



## CABINET

### MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2024 AT 1PM

#### PRESENT:

Councillor S. Morgan – Chair

#### Councillors:

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

#### Together with:

D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director of Economy and Environment) and G. Jenkins (Interim Director of Social Services).

#### Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), A. Dallimore (Regeneration Services Manager), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), L. Sykes (Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), M. Williams (Management Surveyor), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), K. Peters (Service Manager – Service Improvement and Partnerships), J. Morgan (Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), H. Jones (Waste Strategy and Operations Manager), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), T. McMahon (Caerphilly Cares Manager), H. Lancaster (Transformation Manager – Engagement) and J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer).

#### Also in Attendance:

I. Phillips (Audit Wales)

## 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. Harrhy (Chief Executive).

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**3. MINUTES – WEDNESDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2024**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 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 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024.

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. AUDIT WALES OUTPUT REPORT ON SETTING OF WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES FOR CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL 22-23**

Cabinet welcomed Mr Ian Philips from Audit Wales to introduce his report which presented Cabinet with Audit Wales examination on whether the Council set its new Well-Being Objectives (Corporate Plan 2023-2028) within the sustainable development principle of the well-being duty.

Cabinet noted that the well-being duty under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires all public bodies to set well-being objectives that improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of their area and that the Council has a statutory duty to use the sustainable development (SD) principle, when setting its well-being objectives.

Cabinet thanked Audit Wales for the report and their recommendations.

Responding to a query raised, the Director for Education and Corporate Services advised Cabinet that in response to Audit Wales reference within the report regarding reviewing and refining the approach to performance management, the Performance Management Team are developing a set of dashboards to allow Members to review the delivery of the WBOs and the MTFP on an ongoing basis.

Cabinet queried the financial impact of delivering the wellbeing objectives. The Head of Finance advised Cabinet that the Corporate Plan includes the current resources that are allocated to the well-being objectives which are core services. There are also several grants that are supporting the delivery. Over the next three years there is the requirement to make £66 million in savings. There will also be a host of change programmes through the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme.

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 for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The contents for the report provided by Audit Wales and made comment on the Management Response within the report be noted.

## **6. CAERPHILLY CARES SUPPORT PACKAGE FOR FAMILIES ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS**

Consideration was given to the report which provided Cabinet with information on the support available for families eligible for Free School Meals from Caerphilly Cares.

Cabinet noted that on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Welsh Government informed the Council that they would no longer be able to support the payment of Free School Meal Holiday payments, with immediate effect. The announcement generated a lot of feedback from families who were relying on the payment. Consequently, on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023 Cabinet agreed to provide 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.

This decision was taken to cushion the impact of late withdrawal of funding by Welsh Government and required the allocation of one-off funding of £900,000.

Cabinet was pleased to note that the Caerphilly Cares Team (and associated partners) are currently providing a wide range of support to vulnerable individuals and families as part of the Cost-of-Living support package.

Following a query raised the Caerphilly Cares Manager confirmed that the services currently provided to the public at Rhymney Library will be rolled out to other areas but will be bespoke to each areas needs.

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 for reasons contained within the Officers report the content of the report be noted.

## **7. GRASS CUTTING REGIMES**

Consideration was given to the report sought Cabinet approval to amend grass cutting regimes across the county borough to enhance and promote biodiversity.

Responding to a query raised the Parks and Countryside Operations Manager, assured Cabinet that following concerns raised from residents last year regarding the time taken to cut overgrown grass. This year the Parks Department will be carrying out a different approach, particularly in relation to housing estates, which will be cut in their entirety from the start. There will also be a pre-cut in March. Cabinet was also informed that there were added pressures last year due to unfilled vacancies. However, these vacancies have now been filled. There has also been an upgrade on a number of machines used.

Cabinet recognised the pressures the Parks Team had been under and thanked the team for their hard work.

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 for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The approach adopted since the 2021/22 cutting season continue to be the adopted grass cutting standard 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.
2. The Council continues its commitment to the Nature isn't Neat project, which is part of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership, establishing joined-up green space management to create wildflower-rich pollinator habitats across the Gwent local authority areas, which includes Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, and Torfaen be approved
3. 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, will be maintained at the current cutting frequencies be approved.
4. The list of areas as set out in Appendix 1 of the report which are to be allowed to flourish during the summer period be endorsed.
5. The Authority continues to develop and enhance areas using bought in wildflower seed as set out in Paragraph 5.11 of the report be approved.

## **8. APPOINTMENT OF PUBLIC AND AGRICULTURAL ANALYSTS**

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval for amendments to the appointment of Public and Agricultural Analysts.

Cabinet noted that the Council have a statutory duty to enforce the Food Safety Act 1990, which requires the authority to appoint a Public Analyst to analyse food for foreign bodies and compositional and labelling purposes. There are similar provisions in the Agriculture Act 1970 relating to the need to appoint an Agricultural Analyst.

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

RESOLVED for reasons contained within the Officers report the appointment of a Public and Agricultural Analysts as detailed in paragraph 5.3 of the report be approved.

## **9. AMENDMENTS TO AUTHORISATION OF OFFICERS WITHIN THE PUBLIC PROTECTION DIVISION**

Consideration was given to the report which informed Cabinet of new legislation for regulatory services and sought authorisation for officers of the Public Protection Division.

Cabinet approval was sought for the Council's Monitoring Officer to make the necessary changes to the Constitution to reflect the implementation / need for authorisation under the legislation detailed in this report.

The Head of Public Protection advised Cabinet that prior to the report being produced advice had been received that the Animals (Low Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 23 need to be added to the authorisations. However, it has since been learnt that the Act does not apply in Scotland and Wales. Therefore, the Officer proposed an amendment to the recommendation within the report.

It was moved and seconded that subject to an amendment to recommendation 3.1 to read that the 'Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services be authorised under The Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023 so that relevant officers within the division can utilise delegated powers to carry out their duties', the recommendations contained within the Officers report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services be authorised under The Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023 so that relevant officers within the division can utilise delegated powers to carry out their duties.
2. The Council's Monitoring Officer makes the necessary amendments to the Constitution.

## **10. DRAFT WASTE STRATEGY**

Considered by Joint Scrutiny Committee on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Consideration was given to the report which provided Cabinet with the views of the Joint Scrutiny on the Draft Waste Strategy and associated consultation methods. The report also sought Cabinet approval to undertake public consultation on the Council's Draft Waste Strategy.

Cabinet approval was also sought for the Draft Engagement Strategy and Consultation Questionnaire along with proposed timescales.

Cabinet was provided with the financial implications associated with the delivery of the strategy.

Cabinet noted that following consideration at Joint Scrutiny, an amendment to the strategy that the booking system for household recycling sites be removed from the public consultation was agreed.

Responding to a query raised, the Waste Strategy and Operations Manager advised Cabinet that around 50% of other Welsh Authorities do operate a booking system. and while there is no legal requirement to do so, the use of a booking system provides an additional means of controlling inputs to the sites while also offering Health & Safety benefits for staff placed in conflict situations.

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 for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. Consideration was given to the views of the Joint Scrutiny Committee and the draft Waste Strategy to allow public consultation to commence be approved.
2. The draft Engagement Strategy and accompanying draft consultation questionnaire be approved subject to the removal of any reference to Household Recycling Centre booking systems.
3. The financial implications associated with the implementation of the strategy be noted and the officers progress further discussions with Welsh Government in

relation to the level of capital support available from WG and required for delivery of the strategy be agreed.

## **11. DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW CHILDREN'S HOME**

Consideration was given to the report which advised Cabinet of the plans to purchase a property to develop supported accommodation for young people leaving care who are aged 16-18 years and to confirm the purchase price which is above the independent market valuation. In line with WG funding criteria, the grant can only cover the market value of the property which is not necessarily the estate agents or vendors valuation. In this instance there is a difference of £50,000. Cabinet was asked to approve the additional funds be used from the Social Services reserves.

Cabinet was extremely pleased to note that the respective Ward Members had given their full support to this development and wished to thank, Councillors Johnston, Hussey and Jeremiah for their excellent demonstration of the Corporate Parenting in supporting Caerphilly's vulnerable children and young people.

Responding to comments made by Cabinet regarding Corporate Parenting, the Interim Director for Social Services advised that along with Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting is one of the most important roles of any Member and confirmed that Corporate Parenting training is included within the mandatory induction training for all new Members. Seminars have also been held which Members have been invited to attend.

Cabinet was especially pleased to note that Caerphilly has a further expansion plan to include more Childrens Residential Homes and that we will have sufficient residential provision for Children within Caerphilly.

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 for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The content of the report be noted, and both the purchase price and the intended future use of the property be supported.

## **12. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024/25**

Consideration was given to the report which provided Cabinet with details of the draft budget proposals for the 2024/25 financial year based on the Welsh Government (WG) Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement for 2024/25.

Cabinet noted details of a range of cost and service pressures that require funding, details of proposed savings and the use of reserves, along with a proposed increase of 6.9% in Council Tax to enable the Council to set a balanced budget for the 2024/25 financial year.

Cabinet was also provided with an updated indicative Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) showing a potential savings requirement of £46.700m for the two-year period 2025/26 to 2026/27.

Cabinet queried if the temporary saving relating to the Home Assistance and Reablement budget (due to difficulties in recruitment and securing independent sector care packages) would be reviewed if there were an improvement in being able to recruit staff in the future. The Head of Financial Services assured Cabinet that this is a temporary adjustment and there should be no impact on service users. Cabinet was further assured that this will be kept under review.

Responding to a query raised regarding what impact does the reduction in Welsh Government specific grants have on the Council's finances, the Head of Financial Services advised Cabinet that the grants support a range of services, and it is inevitable that there will be an impact on the Council. He also explained that the working assumption is that the reductions would be absorbed by service areas.

Cabinet enquired if there is any pressure put on the Welsh Government to fund the budget pressures on schools, with many of them facing deficit budgets that will not be able to sustain the cuts. The Head of Financial Services explained that we do lobby the Welsh Government through the Welsh Local Government Association and various other networks to highlight the financial pressures facing Local Authorities, including schools.

Clarification was sought regarding what the inescapable services pressures of £10.448m for Social Services related to. Officers explained that it is due to increases in demand from service users and from fee increases for independent sector providers.

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 for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The 2024/25 draft budget proposals, including the proposed permanent and temporary savings totalling £30.984m and the proposed one-off use of reserves of £11.394m be endorsed.
2. The proposed increases in charges for school meals in secondary schools, Meals Direct, and the Hive Restaurant along with the proposed increase in the fee for MOT testing as detailed in paragraph 5.4.5 of the report be endorsed.
3. 100% of the net projected underspend on the Council's 2023/24 revenue budget will be transferred into General Fund balances as outlined in paragraph 5.5.2 of the report be agreed.
4. The proposal to increase Council Tax by 6.9% for the 2024/25 financial year to ensure that a balanced budget is achieved (Council Tax Band D being set at £1,446.37) be supported.
5. The draft budget proposals should now be subject to consultation prior to final 2024/25 budget proposals being presented to Cabinet and Council on 27 February 2024 be agreed.
6. The indicative potential savings requirement of £46.700m for the two-year period 2025/26 to 2026/27 be noted.

### **13. PUBLIC INTEREST TEST**

Members considered the Public Interest Test 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.

**14. SURRENDER AND RELET PROPOSAL - UNITS 3 AND 4 BRYN BRITHDIR, OAKDALE BUSINESS PARK, BLACKWOOD.**

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 reasons contained within the Officers report the recommendations at 3.1 i) to vi) be approved.

The meeting closed at 14.14 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024.

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CHAIR