



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 6TH MARCH 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), 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), K. Peters (Service Manager – Service Improvement and Partnerships), J. Lougher (Sport and Leisure Development Manager), A. Cullinane (Senior Policy Officer - Equalities and Welsh Language), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer) and J. Thomas (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 Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) and C. Harry (Chief Executive).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S. Morgan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to [Agenda Item No. 10 Welsh Government Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2024/2025](#) in that he is the owner of a commercial premise which could benefit from the hospitality rate relief as such he would leave the meeting when the item was discussed and take no part in the debate or vote

3. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE

Cabinet was provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports until 29th May 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.

4. ALLOCATION CRITERIA FOR ARTIFICIAL SPORTS PITCHES AND THE YSTRAD MYNACH CENTRE FOR SPORTING EXCELLENCE

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinets approval for amendments to the criteria used in the allocation of bookings for artificial pitches, Second Generation and Third Generation, e.g. Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) / 3G facilities in Caerphilly CBC that are managed and delivered by Sport & Leisure services.

Attention was drawn to section 5.4 of the report which outlined the number of sports pitches throughout CCBC. Cabinet was pleased to note that school sites were now available for community use on weekday evenings and available all day on weekends. The Officer explained this had been achievable through a collaborative team effort across the board. It is anticipated that this will increase the participation throughout the County Brough.

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:

1. The allocation criteria detailed in this report for artificial pitches, Second Generation and Third Generation, e.g. Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) / 3G facilities in Caerphilly CBC that are managed and delivered by Sport and Leisure services be approved.
2. The delegation of future changes to the allocation criteria as a result of changes by Governing Bodies or changes to ATP/3G provision to the relevant Director or Head of Service in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member be approved.

5. FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY AUDIT OF THE CAERPHILLY FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 13th February 2024.

Consideration was given to the report which presented Cabinet with the findings of an audit conducted by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), on Caerphilly County Borough Council's food law enforcement services, which includes the food safety, food standards and communicable disease control functions within Public Protection.

Responding to a query raised the Officer assured Cabinet that although there is a current issue recruiting Environmental Health Officers (EHO), Caerphilly has a sufficient number of EHO's to ensure that food hygiene inspections are carried out. Although the Officer advised there is still a back log as a result of the Covid pandemic.

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 consideration was given to The Food Standards Agency Audit findings and Action Plan as detailed in Appendices 1 to 3 together with the comments from Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee as detailed at 10.2 of the report.

6. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN – OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS 2024-2028

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet Approval the Council's Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, outlines in Appendix A of the report, and for approval for it to progress to Council on 18th April for formal adoption as Council policy.

Cabinet placed on record their thanks to the Officers involved in obtaining all the information included within the report in readiness to be presented to full Council.

Cabinet was pleased to note that there are policies in place to make reasonable adjustments if required to assist any member of staff with autism.

Clarification was sought in relation to what measures the Council has in place to assist CCBC's residents to obtain employment. The Officer advised Members the Council has a Social Value Policy, the intention of that policy is when there are large projects, for example building schools, the Council, when looking for resources and materials, sources these within the local community, which sustains local employment and potentially increases employment opportunities. There is also an Employment Team, that mentor and support residents into employment, for example will assist with writing CVs and preparing them for interviews. The Council also run an apprenticeship scheme within the organisation.

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 Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 to progress the report to be presented to Council for adoption as Council policy be approved.

7. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Consideration was given to the report which informed Cabinet of the progress made during the financial year 2022-2023 against actions in the Council's current Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 and sought Cabinet approval to publish to the Council's website.

Cabinet formally placed on record thanks to all Officers involved in gathering the information included within the report.

Cabinet was extremely pleased to note the update on the Ukraine Resettlement Scheme which has been in place since March 2022. However, noted that this was only a small snapshot on the work undertaken by CCBC to help the Ukrainian people.

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 annual report for publication on the Council's website by the 31st March deadline be approved.

8. ANNUAL WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022-23

Cabinet noted that sections of the report were scrutinised by Governance and Audit on 15th February 2024 and Joint Scrutiny Committee on 26th February 2024. Feedback was noted in the consultation section of the report.

Cabinet was pleased to note the positive impact the Councils 'Empty Home Strategy' and the work carried out by the Empty Homes Team who have helped bring back into use over 100 homes.

Following a query raised regarding the support the Council provides to tenants to sustain tenancies and help reduce fuel poverty, Cabinet was advised that the Caerphilly Cares Team offers access to a range of support initiatives for individuals and families, whether Council or private rented sector tenants including access to a cost-of-living hardship fund, fuel vouchers in partnership with Citizens Advice, energy advice and access to an energy crisis grant. Housing Support teams had accessed an additional £3.1m in income for tenants during 2022/23 and that support staff in that team were trained to Level 3 City and Guilds in providing energy advice to tenants.

Cabinet sought further information on whether there has been an improvement in productivity from the workforce and their wellbeing since the Agile Work Policy has been implemented. The Director for Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services advised Cabinet that the policy allows employees to better balance their working day and each employee will have different working ways. Some staff prefer to attend an Office every day and others to use a hybrid way of working depending on their individual needs. It has also assisted in recruitment as employees can now work fully remotely in certain departments. Therefore, there is no commute allowing staff to reside at a greater geographical distance from 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 that for reasons contained within the Officers report the Self-Assessment Report (including Well-being Objectives) 2022/23 (Appendix 1 to this report) as a final position on organisational performance for the year 2022/2023 be approved.

9. PUBLICATION OF GENDER PAY GAP DATA 2023 – 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 2023.

In response to a query raised the Officer assured Cabinet that currently there were no concerns around gender pay gap claims for Caerphilly Borough Council and advised Cabinet that the current NJC pay scale structure that was implemented in 2020 with the agreement of the Unions. The Officer also advised Cabinet that CCBC do not offer performance related bonuses. However, Cabinet was assured that the Council is watching the national claims and should there be and any change that could impact Caerphilly would be reported to Cabinet immediately.

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 Officer 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 agreed.

10. WELSH GOVERNMENT RETAIL, LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY RATE RELIEF SCHEME 2024/2025

Consideration was given to the report that provided Cabinet with details of the new 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme' offered by WG for 2024/25 and sought Cabinet approval to adopt the new scheme.

Following a query raised Cabinet were advised that this scheme had been implemented for several years and assured that the Business Rates Team had sufficient resources to deal with the influx of applications. However, should it impact daily workload increase beyond capacity, then staff overtime would be considered.

Cabinet formally placed on record their thanks and support to the Business Team.

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 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2024-25' (the 2024/25 Scheme), in accordance with the WG guidance on the WG website and the provisions of section 47(1) (a) and section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 be endorsed.
2. The Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer will use delegated powers to award the relief be noted.
3. The proposal set out in paragraph 5.8 that in order to assist ratepayers and minimise administration costs for the Authority, it is proposed that the declaration process will involve each eligible business completing and submitting an online form via the Council's website, with the Council's Business Rates Team aiming to process all declaration forms received as quickly as possible and issue amended bills to eligible ratepayers in accordance with the WG guidance be supported.
4. Officers of the Authority will make the business community aware of the 2024/25 Scheme through its usual channels, including its website and social media be noted.

The meeting closed at 14.00 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 1st May 2024.