



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 12TH JULY 2023 AT 1PM

PRESENT:

Councillor S. Morgan – Chair

Councillors:

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

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services) and D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive).

Also in Attendance:

S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), S. Pugh (Communications Manager), S. Richards, (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), C. Rogers (Business Development Manager), C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director - Head of Children's Services), F. Wilkins (Housing Services Manager), N. Challenger (Principal Housing Officer (Technical)), C. Adams (Highway Engineering Group Manager) and L. Lucas (Head of Customer and Digital Services).

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 Councillor E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance) and Councillor E. Forehead (Cabinet Member for Social Care) also C. Harray (Chief Executive), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director of Economy and Environment) and K. Cole (Chief Education Officer).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. MINUTES – 28TH JUNE 2023

RESOLVED the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4. MINUTES - CABINET AS TRUSTEES OF BLACKWOOD MINERS' INSTITUTE – 28th June 2023.

RESOLVED the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th June 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 18th October 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.

6. COURT HOUSE CAR PARK, BLACKWOOD – VARIATION OF PARKING CHARGES

Consideration was given to a report that sought Cabinet approval to vary the parking charges in Courthouse Car Park, Blackwood to allow up to 1 hour parking free of charge for all users.

Cabinet noted that there is a new play area adjacent to Blackwood Road which has been constructed to support the Chartist Gardens development and enhance play provision in the Pontllanfraith area. The Officer advised Cabinet that in considering how better to facilitate use of the new play area a review of the parking charges for Courthouse Car Park has been carried out.

Cabinet were pleased to support the recommendation within the report as it aligns with the Council's strategic Active Recreation Strategy and encourages outside play.

Following a query from Cabinet, the Officer confirmed that there are other car parks adjacent to play areas throughout the Borough. However, none currently charge.

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 reasons contained in the Officers report Cabinet approved the variation of parking charges in Courthouse Car Park, Blackwood to allow up to 1 hour parking free of charge for all users.

7. REVISIONS TO THE SOUTH EAST WALES EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE COLLABORATION AND MEMBERS AGREEMENT (THE CAMA)

Consideration was given to a report which sought Cabinet's approval to revise the South East Wales Education Achievement Service Collaboration and Members Agreement (the CAMA).

Cabinet noted that all four partnering Local Authorities of the Gwent Region which share the same EAS have already signed. The Officer explained that the CAMA aims to make any

additional funding contributions required more straightforward by aligning them to the existing core contributions being made.

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 reasons contained within the Officers report the revised wording in paragraph 5.16 of the Officer's report be agreed and the EAS be allowed to retain fifty percent of their balances to protect their liquidity be agreed.

8. CAERPHILLY INTERCHANGE FUNDING

Consideration was given to a report which sought Cabinet approval for the virement of £520k from the Regeneration Project Board Development Reserve towards the overall cost of completing the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stage 4 design and WeITAG (Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance) Stage 3 study/business case for the Caerphilly Interchange project.

Cabinet noted that to fully meet the funding requirement for this stage of work, up to £580k is also required from an alternative funding source and it is proposed that this is funded from the Council's Placeshaping Earmarked Reserve in the event that alternative external funding cannot be identified.

The Deputy Leader was pleased to move this report and acknowledged the importance of supporting projects such as this.

The Officer informed Cabinet that in terms of the regeneration the Caerphilly Interchange is the gateway to the Caerphilly 2035 PlaceShaping Agenda and is a critical piece of infrastructure and catalyst to all other works that are due to be carried out within Caerphilly in the future.

Cabinet noted that three public consultations had taken place in relation to the project. The first two were healthy engagement regarding potential issues and how the Council are approaching the design.

The Officer advised Cabinet that, as the project has progressed, and the community has began to understand the design approach and have less concerns in regards to the interchange the responses received have reduced.

Cabinet were pleased to note that the concept design was revealed online and also a model was on display for two weeks in the library.

The Officer advised Cabinet that the Caerphilly Conversation site had received 291 visits and there had been 18 specific responses to the interchange consultation.

The library held a specific day in which residents were able to go and staff were available to answer questions and give out hard copies of the survey. It was reported that around 40 residents attended through the day and healthy conversations took place.

Cabinet noted at the end of the third consultation process 35 responses have been received with a high level of support for the project.

Clarification was sought as to how Park and Ride Schemes will be affected in the future as the Regeneration Project Board Development Reserve funding was previously allocated to Park and Ride Schemes.

The Officer advised Cabinet that Ystrad Mynach Park and Ride Scheme will continue and has received alternative funding mechanisms. The Officer further advised Cabinet the TFW review of the Strategic Park and Ride is not in support of the Llanbradach scheme at this point in time, this has been deferred whilst TFW work out the usage profiles going forward.

Clarification was sought as to the current balance of the Regeneration Project Board Development Reserve and what impact the proposed virement of funding would this have on any proposed earmarked funding for future projects.

The Officer advised that Cabinet has previously approved total funding of £3.5 million, that has been allocated to a wide range of schemes. The Officer explained that the report is seeking approval for the Park and Ride Schemes funding to be vired into the Interchange as the funding is no longer needed for its intended purpose.

In response to a query raised by Cabinet, The Officer advised Cabinet, Caerphilly has a current Active Travel Network Map that shows the ambitions of the County Borough and the indicative routes that have previously been identified. A number of studies have been progressed to develop concept designs for some of these proposals as part of the 15 year delivery programme for the county borough. Development of the routes for the Rudry, Machen, Trethomas and Bedwas areas will be progressed as part of this delivery programme when resources are available.

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 reasons contained within the Officers report;

1. The virement of £520k from the Regeneration Project Board Development Reserve for the delivery of RIBA Stage 4 for the Caerphilly Interchange proposal be approved.
2. A further allocation of up to £580k from the Council's Placeshaping Earmarked Reserve to cover the residual shortfall in funding in the event that further external funding cannot be identified be approved.

9. ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORTS 2022 – 2023

Consideration was given to a report which presented Cabinet with the 2022-23 Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report, Forward Work Programme and Safeguarding Key Activity Data for information.

Cabinet noted the report has been approved by the Corporate Safeguarding Board on the 22nd May 2023 and had been presented to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee as an information item on 11th July 2023. Team Together reports provide a strategic overview of Corporate Safeguarding activity during the year and identify progress made in areas for favouring development during 2023-2024.

In response from a query raised by Cabinet, the Officer explained that there is a revised timetable from WG in regards Safeguarding Training which is due to start in November 2023. However, this was due to take place earlier in the year so there is a possibility that this date may be pushed back further.

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 reasons contained within the Officers report Cabinet noted the

content of the Annual Reports and the progress made in implementing the Forward Work Programme.

10. MOBILISING TEAM CAERPHILLY

Consideration was given to a report which sought Cabinet approval to access additional external capability from time to time to ensure the successful delivery of the Council's Team Caerphilly Transformation Programme.

The Deputy Leader stated that Cabinet are acutely aware of the financial pressures the Authority is facing over the next two financial years and have taken into consideration the high levels of inflation, the current economic outlook and the range of temporary measures proposed for the 2023 – 2024 financial year. The Authority needs to identify potential savings of nearly £48.5 million over the next two years, which will be a colossal task. Without additional support the Authority will struggle to find these savings whilst putting the delivery of core services at risk. Using external capacity will enable core services to be maintained whilst also implementing the necessary changes to ensure these services remain sustainable over the long-term. The report includes details of two specific pieces of work delivered by two separate organisations that will work with the Authority for between six to twelve weeks to assist the Authority in building up pace and explicit programme change. The programme will be designed to drive out significant costs over the next two years and the outcomes and proposals will be available to share with the Council this Autumn. The one-off cost associated with this work will be met by the Council's existing Invest to Save Reserve.

Cabinet acknowledged that this report was presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, where it was debated in full.

Cabinet further noted that Scrutiny requested that recommendation 3.1(4) be removed. However, Cabinet have discussed this request, and it is felt that the recommendation cannot be removed due to the need to maintain pace and the time restrictions in bringing any spending proposals back to Scrutiny. If this were to be carried out then the savings would not come forward and this would jeopardise the setting of a balanced budget for 2024-25, taking into consideration the gap is £48 million and not being able to present a balanced budget is not lawful.

This is by no means ignoring scrutiny and the reasons are as laid out by the Deputy Leader.

In response to concerns raised the Officer informed Cabinet that this approach has been successful in other Local Authorities and is not out of the ordinary. As well as external capacity it also brings in leading edge skills and capabilities to help challenge approaches and to assist in shaping an already challenging agenda.

The Officer advised Cabinet that the process of the project would be to develop proposals which will be brought back to Members for their approval. If, however, Members are not satisfied that these proposals are appropriate for Caerphilly they do not have to be agreed.

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 reasons contained within the Officers report;

1. The need for additional resources to be engaged in various aspects of the Council's Transformation programme as set out within the body of this report was noted.
2. The specific proposals for support set out in 5.28 and 5.29-5.34 at a cost of

£221k be approved.

3. The residual balance of £641k within the Council's Invest to Save Reserve be repurposed to provide additional one-off support to the ongoing transformation programme be agreed.
4. Delegated authority on the use of the Invest to Save Reserve be granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, relevant Cabinet Member and Section 151 Officer be approved.
5. The outcome and findings of the external support be shared with a meeting of all Scrutiny Committees in the Autumn be agreed.

11. FREE SCHOOL MEAL HOLIDAY PAYMENTS – SUMMER HOLIDAY 2023

Consideration was given to a report which informed Cabinet that Welsh Government have recently made a decision to cease Free School Meal Holiday payments with immediate effect. The report sought Cabinet approval to allocate one-off funding to continue the Free School Meal Holiday payments to eligible families across Caerphilly during the Summer Holiday period 2023.

It is proposed that the Council provides a one-off payment of £19.50 per week, per child, to eligible families for the school holiday period commencing Friday 21 July 2023 and ending on Thursday 31 August 2023.

The Deputy Leader thanked Officers for compiling the report so quickly following the Leader's statement at Council that the Authority would be making provision for the Free School Meal scheme to run throughout the summer.

Cabinet are aware that it is very important that the Authority continue a rapid response to the cost of living crisis by adapting to change wherever possible, despite the future financial pressures the Authority is facing.

In response to a query raised by Cabinet the Deputy Chief Executive provided Cabinet with an update on the support offered to local residents in relation to the current cost of living crisis.

Cabinet were pleased to note there has been excellent work carried out within the Welfare Benefits, Tenancy Support and Cost of Living teams to maximise residents' income. This assistance has not only been offered to Council tenants but also extended to non-Council tenants. It has been a partnership approach working with the Citizen Advice Bureau and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Cabinet were further pleased to note that the 'Welcome Space' scheme which ran through the winter has been a great success with almost 50 operating within the Borough. These spaces have also remained open throughout the summer months.

The Deputy Chief Executive also informed Cabinet work is currently being undertaken to explore what practical support can be provided to residents.

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 reason contained within the Officers report a one-off funding in the sum of £900,000 from uncommitted Capital Earmarked Reserves to enable the extension of the free school meal holiday payments for the period as outlined in 2.2 of the report be approved.

12. PUBLIC INTEREST TESTS

Members considered the Public Interest Tests and concluded that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interests in disclosing the information and it was: -

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

13. GEORGE STREET, CWMCARN – REAR WALLS 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 reasons contained within the Officers report the recommendations at 3.1-3.3 be approved.

14. PROPOSED MINERAL WORKING AND RESTORATION OF BEDWAS TIPS – EXTENSION OF EXCLUSIVITY AGREEMENT

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 reasons contained within the Officers report the recommendation at 3.1 be approved.

The meeting closed at 13.55 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 26th July 2023.

CHAIR