



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 19TH OCTOBER 2022 AT 1PM

PRESENT:

Councillor S. Morgan – Chair

Councillors:

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

Together with:

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

Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), R. Kyte (Head of Planning and Regeneration), H. Munroe (Caerphilly Place Making Programme Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), and E. Sullivan (Senior 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

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member Education and Communities)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

R. Edmunds, D. Street and M.S. Williams left the meeting when **Agenda Item No. 12 – Workforce Capacity and Associated Challenges** was discussed as the subject of the report could have a potential impact on Corporate Director posts.

3. MINUTES – 26TH SEPTEMBER 2022

RESOLVED that the meetings of the meeting held on the 26th September 2022 be approved as a correct record.

4. MINUTES – 5TH OCTOBER 2022

RESOLVED that the meetings of the meeting held on the 5th October 2022 be approved as a correct record.

5. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE

Cabinet was provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports until 25th January 2023.

Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and thus subject to change. The Leader thanked Officers for populating the forward work programme so far in advance and Cabinet accepted that as a live document it would be 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.

6. BRYN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROPOSAL

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to establish a Liaison Group to promote effective engagement between Bryn Group, Local Residents and other Stakeholders, along with a number of other community engagement interventions.

Cabinet noted that a formal Bryn Compost Liaison Group was operated from 2010 to 2018 to address complaints of odour associated with In Vessel Composting (IVC) of food waste, the IVC plan was replaced by an Anaerobic Digestion Plant (AD) removing the source of the food waste odours and the Liaison Group was disbanded. The Bryn Group site is complex with multiple operations and activities taking place including a dairy farm and a quarry and in view on ongoing complaints from the community regarding operations the report proposes the re-establishment of a liaison group to promote effective communication between the Bryn Group, Residents, Elected Representatives, the Council and other agencies.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to an amendment to the Terms of Reference in that the number of meetings be increased to 3 per year and that Hefin David MS act as coordinator for the resident representatives to Group, the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

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

1. The comments received from the Senedd Member and 2 of the Local Ward Members having been considered, the establishment of a Bryn Liaison Group with the Terms of Reference at Appendix 1 subject to the inclusion of the agreed amendment be approved.
2. The other interventions as set out in section 5.5 of the Officer's report be approved.

7. REGENERATION BOARD – PROJECT PROPOSALS

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to allocate £561k from the Regeneration Board Development Budget towards the overall costs of the projects outlined in the report, which would require a contribution of a further £150k to be allocated from the Council's Place Shaping reserve. The report also sought approval for the allocation of £46,985 from the Infrastructure CIL budget towards the costs associated with the re-introduction of a car park in Pontymister.

Cabinet was referred to section 5.8 of the Officer's report and the summary of the projects and recommendations of the Regeneration Board were noted to include the new market at Park Lane, Caerphilly, public realm/green infrastructure improvements in Bargoed and Blackwood town centres and improvements to Dafydd Williams Park and the strategic acquisition of the former public toilet block, High Street, Blackwood.

Cabinet welcomed the suite of projects proposed as a clear commitment to boost Town Centres and particularly welcomed the proposed improvements to Risca, Bargoed and Blackwood embracing the borough as a whole. Reference was made to the project to develop a hotel in Caerphilly Town and clarification was sought in this regard. Officers confirmed that specialist advice had been sought in order to test market favourability and results had identified that there would be good demand for a 60/80 bed hotel which would be too big for the Park Lane site originally proposed, the Leisure Quarter was noted to be a better fit, overlooking the castle using the vista as a unique selling point for upper floor uses.

Clarification was then sought on the how the new market would operate, and Officers confirmed that a specialist had been appointed to work with traders following the closure of the existing site and assessing their suitability for the move. It was noted that a live survey had been commissioned to identify potential users, the type of business residents would want to see, ensuring that prospective business wishing to take up a space are commercially viable and sustainable. Cabinet was advised that there would be a mix of food, beverage, and traditional usage from existing and new traders.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

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

1. The allocation of £300K from the Regeneration Project Board Development Fund for the delivery of the Park Lane Market be approved.
2. A further £150K from the Council's place-shaping budget towards the Park Lane Market project be approved.
3. An allocation of £111K from the Regeneration Project Board Development Fund to act as match towards Transforming Towns funded placemaking projects be approved.
4. An allocation of £150K from the Regeneration Project Board Development Fund towards the cost of funding the Caerphilly Multi-disciplinary Team be approved
5. An allocation of £46,985 from the CIL Infrastructure fund towards the cost of the Pontymister car park project, design option 2B be approved.

8. FINAL REPORT FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON TACKLING POTENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES POST PANDEMIC

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 6th September 2022.

Consideration was given to the report which sought to inform Cabinet of the findings of the Task and Finish Group established to review how the Council works with partners to tackle any potential mental health issues post pandemic. Cabinet noted that the Group had concluded that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of the population was immense, and that action is now needed locally in mitigation.

Cabinet noted the evidence gathered by the Task and Finish Group and placed on record their thanks to all those involved.

A Member referenced the evidence submitted by Jenny Burns and Dr O'Connor on the how the pandemic had impacted the mental health and wellbeing of specific groups within our communities particularly, ethnically diverse residents, single parents, those in financial difficulties, relationship difficulties, those suffering domestic abuse and expressed how the report and their evidence had brought home the inequalities that people faced, he felt that these comments needed to be highlighted.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to an amendment to recommendation 3.1.4 of the Officer's report to read 'To present this report to the Regional Partnership Board and Gwent Public Services Board to allow partners to consider the content recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the content of the report and its appendices be considered, and the recommendations contained therein be supported in that:

1. The provision of bereavement counselling across the County Borough during future meetings with Health and Wellbeing partners be prioritised.
2. Caerphilly County Borough Council to use its influence within the WLGA to recognise the importance of the role played by Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners and a collective appeal from all Welsh Councils for additional funding from the Welsh Government for this vital service within GP surgeries be recommended.
3. Council communications platforms be actively used to promote community health and wellbeing activities such as Bereavement Cafes organised via the Integrated Wellbeing Network.
4. Caerphilly County Borough Council to present this report to the Regional Partnership Board and Gwent Public Services Board to allow partners to consider the content and actions, such as Participatory budgeting.
5. CCBC staff and Members to be actively encouraged to undertake Gwent Connect 5 training in order to help improve population mental wellbeing.
6. Caerphilly County Borough Council to work with Health and Wellbeing Partners to develop a "Tool Kit" outlining some of the key symptoms of Mental Health issues and signposting users to the range of help available such as the Melo website.

9. ANNUAL REPORT ON CORPORATE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2021 TO 31ST MARCH 2022

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting on the 11th October 2022.

Consideration was given to the report which provided Cabinet with an overview of the complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Policy for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 together with the outcomes and lessons learned.

Cabinet noted the general overview of complaints received as detailed in section 5.10 of the Officer's report and the detailed data broken down by Directorate. It was also noted that Social Services and Schools had their own complaints procedures with this report dealing solely with corporate complaints.

Clarification was sought on the nature of the training being offered, and Officers confirmed that a suite of training had been offered by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and including sessions on managing difficult behaviours. The sessions already booked for next April had an excellent take up, so much so that 2 further dates had been offered with sessions to be attended by Officers across all directorates.

Further clarification was then sought on improving the handling of complaints and the Officer confirmed that there was a better general understanding of complaints, differentiating between a complaint and a service request and ensuring regular communication throughout the complaints process.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the complaints data contained in the report be reviewed and noted and the effectiveness of complaints handling for the annual period 2021/22 be assessed.

10. INTERIM JOINT PROTOCOL FOR MILEAGE RATES IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to adopt a 'Joint Protocol Mileage Rates in Local Authorities in Wales' to provide a temporary increase in mileage reimbursements costs in the short term to address current market volatility in fuel rates.

Cabinet was referred to Appendix 1 of the Officer's report which was drafted by the WLGA on behalf of Leaders and noted that it was for each Local Authority to decide whether they wish to adopt it. Cabinet was advised that the Joint Protocol enables those eligible through existing Local Authority policies to claim an additional agreed sum per mile up to an agreed maximum, to mitigate against the impact of sustained high fuel costs.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to the inclusion of an additional recommendation at 3.2 of the Officer's report in that Council explore the possibility of providing an up-front payment for mileage in the form of a loan, the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

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

1. The 'Joint Protocol Mileage Rates in Local Authorities attached at Appendix 1 be adopted and its provisions as a temporary arrangement within the Council's Mileage Scheme be applied.

2. The Council explore the possibility of providing an up-front payment for mileage in the form of a loan.

11. FOUNDATION LIVING WAGE 2022

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval of the implementation date for the Foundation Living Wage payment for 2022 and also sought Cabinet agreement to fund the additional 2022/23 costs through the Miscellaneous Finance Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) budget.

Cabinet noted that in previous years the increase had been back dated to November, however consideration needed to give as to whether the payment should be back dated to the 22nd September 2022 in line with the earlier announcement made by the Real Living Wage Foundation. Members were advised of the additional costs of the two options and the impact on the grades at the bottom of the Pay and Grading structure and noted that exploratory work was underway to assess the pay and grading structure to consider whether the Council's salary ranges are competitive. This work would take into account the issues at the bottom of the salary range caused by the payment of the Foundation Living Wage.

Cabinet was advised of the possible impact the increase in the Foundation Living Wage could have on private companies and specific reference was made to private domiciliary care providers, the Director for Social Services and Housing added that requests for additional funding from private providers were likely to come forward, in order for them to pay this increase but there was no indication as yet of any additional grant from Welsh Government to cover the costs and as such would result in an additional cost pressure for Social Services.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

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

1. The 22nd September 2022 be agreed as the implementation date for the Foundation Living Wage.
2. The 2022/23 additional cost be funded through the Miscellaneous Finance Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) budget.

12. WORKFORCE CAPACITY AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services and Housing) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment) left the meeting when the report was discussed.

Consideration was given to the report which sought to provide Cabinet with an update on some of the major issues and challenges currently impacting on workforce capacity and sort support for some initial proposals to provide additional resources into key areas.

Cabinet noted the breadth and depth of the transformation and regeneration work the Council is now involved in, above and beyond regular service delivery and the significant challenge that this is proving to be. Reference was made to recruitment and retention challenges across the organisation as a whole and the need to review workforce planning acknowledged.

The Chief Executive set out the capacity issues in relation to the increasing demands placed on the Council and its staff, building on from the pandemic and she went on to detail how the complexity and reach of service provision currently being experienced was like no other. The

three main areas that the report sought to address was noted as the need to overcome difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff, statutory capacity and reducing levels of sickness absence.

The proposal for a new Recruitment Team was detailed and Cabinet noted that the challenges facing Caerphilly were not unique, however a new approach to recruitment was needed to embrace the shift to the social media recruitment market. To seamlessly identify and engage with prospective candidates and market Caerphilly as an exemplary employer. It was proposed that a team of seven would undertake these challenges under the management of the Head of People Services.

The Chief Executive went on to explain the proposed additional statutory posts and current capacity issues and emphasised that the proposals before Cabinet would require no additional funding. The funding for the Deputy Chief Executive and Deputy Section 151 Officer post would be achieved by reallocating budgets from 3 vacant Head of Service posts to appoint to those two key statutory posts.

It was noted that the Deputy Section 151 Officer post would provide much needed capacity to the current Section 151 Officer and the Deputy Chief Executive would ensure delivery at pace of critical matters to the Council such as the Cost-of-Living Crisis, Humanitarian Crisis, Climate Change, UK and Welsh Government policy and legislative requirements.

In terms of sickness absence levels and again, although this position was not unique to Caerphilly it clearly adds additional pressures and needs to be reviewed in order to find the best approach. Cabinet noted that the home related stress, rather than work related stress ranked as one of the leading causes of sickness absence.

Cabinet acknowledged that the report had been fully scrutinised by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and noted the comments raised.

Cabinet expressed their support for the 2 additional statutory roles and felt in terms of risk management it would be irresponsible not to ensure resilience in these areas, particularly in such challenging times.

Cabinet noted that creation of the additional post and designation of Deputy Chief Executive and Deputy Section 151 Officer would be a decision of Council.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to an additional recommendation at 3.1 (iii) of the Officer's report in that a spot salary of £139044.00 be set against the post of Deputy Chief Executive, the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

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

1. The introduction of additional staffing resource as detailed in 5.19 – 5.41 of the report be agreed, consisting of: -
 - The development of an internal recruitment team
 - recommend to Council the proposal to create an additional post and designate as a Deputy Chief Executive
 - recommend to Council the proposal to create an additional post and designate as Deputy Section 151 Officer.

2. The recent appointment of a Cost-of-Living Co-ordinator as detailed at paragraph 5.51 be endorsed.
3. The budget to support the new posts as detailed in paragraphs 8.1 – 8.3 and specifically note that the proposals will not result in any additional financial resources being required as they will be fully funded through the virement of existing budgets be endorsed.
4. Recommend to Council a spot salary of £139044.00 be set for the post of Deputy Chief Executive.

The meeting closed at 14.10pm.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 16th November 2022.

CHAIR