



## **CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 9TH JANUARY 2024 AT 5.30 P.M.**

#### **PRESENT:**

Councillor G. Johnston - Chair  
Councillor A. McConnell - Vice Chair

#### **Councillors:**

M. Adams, G. Enright, C. Forehead, J. Fussell, A. Gair, D. Harse, L. Jeremiah, J. Jones, S. Kent, C. Mann, M. Powell, D. W. R, Preece, C. Thomas, W. Williams, and C. Wright

#### **Cabinet Members:**

Councillor S. Morgan (Leader of Council), Councillor E. Stenner (Finance and Performance), Councillor C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure, and Green Spaces), Councillor N. George (Corporate Services, Property and Highways), Councillor J. Pritchard, Deputy Leader (Regeneration and Climate Change) and Councillor P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection).

#### **Together with:**

Officers: M. S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), H. Delonnette (Senior Policy Officer), L. Evans (Policy Officer), L. Lucas (Head of Customer and Digital Services), I. Evans (Procurement and Information Manager), M. Cuthbert (Information Security Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and A. Jones (Committee Services Officer).

### **RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded and would be made available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#) Members were advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L. Whittle and R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services)

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement of or during the course of the meeting.

**3. CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2023**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 16 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 (minute nos. 1 – 7) be approved as a correct record.

**4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE**

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

**5. CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report, which outlined details of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period January 2024 to March 2024.

It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 16 for, 1 against and 0 abstention, which included verbal votes) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website.

**6. CABINET REPORTS**

In accordance with rules of procedure the Cabinet report on The Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan was brought forward for consideration.

A Member sought clarification on how Welsh Government reducing Business Rate relief from the current 75% support to 40% would help to deliver the Master Plan, given that the plan is largely based on growing the Pub and Restaurant Sector. The Member highlighted that there would be a 35% cut in Business Rate relief and sought confirmation on the number of Businesses that would be affected by the reduction in financial support.

Reference was made to an article in the Caerphilly Observer that stated that the Council supports businesses via 50/50 contributions. The Member queried if all businesses that saw their financial support cut would receive financial support from the Council. The Member wished to know how long would the support be in place, how much would it cost the Council, and how would the Council find the extra money needed as the Council was committed to £50 million in cuts over the next two years?

Concerns were raised that the hard work of officers would be undermined by the Welsh Government cuts and the Member asked if the Masterplan would require any further actions to incorporate changes to support and support the growth of the Local Pub and Restaurant Sectors.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Climate Change confirmed that this is a Welsh Government cut to rate relief that would have an impact on businesses where properties were valued over £6,000 and confirmed that there are 522 businesses that would be impacted by the decision in the Caerphilly County Borough resulting in a loss of £1.095 million.

In relation to the article in the Caerphilly Observer, it was confirmed that 50/50 contributions would be available via the Caerphilly Enterprise Fund which provides financial assistance to businesses throughout the County Borough. Reference was made to a report brought to the Scrutiny Committee in October 2023 where it had been confirmed that funding had safeguarded 426 jobs and created 149. The fund had been extremely popular, and a decision had been made recently by the SBF Board to earmark further money to the Caerphilly Enterprise Fund due to the impact these cuts would have on businesses. Members were advised that the funding can be up to £25,000 match-funded and Members were encouraged to advise businesses on how to apply. It was confirmed that since the Welsh Government decision the Cabinet Member had been in discussions with Officers on how to improve or make additions to the Caerphilly Enterprise Fund.

The Chair advised the Member that at the previous meeting the committee agreed for The Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan to go out for consultation and that it would be brought back to the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, following the consultation process.

The Director for Economy and Environment confirmed that the consultation commenced at the beginning of January and was currently live for a number of weeks and any business, stakeholder, individual or Member would have the opportunity to raise any concerns or comments as part of the consultation process.

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports.

### **7. CYBER/INFORMATION SECURITY UPDATE**

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways presented the report which provided the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee with a status update in relation to the Council's approach to Cyber/Information Security. The update was aligned to the Council's Cyber Security Strategy ('Strategy') and Associated Action Plan, which were formally endorsed by Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and implemented in December 2022.

Since implementation of the Strategy positive progress had been made in all the critical success factors within the Strategy and Action Plan. Members were advised that it was important to acknowledge that the Council would never be 100% secure and there was further work needed, however the Council was in a much stronger position than in December 2022.

The report highlighted the continuation of the positive work undertaken within both the Corporate and Education Cyber Security Forums, which would be held regularly on a variety of Cyber Security issues. A positive example of the impact of the Education group, could be seen in Section 5.9 of the report. Within the Corporate domain, positive examples could be seen in the progress detailed within Section 5.10 of the report.

The introduction of a new Matobo 'Cyber Ninja' Training for all staff, with the ability to audit

and track those who had completed the training was outlined to Members. Circa 97% (as of mid-October 2023) of all corporate staff had completed the course. This would now be rolled out to Councillors.

To further illustrate progress, the Council could track its Microsoft Secure Score, which is a KPI generated on the Microsoft platform on how secure the Microsoft 365 environment was. In July 2023, the score was circa 65% and as of October 2023 it was more than 80% with further improvements expected over the coming months. For context, the average score for similar organisations was 47%.

The Procurement and Information Manager introduced himself and advised that in order to strengthen Cyber Security the Team had been strengthened with the appointment of the Information Security Manager in 2022, an apprentice and a student placement from Swansea University. Members also heard how other initiatives had been captured and incorporated to further enhance the resilience and infrastructure.

The Information Security Manager outlined the details of the report to Members.

The Chair enquired about the number of Cyber-attacks that were recorded against the Council. It was confirmed that there were not many specific targeted attacks but there were certain vulnerabilities. For instance, if there was an issue with Teams then attackers would attack that issue for Teams generally not just the Council. Another example was where people tried to log in with generic usernames and passwords which were general attacks which occurred frequently. Members were reassured by officers that with everything in place the Security team and Digital Services managed to deal with those attacks quite early and information gathered from external parties and other bodies also assisted with those attacks.

Members were encouraged to participate in the Cyber Security Training on offer.

A Member sought confirmation that the Council was fully up to date with the PSN accreditation. Members were reassured that everything is up to date and were advised that the accreditation would last for a further 3 to 5 years. Members were advised that there was another framework for the Council and Central Government called "CAF" (Cyber Assessment Framework), this was used by National Infrastructure Companies as a trial and there was an option for Councils to be included as part of a local government aspect. The Council had been part of the first pilot at the start of last year and would continue to be involved.

A Member sought clarity on how the fake emails that are to be sent to staff would work and queried if there would be any penalties for those that failed such as the requirement to receive further training. Members were advised that an attack simulator would be rolled out this year and Officers would be sent a fake phishing email with a link, once opened the link would take Officers to a training video which lasts a few minutes and sets out what they would need to look out for in the future. An alert would be sent to the team who would then monitor and identify anyone that required further training. The Chair thanked the Officers for their report.

**RECOMMENDED** that the status update and the progress made in relation to Cyber/Information Security since the implementation of the Council's Cyber Security Strategy and Associated Action Plan in December 2022 be noted.

## **8. COMMUNITY BENEFITS GUIDANCE – FOR PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS WITH THE POTENTIAL FOR SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY IMPACT**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change introduced the report which sought the views of Members on the proposed Community Benefits Guidance for projects and developments with the potential for significant community impact, before decision by Cabinet in February.

The report highlighted the role of Caerphilly County Borough Council in working with private sector partners, in partnership with our local communities, to secure meaningful and sustainable benefits.

A Member suggested some of the guidance was vague and highlighted the description of Community Benefit Contributions as “goodwill financial contributions” made voluntarily and which could be monetary. The Senior Policy Officer provided clarity to Members and outlined that contributions were mainly monetary, such as per kWh generated at renewable energy sites, but could also be the offer of an apprenticeship scheme by the developer for example.

One Member highlighted that the voluntary nature of contributions should be stressed so that the expectations of communities are not falsely raised.

The Chair asked how the criteria for contributions was set. The Senior Policy Officer advised that negotiations were a matter for communities and the developer but highlighted that key principles such as proximity to the development were included in the guidance. Also, any groups receiving funding had to be properly constituted. Assurance was given that Community Councils were regarded as being properly constituted.

In terms of the negotiations with developers a Member asked about the help available to communities without constituted bodies such as Community Councils. The Corporate Policy Manager clarified that Council teams such as the Regeneration Team and Caerphilly Cares would be able to use the guidance and offer assistance to such communities, and she also highlighted the collaborative regeneration work with colleagues from the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations.

One Member asked about the protection of the right for communities to object to proposed renewable energy developments. The Senior Policy Officer advised that this right existed within the planning framework rather than the Community Benefits Guidance. The Corporate Director for Economy and the Environment added that as proposed renewable energy sites were classed as developments of national significance the planning authority was Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) and the associated Local Authority was purely a consultee in the process. During the ensuing discussion it was also highlighted that PEDW received a Local Impact Report prior to its planning meeting and that this was followed by a 6-week consultation period.

A Member asked about future responsibility for infrastructure if a developer ceased trading. The Corporate Director for Economy and the Environment advised that such considerations would be included in the planning conditions imposed by PEDW.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:

Guidance was considered, and the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be provided to Cabinet.

The meeting closed at 19:12 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

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CHAIR