



## COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2024 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, D.T. Davies MBE, N. Dix, 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, J. Jones, S. Kent, P. Leonard, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Miles, C. Morgan, S. Morgan, B. Owen, T. Parry, L. Phipps, M. Powell, H. Pritchard, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Rao, J. Reed, J. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Scriven, 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:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services), M. S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), G. Jenkins (Interim Corporate Director Social Services), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), A. Cullinane (Senior Policy Officer - Equalities and Welsh Language), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), D. Lucas (Team Leader, Strategic Planning), S. Pugh (Communications Manager) and S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer).

#### Also in attendance:

Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargod School Choir.

#### Also present to receive presentation of awards:

Sports and Leisure Department, Decarbonisation Team, Caerphilly's Supporting People Team, United Welsh, Platform and Llamau, Caerphilly Empty Homes Team and Members of Gelligaer Young Farmers Club.

## RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services 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.

## **1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Ead, A. Gair, D. Ingram-Jones, A. Leonard, D.W.R. Preece and D. Price.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

## **3. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS**

### **Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach School Choir**

The Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement welcomed pupils from Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargod who were in attendance to celebrate the opening of Caerphilly's first ever Welsh language immersion class, Canolfan Gwenllian.

The Mayor called forward Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargod's Choir to sing a song for Members that was written and composed specifically for Canolfan Gwenllian by Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargod's very talented Deputy Headteacher, Mr Perry-Hopton, called Llaw yn Llaw (Hand in Hand). The Choir received a round of applause from Members and the Mayor thanked them for their fantastic performance.

### **Member Experience Awards**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection was pleased to announce that a number of Leisure Centres have gained recognition from the Member Experience Awards 2023. The Cabinet Member highlighted the outstanding achievement of Newbridge Leisure Centre. Risca, Heolddu and Caerphilly Leisure Centre's were also recognised for their work in delivering excellent service and experiences to their valued customers.

The Mayor called forward G. O'Connell, L. English, L. Hewitt, M. Donovan, S. Jones and S. Spooner so that Members could recognise their achievements.

### **Carbon Literacy Project**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change announced that the Decarbonisation Team has recently received notification from the Carbon Literacy Project that they have been successful with their application to become a Bronze Level Carbon Literate Organisation. The team will officially collect their Bronze Award at an awards ceremony in Manchester in June. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member praised the Decarbonisation Team for this wonderful achievement, which was a testament to their diligent efforts and hard work.

The Mayor called forward P. Cooke, H. Richardson, G. Hutchings, P. Evans and A. Lewis so that Members could recognise their achievement.

### **Welsh Housing Awards**

The Cabinet Member for Housing was pleased to announce two awards for Caerphilly Homes, both were won at the prestigious Welsh Housing Awards. The annual awards are hosted by the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru and recognise the creativity, passion and innovation of housing organisations and individuals across the sector in Wales.

Firstly, a project developed and delivered by Caerphilly's Supporting People Team, United Welsh, Platform and Llamau won the 'Working in Partnership' category at the Welsh Housing Awards. The Caerphilly partnership won for its STAR housing model, which uses starter, transitional and resettlement flats as a route for rehousing individuals leaving temporary accommodation. The Cabinet Member also congratulated the Caerphilly Empty Homes Team who won 'Team of the Year' for their commitment, creativity and tenacity in tackling the issue of private empty properties in the borough.

The Mayor invited forward the winners of the Working in Partnership category and Team of the Year so that members could recognise their achievements.

### **Gelligaer Young Farmers Club**

The Leader of Council was pleased to share the success of the Gelligaer Young Farmers Club, who have taken part in the Federation of Young Farmers annual competition, which alternates across a three-year cycle between pantomime production, entertainments and drama production.

The Leader congratulated Gelligaer Young Farmers Club who have been working hard and rehearsing throughout the winter months on their entry and production entitled "Game of Tiaras", and in February won the County level of competition, competing against other clubs throughout the Glamorgan region. Following this achievement, they then went on to represent Glamorgan County at the All-Wales finals in March, performing at Theatr Brycheiniog in Brecon and for the first time in the Club's 75-year history they won. Gelligaer Young Farmers Club are now busy preparing to represent Wales at National Finals on 20<sup>th</sup> April in Warwickshire, competing against regional winners from across England and Wales. The Leader asked Members to join him in wishing them the best of luck in the competition.

The Mayor called forward members of the Gelligaer Young Farmers Club so that their incredible achievements could be recognised.

## **4. COUNCIL HELD ON 27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 be approved as a correct record.

## **5. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN - OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS 2024-2028**

Consideration was given to the report which presented Council with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, following its review by the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024; and consideration by Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024. The Plan detailed the new Equality Objectives and associated actions for the next 4-year period, from 2024 to 2028. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection summarised a number of key points.

The Council was commended on the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, a Member acknowledged the work that had been undertaken and highly praised everyone involved.

A query was raised regarding the key amendments to the Equality Act scheduled to take effect in October 2024. In order to respond to the query raised, clarification and further information were sought, and it was agreed that the Member would correspond with the Senior Policy Officer for Equalities and Welsh Language following the meeting.

Further information was sought regarding the inclusion of the transgender community into grassroots sport. In response, the Senior Policy Officer for Equalities and Welsh Language

advised Members that the matter would be for the individual service area. It was explained that Officers within the Equalities and Welsh Language Team provide advice and guidance to service areas in line with Sport Wales guidance and any further guidance from Welsh Government following the publication of the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained in the Officer's report be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The appended Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, as recommended by Cabinet, be adopted as Council policy.

## **6. GREATER BLACKWOOD MASTERPLAN**

Consideration was given to the report which advised Members on the main issues identified by respondents during the public consultation exercise carried out between 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 and 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024 on the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan. Council was asked to approve the amended Greater Blackwood Masterplan as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan as a tool for guiding regeneration activity in Greater Blackwood. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change provided an overview of the report.

In response to a question regarding private sector investment, the Cabinet Member for Prosperity Regeneration and Climate Change highlighted the importance of working with the private sector industry and being in constant dialogue with Cardiff Capital Region.

A Member raised a number of questions in relation to funding opportunities, the development of the market square to extend activities in discussion with the private sector, the Talking Shop pilot project, Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre, the consideration of a tram provision and the use vacant buildings in Blackwood Town Centre. It was noted that all the questions have been submitted to the relevant Officer and a response will be provided in writing.

Clarification and further information were sought on accessing Welsh Government funding to improve Blackwood Town Centre. The Head of Regeneration and Planning explained that the Welsh Government Transforming Towns Regeneration Programme requires a Placemaking Plan to be in place to enable the funding to be directed to a specific town, and Members were informed that the Placemaking Plan for Blackwood Town Centre is now at the delivery and implementation stage. It was highlighted that the Placemaking Plans and the Masterplan are predicated on all sources of funding and not just on grant funding and Welsh Government funding. Officers work very hard with the private sector and with other funding sources such as the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund to ensure that money can be channelled wherever possible throughout the County Borough.

A Member pointed out the number of empty shops in Blackwood asked if the Council could do anything to help businesses mitigate costs associated with the new recycling regime and the 35% cut in the Business Support Grant. In response, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change highlighted and praised the Council's Business Support Team who are engaging with businesses in Blackwood and every other town and village across the County Borough. Reference was also made to the Caerphilly Enterprise Fund which can support new and established businesses throughout the County Borough.

Reference was made to the main issues raised in the consultation responses, in response to a Member's query, the Head of Regeneration and Planning explained that the Blackwood

Masterplan is the last in a set of 5 Masterplans and will be reviewed in line with the Regeneration Strategy. Members were informed that the new Regeneration Strategy will come forward within the next six months for consideration by Scrutiny and Cabinet.

Responding to a Member's question regarding a decline in footfall, the Head of Regeneration and Planning pointed out that the Council has a successful strategy in terms of developing town centres and a very successful events programme, which are predicated on the basis on increasing footfall.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The representations received as part of the public consultation exercise be considered and the Officer recommendations set out in the ROC be endorsed.
2. The Greater Blackwood Masterplan as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan and as a tool for guiding regeneration activity in the Greater Blackwood area be approved.

A number of tributes were paid to Rhian Kyte, the Head of Regeneration and Planning, to thank her for all her hard work over the last 40 years and to her wish her a long and a happy retirement.

## **7. SUPPORTING THE WORK OF MEMBERS ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND THE USE OF BROADBAND**

Consideration was given to the report which presented a recommendation to Council from the Democratic Services Committee in relation to the use of home broadband by Members, following consideration of a report at the Democratic Services Committee meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained in the Officer's report be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The recommendation from the Democratic Services Committee be endorsed that all Elected Members make use of their personal broadband connections to access e-mails, papers and meetings, as is the case for 67 members currently, and if for any reason Members do not have access to their own broadband, they could be provided with a MiFi device or a SIM enabled laptop.

## **8. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR**

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

The Deputy Mayor took the opportunity to express his thanks to the Mayor for his service over the past year.

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

There were no petitions received.

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

Question from Councillor L. Whittle to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan.

Will the Leader of Council please give a full explanation for the delay yet again in the opening of Ffos Caerffili. Members recognising that the initial opening being delayed from September 23 to January 24 missing the Christmas trade. Then further delayed from January but missing the January sales trade. Now further delayed until April missing the Easter trade.

Response from the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan, to Councillor L. Whittle.

The delay in opening Ffos Caerffili on the 15<sup>th</sup> March was unfortunate and the decision was not taken lightly. It was taken in full consultation with the Contractor, Market Operator and Traders with primary emphasis to ensure that public safety was not compromised in any way. The advice received from the Market Operator, in consultation with the Traders, recommended not opening over the Easter weekend for commercial reasons and therefore the opening was achieved following that holiday period. The success of the opening weekend appears to demonstrate that it was appropriate to follow the advice received.

1. The construction of Ffos has endured several difficulties.
2. Record breaking rainfall and storms.
3. The need to remove services and utilities that had not previously been mapped.
4. Difficulties in connecting to foul and surface water drainage systems.
5. Constructing the market on a highly constrained site, right in a town centre.
6. And again, record breaking rainfall, apart from today I don't think its stopped since November.

Supplementary question from Councillor L. Whittle to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan.

Can the Leader of Council please inform Council if the delays to Ffos Caerffili opening has resulted in any excess expenditure over and above that of the original tender. If so how much is that cost?

Response from the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan, to Councillor L. Whittle.

The only additional contract costs are those relating to unforeseen works that arose during the construction phase, as is the norm with any major construction project. There were also a number of compensation payments totalling £56k.

But it is very important to discuss these costs in relation to the very low level of funding from CCBC core budgets. Only £150k of CCBC core funding that was required to deliver Ffos Caerphilly. I must congratulate Councillor Jamie Pritchard and the Officers within the Regeneration Team who were so successful in obtaining external funding for the scheme. You will recall that this was the subject of a recent Cabinet report which was also reported positively in the media.

ERDF European funding, WG grant and loan along with UK Shared Prosperity funding has resulted in just £150k from within CCBC core funding.

I would also like to note that the Market Operator and Traders have reported an exceptional first couple of weeks of trade, even with the rain, with enthusiastic and positive comments received from the vast majority of visitors to the town.

I hope you will join me in congratulating the Team, welcoming in 50 or so new jobs and welcoming the vibrancy and hope that this market is bringing to the borough.

Further debate ensued in relation to the Leader's response to the question. The debate focussed on any additional costs incurred over and above the original tender, as a result of the delayed opening of Ffos Caerphilly. The Mayor expressed his confidence in the future and longevity of Ffos Caerphilly.

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

Question from Councillor T. Heron to the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Councillor E. Forehead.

Can the Cabinet Member for Social Services provide an update on social services pressures?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Councillor E. Forehead, to Councillor T. Heron.

Council will be aware that service pressures within Social Services will very often be mirrored by budgetary pressures and whilst the service is reporting an underspend of £2.7million at month 7, this includes the maximisation of grant funding and masks some key underlying pressures which include:

Recruitment and retention of staff across both Adult and Children Services with ADSS commissioning an independent report to consider the harmonisation of terms and conditions for Social Workers.

We continue to face significant fragility in the care sector with agencies handing back packages of care – to date we have been able to manage this and successfully re-provide the care. The average of unbrokered hours is now around 120 per week which is a significant improvement.

The 'eliminate profit from children's care' agenda is impacting on the availability of placements for all children including children with disabilities.

The increasing complexity of cases across both Adult and Children Services impacts on the level of care and support that is required.

Replacement of WCCIS, the current IT data base, is likely to disrupt recording and reporting functions whilst also having a significant cost implication – we are working both regionally and nationally to procure the replacement system in readiness for 2026.

**12. TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(12) FOR WHICH A WRITTEN RESPONSE WILL BE PROVIDED.**

There were no questions received to be answered in writing.

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2024 they were signed by the Presiding Member.

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PRESIDING MEMBER