



## COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2023, AT 5.00PM

#### PRESENT:

Councillor M. Adams - Mayor  
Councillor J. Simmonds - Deputy Mayor

#### Councillors:

E. M. Aldworth, C. Andrews, A. Angel, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, S. Cook, D. Cushing, C. Cuss, E. Davies, G. Ead, C. Elsbury, G. Enright, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Forehead, E. Forehead, J. E. Fussell, N. George, C. Gordon, D. Harse, T. Heron, A. Hussey, M. James, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, S. Kent, A. Leonard, P. Leonard, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Miles, C. Morgan, S. Morgan, B. Owen, T. Parry, L. Phipps, M. Powell, D.W.R. Preece, H. Pritchard, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Rao, J. Roberts, R. Saralis, S. Skivens, E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas, A. Whitcombe, L. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade, C. Wright and K. Woodland.

#### Together with:

D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director - Head of Children's Services), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), D. Beecham (Electoral Services Manager), M. Lewis (Deputy Elections Manager), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), I. Richards (Business Improvement Officer), J. Pearce (Business Improvement Officer), J. Williams (Assistant Director Adult Services), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), C. Ewings (Youth Service Manager - Participation and Inclusion), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager) and S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer).

### RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Deputy Chief Executive reminded those present the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). He advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

### IN MEMORIUM

The Mayor referred to the recent passing of former Cabinet Member, and Local Ward Member for the Darran Valley, Councillor David Hardacre. Members and Officers stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect. Tributes were paid by the Leader of Council and the Leader of the Plaid Cymru group.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D.T. Davies MBE, N. Dix, A. Gair, D. Ingram-Jones, J. Jones, D. Price, J. Reed and J. Scriven.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors C. Bishop, J. Roberts, J. Taylor, W. Williams, C. Andrews, C. Morgan, E.M. Aldworth, L. Phipps, J. Winslade, A. Farina-Childs, K. Etheridge, A. Broughton-Pettit, C. Elsbury, S. Kent, J. Fussell, R. Chapman, A. McConnell, A. Angel, D. Cushing, M. James, H. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, T. Parry, G. Enright, C. Mann, B. Miles, S. Morgan, E. Stenner, M. Evans, J. Rao, G. Ead, S. Skivens, L. Whittle, D. Harse, C. Cuss, M. Powell, N. George, P. Leonard, A. Leonard, E. Forehead and C. Forehead declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 - Community Review - Draft Proposals, as Members of Town and Community Councils. As this was a personal interest only there was no requirement for those Members to leave the meeting and they could take full part in the debate and vote. Details are also minuted with the respective item.

## **3. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS**

### **Chartered Trading Standards Institute's Hero Award 2023**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection was pleased to announce that the Trading Standards Team was awarded the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's Hero Award 2023 at a recently held awards evening, at the House of Commons. This was presented to recognise the unwavering efforts and dedicated work by staff on Illegal Dog Breeders. It was highlighted that, to make it even more incredible, this prestigious national award is not given every year unless it is felt justified, so this was a real testament to the team and their dedication. The Cabinet Member expressed how proud she was of the Trading Standards Team and thought that they thoroughly deserved this award.

Dilys Harris, Karen Morgan, Laurence Brown, Selina Griffiths and Cathy Zak were invited forward by the Mayor so that Members could recognise this wonderful achievement.

## **4. COUNCIL HELD ON 27<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023**

RESOLVED that the minutes of Council held on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (minute nos. 1-14) be approved as a correct record.

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports.

## **5. CORPORATE PLAN (INCLUDING WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES) 2023-2028**

Consideration was given to the report which presented Council with the Council's Draft Corporate Plan, following its review by Joint Scrutiny on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and approval by Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The Plan detailed the new Well-being Objectives for the next five-year period from 2023 to 2028.

The Leader of Council introduced the Corporate Plan which set out the Council's direction, priorities and objectives for the next five years. He explained how the new Well-being Objectives help shape services, target resources and prioritise efforts as the Council continues to deliver the services that communities need. It was highlighted that since the last Corporate Plan in 2018 the Council has faced unprecedented challenges including a global pandemic, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and significant and far-reaching reductions in budgets. These issues have stretched resources, tested resilience and led to changes in the organisation itself and the Leader of Council took the opportunity to commend the Council's teams for the incredible 'can do' attitude they have shown. The Leader also highlighted the need to adapt in order to meet the challenges faced by the Council, focusing on flexibility and finding different ways to deliver what communities need and when they need it. Through the Corporate Plan positive and progressive steps can be taken to achieve this.

The Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services presented Members with a quick guide to the key elements of the Corporate Plan. The presentation included an introduction to Caerphilly County Borough Council, an overview of the Well-being Objectives, how the Well-being Objectives will be delivered, reshaping the Council to meet the challenge and how progress will be monitored.

Council was reminded that the Corporate Plan (including Well-being Objectives) 2023-2028 was reviewed and debated at length by the Joint Scrutiny Committee and responses were captured against each Well-being Objective. A Member highlighted the importance of the Corporate Plan being considered by the Joint Scrutiny Committee prior to consideration at Cabinet and Council.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 57 For, 0 Against and 1 Abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The Draft Corporate Plan (2023-2028) as recommended by Cabinet be adopted.

## **6. COMMUNITY REVIEW - DRAFT PROPOSALS**

Councillors C. Bishop, J. Roberts, J. Taylor, W. Williams, C. Andrews, C. Morgan, E.M. Aldworth, L. Phipps, J. Winslade, A. Farina-Childs, K. Etheridge, A. Broughton-Pettit, C. Elsbury, S. Kent, J. Fussell, R. Chapman, A. McConnell, A. Angel, D. Cushing, M. James, H. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, T. Parry, G. Enright, C. Mann, B. Miles, S. Morgan, E. Stenner, M. Evans, J. Rao, G. Ead, S. Skivens, L. Whittle, D. Harse, C. Cuss, M. Powell, N. George, P. Leonard, A. Leonard, E. Forehead and C. Forehead declared a personal interest as Members of Town and Community Councils. As this was a personal interest only there was no requirement for them to leave the meeting and they took full part in the debate and vote.

Consideration was given to the report which informed Council that the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission) was appointed by the Council to carry out a review of the communities within the county borough. It was highlighted that the Council also established a Cross-Party Working Group to help frame the review and their responses to the proposals were outlined in the report. Following an initial consultation, the Commission has now published a set of draft proposals for Council to consider. It was noted that the views of the Cross-Party Working Group formed a basis for the Commission's considerations along with the Council Size Policy and the Commission's own policies. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change thanked Members of the Cross-Party Working Group for their co-operation during the review

process and highlighted that the Cross-Party Working Group reached a unanimous decision on the recommendations in the report.

Reference was made to the Commission's proposal to transfer the Hawtin Meadows development from Maesycwmmmer to Pontllanfraith and concerns were raised regarding the number of electors affected. A Member asked for an increase in the number of Councillors representing the Pontllanfraith Ward to be considered. The Elections Manager acknowledged that since the last community review there have been many changes, such as new housing developments, and therefore some community boundaries will need to be reviewed. Members were informed that there will be another review of the county borough wards following the next local elections in 2027. The Elections Manager explained that it is the responsibility of the Commission to carry out a review of the communities in the county borough and a Council Size Policy is used when carrying out the review.

In response to a Members query the Elections Manager confirmed that the Commission's final recommendation report will be submitted to Welsh Government for approval.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 56 For, 3 Against and 0 Abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The Commission's draft proposals be endorsed, subject to the amendments proposed by the Cross-Party Working Group.
2. A response to the consultation be provided by the Chief Executive, by 4th December.

## **7. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING FOR 2022/23**

Consideration was given to the report which presented Council with the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services and Housing 2022-2023. It was noted that Part 8 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) requires Directors of Social Services in Wales to publish an annual report about the exercise of the Local Authority's social services functions and that statutory guidance requires the Corporate Director of Social Services and Housing to present the Annual Report to Council for its adoption. The report provided Council with the key messages that have been identified in the preparation of the Annual Report. It was highlighted that all the identified service priorities for the year have been met and the report also outlines the priorities for the year 2023/24.

It was noted that the report was considered by the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

As Statutory Director of Social Services and Housing for Caerphilly County Borough Council, the Deputy Chief Executive introduced his Annual Report for 2022/23 and provided an overview on the achievements and challenges for the year concerned. The Deputy Chief Executive placed on record his thanks to all of the staff involved in the provision of social care, whether they be employees of the Council or staff employed by independent or Third Sector partners and also the absolutely essential services that are provided by unpaid carers in the borough.

A Member re-iterated the gratitude of the Deputy Chief Executive and asked that congratulations be passed on to everyone who has played a part in delivering Social Services, for all their hard work.

In response to a Members concern, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that homelessness and lack of affordable housing does impact Social Services, particularly in relation to mental health, but not to a great extent.

Clarification and further information were sought in relation to the complaints process for Social Services. The Assistant Director - Head of Children's Services explained the three-stage approach to complaints. It was highlighted that the Social Services Complaints and Information Team put significant effort into attempting to resolve issues to the customer's satisfaction at Stage 1 of the process and it was positively reported that the majority of complaints continue to be resolved at this stage. It was further highlighted that all complaint responses are overseen and signed off by the Assistant Director - Head of Children's Services and that the complainant has the option to accept the complaint has been resolved to their satisfaction.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 57 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The report be endorsed and adopted prior to submission to Welsh Government, Care Inspectorate Wales and publication on the Authority's website.

## **8. PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES - ANNUAL LETTER 2022/2023**

Consideration was given to the report which informed Council of the publication of the Annual Letter for 2022/2023 in respect of Caerphilly Council by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, which deals with complaints relating to maladministration and service failure, complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct and the actions being taken to improve public services.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 58 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The content of the Annual Letter be considered and noted.

## **9. NOTICE OF MOTION – PRIDE IN VETERANS STANDARD**

Consideration was given to the Notice of Motion, presented by Councillor C. Andrews and Councillor T. Heron. Councillor C. Andrews outlined the Notice of Motion which requested that Council adopt the Pride in Veterans Standard (PiVS) to visibly demonstrate its commitment to providing inclusive and welcoming support to LGBT+ Veterans serving personnel and their families.

Members were advised that the Notice of Motion was considered by the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and it was unanimously supported.

Members welcomed the Notice of Motion and Councillor L. Whittle addressed Council, on behalf of the Plaid Cymru group, to fully support the Notice of Motion.

Following consideration of the report, the Notice of Motion was moved and seconded. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting that there were 58 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions) the Notice of Motion was unanimously supported.

RESOLVED that the Notice of Motion be supported.

## **10. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's announcements were noted.

## **11. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 28(3)**

Councillor J.A. Pritchard presented a petition on behalf of residents from Tir-y-Berth, Glan-y-Nant and surrounding areas, to replace the current island crossing on New Road in Tir-y-Berth with a safer zebra crossing.

The Mayor accepted the petition which would be actioned in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

## **12. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10 (2)**

Question received from Councillor K. Etheridge to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan.

To ask the Leader how much CCBC has spent on Consultants and define the various duties undertaken within the last 12 months and currently at the Council, and whether they feel this is cost effective and value for money?

Response from the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan, to Councillor K. Etheridge.

During the 22/23 financial year, Caerphilly spent just short of £1.5million on Consultants across all aspects of its business. There has been a further spend of £570k so far this year. So, you will appreciate that the use of Consultants is common practice across service areas.

We use consultants on a myriad of things, for short term or one-off pieces of work, where we require capabilities that are not available within the organisation. We use consultants for areas such as Specialist Drainage Engineering, Road Safety Audits, Contaminated Land Advice, Master-planning such as Caerphilly 2035 or when an Independent View is required.

In terms of answering the value for money question, perhaps it is worth using the example of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly Transformation programme.

Members will be aware that Caerphilly is employing Consultants to work alongside the Council in an attempt to find savings of over £55m over the next two years. We need to undertake this significant service transformation whilst also doing the day job. Therefore, using Consultants for a short period is essential.

Early indications show that we are likely to see recurring savings in the region of £15m per annum, while also improving the customer experience, avoiding wholesale redundancies and, perhaps more importantly, avoiding significant cuts to services. So yes, I do believe that this is cost effective and value for money.

I know many Members in the Chamber have taken time to come across to the Agile Space and see firsthand the value of Consultants working alongside our employees. Despite

invites having been sent out to join the weekly stand ups, to attend the recent Members Seminar or indeed to just pop in and talk to staff about what they are doing, I'm not sure that you have taken us up on that offer. The invitation remains open, because I am sure you would support the use of Consultants as we drive out costs, protect services and avoid wholesale redundancies at a time when our budgets are under more pressure than we could have ever imagined.

Supplementary question from Councillor K. Etheridge to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan.

Can the Leader give some indication where the savings will be made, confirm that there will be no enforced redundancy schemes and confirm what non-essential services the Council is looking at to rationalise.

Response from the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan, to Councillor K. Etheridge.

In order to make savings and do everything we can to avoid enforced redundancy we are looking at so many areas of change, of doing things differently and more efficiently, such as better use of buildings, looking at services through the eyes of the customer and using technology to drive efficiencies, exploring alternative models of delivery and so many other ideas are being thrashed out in order for us to deliver for the public who depend on us.

I would just like to reiterate what I said in my earlier answer, that all of the ideas, projects and approaches that will support this programme are being taken forward "in the open" in the agile space for everyone to see, and that you and indeed, any Member from this Chamber can take the opportunity to come and see the progress in action.

**13. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(3)**

Question received from Councillor T. Heron to the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities, Councillor C. Andrews.

Would the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities offer an update about Library Services?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities, Councillor C. Andrews, to Councillor T. Heron.

I recently shared with all Councillors an excel spreadsheet showing the extra range of service provision our 18 libraries offer to residents and communities. The document is a snapshot in time and new events and sessions are continually being added.

These events and sessions cater for our youngest residents to our older residents, with events like toddler time, Lego and Duplo Club, various craft activities, book clubs, family history, Communities for Work, Welsh conversation groups and digital literacy to name just a few. And it is not just CCBC who run these sessions, we have organisations like the NHS, Dewis Cymru, Gwent Police, Cornerstone and many others taking advantage of the space in our libraries. All these sessions help residents in some way with their education, health, wellbeing, social isolation and developing language skills and as you saw from the document the list is endless.

To quote the Senior Libraries Manager, Karen Pugh, "too many times I hear the phrase, 'no one uses libraries anymore', but this isn't correct!"

Whilst it is a known fact in the UK people aren't reading as much, this doesn't mean they're not using our libraries for reading or other purposes. Our annual statistics show that CCBC customers and residents are still reading, still visiting our libraries and still value our library services really highly, even though the service is changing and evolving to meet new needs.

This is reflected in the Welsh Government, Welsh Public Library Standards Sixth Framework 2022/2023 Assessment Report for Caerphilly. Whereas I am not going into detail about this report you will have an opportunity to view the WPLS Assessment Report as an Information Item at a future Scrutiny Committee in 2024. The report will identify how Caerphilly has successfully met all the 12 core entitlements in full and of the 10 quality indicator targets, 7 were met in full and 1 in part and only 2 targets were not met.

Our Library Service is still encouraging our young people to read during the summer holidays with their annual Summer Reading Challenge, and recently at a presentation in the Council Chamber, the Mayor awarded the winners all living in different areas of the borough with prizes. The Mayor also recognised the achievements of volunteers who helped with the scheme.

Caerphilly's 18 libraries were also praised in a recent issue of the 'Big Issue' for distributing more than 38,000 hot drinks between November 2022 and last August. A service that was run in collaboration with Caerphilly Cares.

Caerphilly County Borough Council has been recognised by Age Cymru in an open letter titled '*We need banks to protect access to local branches in Wales*'. We are all aware of the rising number of bank closures on our high streets. The letter cites best practice of authorities who have worked to combat closures with Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive of Age Cymru saying "A good example is Caerphilly, where the local authority has been proactively working with banks who have announced closures within the area to set up alternative provision". CCBC has offered a banking provision in several Libraries including Bargoed, Blackwood and Caerphilly in recent months, helping to retain a service of some kind, for our residents.

Finally, the major redevelopment at Rhymney Library is nearing completion with a tentative re-opening date of Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Now renamed: Hwb Llyfrgell Rhymni – Rhymney Library Hub. The Hub offer will address the Council's intention to support access to a range of different services close to where people live, help to foster other community activities, and maintain library services in local areas.

After the temporary closure caused by Storm Eunice, building work and a furniture re-fit will soon progress at Deri Library. This site will feature a new DDA toilet and washroom.

Finally, Pengam Library will be temporarily closing for three months in January 2024 to allow for the building of a new Flying Start Welsh language setting on the ground next to the current library. The library will undergo a complete refurbishment and the new partnership of both sites will strongly contribute to the continuation of both the Welsh language and culture.

In conclusion, 18 Libraries continue to be at the centre and the heart of our communities.

The meeting closed at 6.18 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 they were signed by the Mayor.



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MAYOR