



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 13TH NOVEMBER 2019 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor B. Jones - Chair

Councillors:

C. Cuss (Social Services and Well Being), N. George (Neighbourhood Services), C.J. Gordon (Corporate Services), P. Marsden (Education and Achievement), S. Morgan (Economy, Infrastructure and Sustainability), L. Phipps (Homes and Places) and E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection).

Together with:

C. Harry (Interim Chief Executive), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services and Housing) and M.S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director – Communities).

Also in Attendance:

S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager – Education, Lifelong Learning and Schools), M. Williams (Interim Head of Property Services), S. Harris (Interim Head of Business Improvement Services and Acting S151 Officer), L. Goodwin (Project Manager – European Projects), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer) and E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors N. George and B. Jones declared a personal interest and Councillor L. Phipps declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item No. 4 – Specialist Resource Base (SRB) Funding Review and Councillors C. Cuss and L. Phipps declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 – Formula Funding Arrangements for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni (Spilt Site), detailed and minuted with the respective item.

3. CABINET – 30TH OCTOBER 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30th October 2019 were

approved as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

4. SPECIALIST RESOURCE BASE (SRB) FUNDING REVIEW

Councillor N. George declared a personal interest as a Local Authority Governor at Ty Sign Primary School and Risca Comprehensive School and Councillor B. Jones declared a personal interest as a Local Authority Governor at St. James Primary School and St Cenydd School.

Councillor L. Phipps declared a personal and prejudicial interest as her sister works in Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and her nieces are also students at that school and left the meeting when the item was discussed.

Consideration was given to the report which was presented to the Education Scrutiny Committee on the 2nd July 2019. It was noted that the majority of pupils have their needs met in mainstream education however; there is a range of provision for children with differing complex needs across the local authority. The staffing model and resources outlined within the report would allow the increasingly complex needs of children within specialist resource bases to be met. The Cabinet Member for Education confirmed that the Education Scrutiny Committee had unanimously supported the proposals.

Cabinet were advised that a robust analysis of those needs had been undertaken in order to identify a model that would ensure equity across the provisions or for provisions of similar designations and Members were referred to section 5.16 of the scrutiny report which detailed the proposed provision at primary and secondary phases and the timescale for implementation was confirmed. It was noted that provision would be reviewed on a 3 year rolling programme in order to ensure that the authority continues to meet the needs of children.

Cabinet Members commended the schools providing Specialist Resources Bases and placed on record their thanks for making this type of provision possible.

Clarification was sought in relation to 21st Century Schools Band B proposals and future SRB provision. Officers confirmed that they had recognised the need for forward planning particularly as children's needs become more and more complex and discussion had taken place as to how this could be linked to Band B proposals.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained with the Officer's report be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in Officer's report the proposed staffing model, resourcing and timeline for implementation for the Council's SRB's be agreed.

5. EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND OPERATION INSPIRE 2 ACHIEVE (I2A)

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to deliver Inspire 2 Achieve (I2A) as part of a regional operation lead by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council subject to final approval from the Welsh European Office (WEFO).

Cabinet were advised that Inspire 2 Achieve is an operation to provide support to young people aged between 11-24 who are at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) across the 5 local authorities in South East Wales (West Wales and the

Valleys). This would be achieved through a collaborative approach identifying and addressing the need of those most at risk of disengagement and equip them with the skills needed to enable them to deal with and remove any barriers to learning.

It was noted that Caerphilly would aim to support 550 participants over two years with support provided on an individual basis or in small groups to develop their learning, motivational and engagement skills in order to reduce the risk of then becoming NEET. Tailored coaching sessions will be provided to meet the learner's individual needs and learning styles and where required participants would be referred to partner agencies or procured services.

Clarification was sought as to what support would be provided to the most deprived of the electorate wards within the borough, where statistically there was the highest NEET risk.

The Officer confirmed that they would be working very closely with schools, Careers Wales and were looking at innovative approaches as well as providing specialist training for staff and the most deprived areas of the borough would be targeted as part of the work.

It was highlighted that this project would draw down £1.2M of grant funding with no further costs to the local authority and this was noted as a prime example of the social heart/commercial head aspect of the Team Caerphilly operational model.

Clarification was then sought in relation to how I2A success would be monitored and it was noted that any European funded programme was subject to immense monitoring by the WEFO and this would be coupled with local authority monitoring from an EOTAS perspective.

Cabinet acknowledged the positivity of the programme and difference it would make to the learning and development of the participants.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained within the Officer's report be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the Authority's participation in the Inspire 2 Achieve project be approved, subject to final approval from the Welsh European Funding Officer (WEFO).

6. FORMULA FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR YSGOL GYFUN CWM RHYMNI (SPLIT SITE)

Councillor L. Phipps declared a personal and prejudicial interest in that her sister works at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and her nieces are students at the school and Councillor C. Cuss declared a personal and prejudicial interest in that his cousins attend the Y Gwindy site, both left the meeting when the item was discussed.

Consideration was given to the report that sought Cabinet approval for changes to the formula funding arrangements for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni as a split site school. It was noted that to date the school has been funded as one school with an additional split site lump sum. The split site formula funding allocation recognises the additional financial burden that arises for a school as a direct result of delivery across 2 sites.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

- (i) the split funding arrangements for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni be updated following consideration of the issues presented in the body of the report (Equates to circa £114k additional funding to the school);
- (ii) retrospective funding for financial years 2018/19 to 2019/20 be agreed (Equates to circa £228k for the 2 financial years);
- (iii) financial pressure linked to this proposal be included as a “growth” item within the Authority’s budget strategy proposals for 2020/21 (Equates to £114k in 2019-20).

7. ACQUISITION OF VIRGINIA PARK GOLF CLUB PREMISES

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to acquire the former Virginia Park Golf Club premises in Caerphilly for the purpose of providing non-residential education and training, subject to a successful change of use planning application from D2 Assembly and Leisure to D1 Non-residential institutions.

Cabinet were advised that the building holds the potential to provide a suitable base for statutory education activities, including youth work, within the Caerphilly Basin as well as providing a platform for the delivery of education and training opportunities for vulnerable young people unable to attend school. It was noted that in order for the building to come into Local Authority ownership, the Council would be required to lift a covenant on the land and in doing so, would forgo a potential future capital receipt in the region of £300k in the short term.

It was noted that the acquisition would allow services to be moved out of less suitable accommodation and provide learners with low level anxiety who find traditional school challenging an improved and fit for purpose educational environment. It was noted that this would be ideal accommodation for those learners currently served by the HIVE.

Clarification was sought in relation to the timescales involved in the acquisition process and Officers confirmed that this would be very much dependent on due diligence and advised that current owners were keen to progress.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that subject to an amendment to recommendation (ii) to include ‘in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member’ the recommendations contained in the Officer’s report be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer’s report: -

- (i) the acquisition of the former Virginia Park Golf Club premises be agreed in principle, and its use as a base for youth work, education and training, subject to planning for a change of use being granted to D1 Non Residential Institutions be agreed;
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Head of Property Services, *in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member*, to negotiate an agreement on the best possible terms with Withey Properties on the transfer of Virginia Park Golf Club premises to the Council’s ownership.

8. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2020/21

Consideration was given to the report which presented Cabinet with details of the draft budget proposals for the 2020/21 financial year to allow for a period of consultation prior to a final decision in February 2020.

It was noted that details of the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement would normally be announced by Welsh Government (WG) in early October each year. However, due to a combination of the continuing uncertainty around Brexit, along with the delay in undertaking the UK Government spending review; the announcement of the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement for 2020/21 had been delayed.

At the time of writing the report it was anticipated that the Provisional Settlement would be announced on the 26th November 2019, however last week WG confirmed that details will not now be released until the 16th December 2019. To ensure that sufficient time is allocated to consult on the draft budget proposals, Cabinet endorsement is being sought in advance of the announcement. Therefore the draft budget proposals use a start point based on the Medium Term Financial Plan presented to Council on the 21st February 2019, which showed a projected 2020/21 savings requirement of £15.658M based on information available at that time. This position has since been reviewed and based on updated information and a revised set of assumptions an updated savings requirement of £8.485M has been projected, a reduction of £7.173M.

The main reasons for this significant reduction in the savings requirement were noted as an assumed cash flat position in respect of the core funding from WG, an assumption that cost pressures in respect of Teachers Pensions would be fully funded by WG and the proposed increase in Council Tax of 6.95%. It was noted that Caerphilly CBC is currently in the lower quartile compared to other Welsh Local Authorities in terms of Band D Council Tax levels.

Cabinet were referred to the proposed savings detailed in Appendix 2 of the Officer's report which totalled £8.485M and it was acknowledged that identifying the proposals had not been an easy task but thanks to effective budget management and a prudent approach the public had been protected from deep cuts and major disruption to frontline services. The impact of the new authority operating model "Team Caerphilly – Better Together" in delivering efficiencies through process reviews, automation and a review of the council's investment strategy were noted.

In terms of the financial outlook for future years the Medium-Term Financial Plan presented to Council in February 2019 showed a potential savings requirement of £44M for the four year period 2020/21 to 2023/24, however considerable uncertainty remains surrounding the funding position moving forward. With UK Government only completing a spending review for 2020/21 at this stage there is currently no indication of likely funding levels in the medium to long-term. Therefore the Medium-Term Financial Plan has been updated based on current information and a revised set of assumptions, which results in an anticipated savings requirement of £27M for the period 2021/22 to 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix 3 of the Officer's report.

Cabinet agreed that these are unprecedented times and clarification was sought as to what innovative methods were being utilised in order to secure efficiencies. The Interim Chief Executive confirmed that the "Team Caerphilly – Better Together" Transformation Strategy would be used to improve the way we work, enhance relationships with our communities and partners, and to develop proud and trusted staff. By improving and changing ways of working cuts to front line services can be minimised and through exploring commercial opportunities we can generate income to invest in services and help them remain resilient. Using digital technology to unlock and retrain staff would also provide new opportunities for role enrichment whilst securing positive outcomes for service users.

The Interim Chief Executive confirmed that the model presented an exciting agenda for the next 12 months and with strong foundations now in place was looking forward to moving ahead with more pace and energy in the new year.

Cabinet Members acknowledged the positive impact that collaborative working was having in terms of both Education and Social Services.

The consultation process was discussed and Cabinet emphasised the importance in reaching as many people as possible, being mindful of the pre-election period and the limitations that placed on Members involvement, Officers were asked that it be clearly communicated to the public that Cabinet and Councillors would be involved if they could but were unable to do so because of these restrictions.

Clarification was sought on what consultation methods would be employed, particularly in relation to harder to reach residents and communities. It was noted that consultation would be conducted face-to-face, via social media, questionnaire and roadshow events so there would be plenty of opportunities for public involvement.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained within the Officer's report be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

- (i) the draft 2020/21 budget proposals, including the proposed savings totalling £8.485m (inclusive of the proposed use of £800k of Social Services service reserves) be endorsed;
- (ii) the proposal to increase Council Tax by 6.95% for the 2020/21 financial year to ensure that a balanced budget is achieved (Council Tax Band D being set at £1,209.83) be supported;
- (ii) the draft budget proposals now be subject to consultation prior to final 2020/21 budget proposals being presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2020.

5. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE

Cabinet were advised that due to restrictions around the pre-election period two reports scheduled for the meeting on the 27th November 2019 had been deferred until after the election namely – Renewable Energy Generation – Tredomen Campus and Waste and Recycling Collection Systems.

Subject to the aforementioned amendments the Cabinet Forward Work Programme was noted.

The meeting closed at 11.25am.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 27th November 2019.

CHAIR