



## CABINET

### MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2023 AT 1PM

#### PRESENT:

Councillor S. Morgan – Chair

#### Councillors:

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

#### Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services and Housing)

#### Also in Attendance:

S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), N. Taylor-Williams (Head of Housing), P. O' Neill (Senior Youth Services Manager), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), S. Pugh (Head of Communications) 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

Apologies for absence were received from C. Harry (Chief Executive) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment).

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C. Andrews declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 National Empty Home Grant in that her mother-in-law has an empty property. As this was a personal

interest only there was no requirement for her to leave the Chamber and she could take full part in the debate and vote.

Councillor S. Morgan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 8 Welsh Government Retail, Leisure, and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2023/2024, in that he owns 2 commercial properties and as such he left the Chamber when the item was discussed and took no part in the debate or vote.

### **3. MINUTES – 25<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2023**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

### **4. MINUTES – 25<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2023 – CABINET AS TRUSTEES OF BLACKWOOD MINERS' INSTITUTE**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 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 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

The Leader was pleased to see that the Forward Work Programme had been populated to so far in advance and reminded the Cabinet 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. NATIONAL EMPTY HOME GRANT**

Consideration was given to the report which sought to inform Cabinet of the new Welsh Government National Empty Home Grant, the successor to the Valley Task Force Empty Home Grant. Cabinet noted that Welsh Government were committed to maximising the return to use of privately owned empty properties, an objective shared by this Council.

The national scheme launched in January 2023 set aside £50M for the programme over a 2-year period. Caerphilly's allocation is £2.31M with the Council's contribution towards these grants being approximately £231,000, resulting in total assistance of £2.54M. Based on a £25,000 maximum grant this would bring back approximately 101 empty properties.

Clarification was sought as to the success of the previous Valley Task Force Empty Home Grant and Officers confirmed that this had enabled 65 properties to be brought back into use. Further clarification was sought as to how the Council's contribution would be funded and noted that this would be funded by the Private Sector Housing revenue balances and Housing General Fund capital reserves.

Cabinet welcomed the Grant and the opportunity to bring over 101 empty properties back into use.

Following consideration and discussion, 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 for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

1. The merits of the new National Empty Home Grant programme and the potential number of empty homes that could be brought back into use based on the maximum grant, across the county borough over the next two years (101) be considered and that Caerphilly Homes participate in the new National Empty Home Grant programme be agreed.
2. The contribution of circa £231,000 towards the scheme during 23- 25 from housing general fund capital reserves be agreed.
3. The use of both General Fund and Private Sector Housing revenue balances of circa £274,000 to fund the Empty property Team for an additional 2 years until October 2025 be approved.

## **7. FORMALISING THE YOUTH SERVICE MODEL**

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to formalise the blended approach to youth work that had gained prominence and delivered success throughout and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. The new model aims to deliver improved youth work provision throughout the borough, based on the needs, demographics, and geography of the area, whilst enhancing the professionalism of staff and better blending and balancing universal youth work with more targeted elements of the service.

Cabinet welcomed the positive implications for staff career and personal development and the opportunity for specialisms such as Welsh, LGBTQ+ and NEET provision to be developed. Cabinet also welcomed the involvement of the Youth Forum and Partner Agencies in the blended model.

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 formal adoption of the new blended model of youth working set out within this report be agreed.
2. Authority be delegated to the Youth Service Manager to begin to progress discussions with staff and Trade Union partners in consultation with the Chief Education Officer and relevant Cabinet Member.
3. Authority be delegated to the Youth Service Manager in consultation with the Chief Education Officer and relevant Cabinet Member to progress meaningful consultation with the local community in respect of the needs for the service to retain the Youth Centre at Brooklands in Risca.

## **9. BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2023/24**

With the agreement of the Chair this item was brought forward on the agenda.

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet's endorsement of the Budget Proposals for 2023/24 prior to final determination by Council. Cabinet noted the further emerging cost pressures that require consideration as detailed in Table 2 along with proposed adjustments to some initial savings proposals in response to feedback from the consultation process.

It was noted that whilst the proposals present a balanced financial position for 2023/24, a significant element was being achieved through one-off temporary measures which would only support the budget for 2023/24. However, this does provide some breathing space in order to identify, agree and implement permanent savings for the 2024/25 financial year.

Cabinet was advised that the budget proposed an increase of 7.9% in Council Tax for the 2023/24 financial year and that this would increase the Band D precept from £1,253.95 to £1,353.01, equating to an annual increase of £99.06 or weekly increase of £1.91. The Cabinet Member emphasised that even with a 7.9% increase, Caerphilly was still likely to have the second lowest level of Council Tax in Wales. It was emphasised that due to the unprecedented levels of inflation, the current economic outlook and the range of temporary measures proposed, the Council would continue to face significant financial challenges moving forward. With this in mind the Medium-Term Financial Plan had been updated based on a range of assumptions, resulting in a potential savings requirement of £48.33547m for the two-year period 2024/25 to 2025/26.

Having considered the consultation process feedback and following full consideration of the Budget Proposals, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that: -

1. The revenue budget proposals for 2023/24 of £438.722m as detailed throughout the report and summarised in Appendix 1 be approved.
2. The proposed budget virements in relation to Additional Learning Needs as detailed in paragraph 5.3.12 be approved.
3. The proposed use of £346k of the LMS Contingency Reserve as a one-off sum to support the Education & Lifelong Learning Directorate's 2023/24 contribution to the 50% repairs and maintenance budget for schools (as detailed in paragraph 5.5.3) be approved.
4. The movements on the General Fund in Appendix 5 and the current projected balance as at 31 March 2023 of £13.041m be noted.
5. The proposed Capital Programme for the period 2023/24 to 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 6 be approved.
6. The proposal to increase Council Tax by 7.9% for the 2023/24 financial year to ensure that a balanced budget is achieved (Council Tax Band D being set at £1,353.01) be approved.
7. The updated MTFP in Appendix 7 showing an indicative potential savings requirement of £48.335m for the two-year period 2024/25 to 2025/26 be noted.

**8. WELSH GOVERNMENT RETAIL, LEISURE, AND HOSPITALITY RATE RELIEF SCHEME 2023/2024**

Councillor S. Morgan having declared a personal and prejudicial interest left the meeting when this item was discussed and took no part in the debate or vote.

Consideration was given to the report that provided Cabinet with details of the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme offered by Welsh Government for the 2023/24 financial year only. Cabinet welcomed this opportunity for local business and noted that Welsh Government only releases this aid on an annual basis.

Cabinet noted that the administration of this Grant would add further pressure to the Business Rates Team and reassurance was sought with regard to capacity in the Team. Cabinet also placed on record their thanks for the tremendous work done by the Team not just with this Grant but with numerous grants that had been administered both during and post pandemic.

The Section 151 Officer confirmed that this would place additional pressure on the Team but every effort would be made to ensure successful delivery. Cabinet was advised that as last year, applications would be made via the Council's website and mechanisms were already in place and ready to go, including a draft web page. The business community would be contacted to make them aware of registration requirements and wider contacts from the Communications Team would also be utilised to advertise the scheme.

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 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2023-24' (the 2023/24 Scheme), in accordance with the WG guidance on the WG website and the provisions of section 47(1) (a) and section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 be endorsed.
2. The Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer will use delegated powers to award the relief be noted.
3. The proposal set out in paragraph 5.8 that in order to assist ratepayers and minimise administration costs for the Authority, it is proposed that the declaration process will involve each eligible business completing and submitting an online form via the Council's website, with the Council's Business Rates Team aiming to process all declaration forms received as quickly as possible and issue amended bills to eligible ratepayers in accordance with the WG guidance be supported.
4. That Officers of the Authority will make the business community aware of the 2023/24 Scheme through its usual channels, including its website and social media be noted.

The meeting closed at 13.43 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023

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CHAIR