



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 22ND MARCH 2023 AT 1PM

PRESENT:

Councillor S. Morgan – Chair

Councillors:

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

Together with:

C. Harry (Chief Executive), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services and Housing), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services)

Also in Attendance:

S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), A. Cullinane (Senior Policy Officer), M. Headington (Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), 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 Councillors C. Morgan, E. Forehead, J. Simmonds and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. MINUTES – 8th MARCH 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 8th March 2023 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 26th July 2023.

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. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Consideration was given to the report which sought to update Cabinet on the progress made during the financial year 2021-2022 against actions in the Council's current Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2022.

Cabinet noted that the Council has a statutory duty to produce an annual report on equalities issues, the requirements are very detailed as to what relevant information must be included in order to ensure that the Equality and Human Rights Commission are provided with full evidence of the Council's compliance and commitment with its statutory duties and must be published by the 31st March the following year.

Cabinet was referred to section 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 and the case studies at section 5.6 of the Officer's report which detailed consultation and engagement exercises undertaken, provided a brief snapshot of key decisions and the many significant calendar dates that were marked and celebrated in the borough over the last year. These included Pride Cymru, Mental Health Awareness Week, Dementia Action Week, Diwrnod Shwmae and Armed Forces Day events.

Cabinet sought clarification as to the way in which training and awareness raising events were delivered and noted how the Strategic Equality Plan linked in with other strategies such as the Workforce Development Strategy. Cabinet also noted the ways in which Syrian and Afghan Refugees were being supported by the Council through the third-party provider Displaced People in Action to secure a variety of training opportunities, including transitioning existing qualifications to UK equivalent.

Cabinet placed on record their thanks to Anwen Cullinane for all her hard work and in particular her efforts in organising the Pride Caerffili event in June.

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 and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the annual monitoring and improvement report be approved for publication on the Council's website by the 31 March deadline.

6. PUBLICATION OF GENDER PAY GAP DATA 2022 – EQUALITY ACT 2010 (SPECIFIC DUTIES AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES) REGULATIONS 2017

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval for the publication of the Authority's Gender Pay Gap Written Statement 2022.

Cabinet noted that the gender pay gap did not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work but was the result of the roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract and was more reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. Most posts in the lower quartile being part time posts, continue to predominantly attract female applicants, due to the choice that women often make in terms of caring roles and family responsibilities.

Cabinet was assured that the Council's HR policies were open to males and females equally and provided staff with flexibility in terms of work/life balance whilst ensuring the delivery of services to its residents.

Cabinet also noted the positive impact of the foundation living wage on the mean and median figures.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the written statement attached at Appendix 1 detailing gender pay gap data for publication on the Council's website and the Government website online using the gender pay gap reporting service be approved.

7. GRASS CUTTING REGIMES

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on the 7th February 2023 and had been the subject of an All Members Seminar on the 24th October 2022.

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to amend grass cutting regimes across the county borough to enhance and promote biodiversity. Cabinet noted that allowing specific areas across the county borough and roadside verges to flourish would not only enhance the local environment but also assist in fulfilling the Council's statutory biodiversity duty and assist in its response to Climate Change and the Climate Change Emergency declared in 2019.

Cabinet noted that Officers would develop pro-active press releases to update Members and residents of the revised arrangements and the areas left to flourish would be actively monitored at various stages during the growing season to assess their suitability and to gauge success accordingly.

Cabinet further noted that the proposed approach would also contribute to the Decarbonisation Action Plan by reducing the use of petrol and diesel through reduced mowing and the carbon emissions associated with that but also the potential significant emission reductions in travelling to and from individual sites. The report set out eight areas as examples where an estimated annual saving of 8,616kgCO₂, could be achieved. The promotion of grasses and wildflowers in this way also offers the potential for additional carbon sequestration.

Cabinet welcomed the report and its recommendations and the vital impact that this small change would make in terms on climate change and were pleased to note that the proposal had received cross-party support at Scrutiny.

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 recommendations made by the meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on the 7th February 2023 as detailed in section 11 be noted.
2. The approach adopted during the 2021/22 cutting season as the standard going forward in relation to our highway verges and by-pass routes where mowing is kept to a minimum, in accordance with Traffic Wales guidance be approved.
3. The Council's commitment to the UK wide 'No Mow May' campaign and formal grass cutting does not commence until June with the exception of designated areas to include visibility splays and sight lines on highways; margins and access on footways/cycle routes; sports grounds; urban areas such as housing estates, municipal parks, older person accommodation, cemeteries; play/recreational public open spaces, which are maintained at the current cutting frequencies be approved.
4. The initial list of areas nominated by both relevant officers and local members within their respective wards as set out in Appendix 1, which could be allowed to flourish during the summer period be endorsed.
5. The Authority continues to provide wildflower seed packs to community groups on request as set out in Paragraph 5.11 of the report.

The meeting closed at 13.40 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 5th April 2023

CHAIR