instance was the best way to start with regards to a delegation, if a meeting with the Minister could be arranged then a cross-party delegation could be considered at this point in time.

By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation and in noting there were 57 For and 1 Abstention the motion was declared carried by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the Notice of Motion be support.

## **10. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2022/23**

Council noted that the report had previously been considered by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and by Cabinet on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022.

Consideration was given to the report which advised Council of the annual requirement to submit a Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to Welsh Government and sought Council approval to extend the HRA borrowing cap to £90M to allow the new build programme to progress.

Members were advised that the HRA must be submitted to Welsh Government as part of the Major Repair Allowance (MRA) funding grant submission. It was noted that failure to submit a viable Business Plan as part of the application would be interpreted as failure to comply with the MRA grant criteria, and the grant would likely be withdrawn. Council noted that the Business Plan is a long-term 30-year plan for managing the organisations assets and financing the necessary investments. It is a key element in ensuring the effective long-term management and maintenance of the Council's Housing Stock and is essentially a financial forecast reliant on key assumptions that identifies the resources and funding required to meet WHQS and maintain it thereafter.

It was noted that in 2019 the borrowing profile was amended to include funding for the first draft of the Council's ambitious new build programme. Having achieved the target of meeting WHQS to all eligible stock this was an opportune time to report the HRA Business Plan and to continue to do so annually going forward as the Council progresses on to developing its own social housing stock. This has become more important given the volatility within the market in terms of material costs, supply and labour resources that could impact significantly on new build commitments and the ambitious decarbonisation agenda.

Council were advised that the borrowing level is currently at £75m which was estimated to be £45m for WHQS and £30m for the initial investment for increasing housing supply, however it was noted that this was likely to increase by £11.5m as the number of proposed buildings increased to 175 compared to the previous plan.

Clarification was in relation to the impact that the living rent model would have on Caerphilly tenant, particularly those on low incomes who would not be in receipt of Housing Benefit and which had the potential to see 83% experience an increase in rent and concern expressed that given the current cost of living crisis many Caerphilly families are living in poverty some relying on foodbanks and have to make the choice between rent, heat and food. The Member queried if the living rent module is the best method available and whether this could be tried in the first instance as an experiment over a fixed term period to see if it was working.

The Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed that he would be happy to send full details on the living rent model to the Member after the meeting and confirmed that the proposal to adopt the living rent model had received cross-party support at scrutiny.

Reference was made to section 5.5 of the report and that Caerphilly Homes uses a model approach adopted by Capita, the Member requested a copy of the summary of the business case. The Member then referenced section 5.12 of the report which referred to the advice from Welsh Government that local authorities use 2% as a typical inflation rate and expressed concern given the volatile increases in inflation being experienced now.

The Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed that he would circulate that information to the Member following the meeting.

Clarification was then sought in relation to the estimated annual energy costs for the new passive house system that the Council has included in its new builds, as this would provide much needed energy affordability. The Cabinet Member referenced a recent new build in Trethomas and confirmed that one of those flats was quoted at having an annual heating cost of between £90-£100. Although this figure was provided roughly a year ago.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the extension on the HRA borrowing cap to £90M to allow the new build programme to progress be approved.

The meeting closed at 18:00 pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022 they were signed by the Mayor.

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MAYOR