



## COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 21ST JANUARY 2020 AT 5.00PM

---

---

PRESENT:

Councillor J. Simmonds - Mayor

Councillors:

M. Adams, Mrs E.M. Aldworth, A.P. Angel, J. Bevan, C. Bezzina, L.J. Binding, A. Collis, D. Cushing, C. Cuss, W. David, D.T. Davies, M. Davies, K. Dawson, N. Dix, C. Elsbury, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, Mrs C. Forehead, J.E. Fussell, A. Gair, Ms J. Gale, N. George, C. Gordon, R.W. Gough, L. Harding, D. Harse, D. Havard, A.G. Higgs, A. Hussey, M.P. James, V. James, L. Jeremiah, Mrs B.A. Jones, G. Kirby, Mrs A. Leonard, Ms P. Leonard, C.P. Mann, P. Marsden, B. Miles, S. Morgan, Mrs G.D. Oliver, B. Owen, Mrs T. Parry, Mrs L. Phipps, D.V. Poole, J. Pritchard, J. Ridgewell, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Scriven, G. Simmonds, S. Skivens, Mrs E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas, A. Whitcombe, R. Whiting, L.G. Whittle, T. Williams, W. Williams and B. Zaplatynski.

Together with:-

C. Harrhy (Interim Chief Executive), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services, M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Communities), S. Harris (Head of Business Improvement, Finance and Section 151 Officer), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), S. Pugh (Head of Communications), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

#### WEB-CASTING FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Interim Chief Executive reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed and would be made publically available in live and archive form via the Council's website. She advised that decisions would be made by way of the electronic voting system.

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Andrews, P.J. Bevan, S. Cook, E. Forehead, D. Hardacre, G. Johnston, S. Kent, D.W.R. Preece, D. Price and M. Sargent.

#### 2. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor referred to the many events and visits that he and the Deputy Mayor have undertaken since the last meeting and referred to an upcoming Quiz and Curry Night, proceeds from which would be donated to the Mayor's Charities.

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

Councillor C. Mann presented a petition on behalf of local residents to Switch Caerphilly's Street Lights Back On and Councillor J. Roberts presented a petition from Aber Valley Community Councillor Against the Decommissioning of the CCTV Camera's in the villages of Senghenydd and Abertridwr as part of the 2020/21 Draft Budget Proposals.

### **4. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS**

#### **Idris Davies School – Launch of Loan Shark Awareness Film**

The Cabinet Member for Homes, Places and Tourism advised that by working in partnership with the Authorities Rents Team, pupils from Idris Davies School recently launched their loan shark awareness film.

The Partnership secured £9,000 of funding from the Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit to support local projects that raise awareness of borrowing from loan sharks.

Idris Davies School worked with Dean Richards, a local song writer, to develop and produce a short film and song highlighting the negative impacts of loan sharks. The film which will be used to help educate young people about budgeting and avoiding debt was then played for Council.

Richard Owen – Head Teacher, Davina Parfitt – Head of Middle Phase and pupils Hollie Morgan and Ben Jones were invited to come forward so that their project could be recognised by Council.

#### **Landscape Institute Awards**

The Cabinet Member Environment and Neighbourhood Services advised that the Masterplan for Sustaining Caerphilly's Landscape study has won the Local Landscape Planning Award at the National Landscape Institute Awards Ceremony.

The study, commissioned through Countryside and Landscape Services Regional Development Planning Team, was led by White Young Green who worked with the authority and local community groups to prepare a landscape masterplan based on the principles of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources. The study looks at how to make the landscape work harder for multiple end users, improving resilience to climate change and is based on the resources available to manage the landscape in a sustainable way. The study provides a deliverable and ambitious set of proposals to facilitate a sustainable and collaborative approach to landscape management and public access.

Phil Griffiths, the Authority's Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager, Lee Morris from White Young Green and Jayne Garland from the Community Group were invited to come forward so that Council could recognise their award.

#### **Wales Local Authority Catering Association Awards**

The Cabinet Member for Education introduced the award and was pleased to announce that two Members of the Schools Catering Staff have recently been crowned as 'shining stars' at the Wales Local Authority Catering Association Awards.

Phyllis Levi the Cook in Charge at Blackwood Primary School has worked for catering services for more than 40 years. Her team provides over 1,000 meals a week and Phyllis also has responsibility for managing the Breakfast Club. Phyllis is warm and caring with a big heart, and has an infectious personality which puts a smile on everyone's face which shows through in her strong bond with pupils.

Joyce Handford is a Breakfast Club and Catering Assistant at Coed y Brain Primary School and has worked at the school for more than 41 years. Joyce works extremely hard, going above and beyond what is expected of her to make the service a success. She encourages the pupils to try new things and with her friendly, cheerful attitude helps make them feel special and part of her wider family.

These two very special ladies who are passionate about their job were called forward so that Council could recognise their outstanding work.

### **APSE BUILDING CLEANING AWARDS**

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Neighbourhood Services advised that at the recent Association for Public Service Excellence Awards the Council's Building Cleaning Department won the 'Most Improved Performer in Building Cleaning'. This award recognizes the significant improvements implemented by the team, which covers areas such as quality performance, cost, promoting excellence and commitment to frontline service provision.

Julie Howe, Sharon Tasker, Alison Greenaway, Kelly Thomas and Sharon Smith were called forward so that Council could recognise their award.

### **APSE HIGHWAYS**

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transportation and Sustainability confirmed that at the recent Association of Public Service Excellence Awards the Council's Highways Department won the Most Improved Performer in the Road Highways and Winter Maintenance category.

The Highways Team is responsible for making Caerphilly County Borough a cleaner, safer and greener place to live and staff work extremely hard to ensure the safety of our residents.

Joe Williams, Nathan Jones and Ian Shephard were called forward in order for Council to recognise their outstanding work.

### **SOUTH WALES ARGUS SCHOOL AND EDUCATION AWARDS**

The Cabinet Member for Education introduced The South Wales Argus School and Education Awards which celebrate excellence in schools and education across Gwent. Five Caerphilly schools, Bedwas Infants, Fochriw Primary, Greenhill Primary, Idris Davies and St Martin's Comprehensive were selected as finalists, clearly demonstrating the level of excellence we have in the schools and within our borough.

Council were advised that St. Martin's Comprehensive School won the prize for Secondary School of the Year after having an outstanding academic year achieving its best ever set of results. Fochriw Primary School won the prize for Best Primary School and the schools Heddlu Bach scheme was praised at the ceremony and has been put forward for a Wales wide award.

The Cabinet Member was also delighted to announce that the judges voted unanimously to crown Fochriw Primary as School of the Year, which is testament to the hard work and commitment of the staff, pupils and parents of the school.

The Cabinet Member congratulated all the schools who reached the finals and recognised the dedication of the staff within the schools.

Richard Owen and Davina Parfitt from Idris Davies School and Lisa Jones and Carole Pepperell from Greenhill Primary were called forward so that Council could recognise their achievement in reaching the finals.

Lee Jarvis, Steve Jones and Clare Manson from St. Martin's Comprehensive and Sharon Pasco and Michelle Harris from Fochriw Primary were called forward so that Council could recognise their fantastic achievement and awards.

## **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D. Cushing declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 9 – Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21, in that she had recently made an application under the scheme and could therefore potentially benefit from it and would leave the Chamber when the matter was discussed. Full details are minuted with the respective item.

## **6. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Leader, Councillor Philippa Marsden set out her plans, priorities and aspirations for the future and welcomed a new chapter for the Authority following the significant challenges faced over the past few years.

Entering 2020 with a new sense of shared purpose and direction, The Leader expressed the pride and privilege she felt in undertaking her new role. Members were advised that the recruitment process for a permanent Chief Executive was underway and this appointment would help strengthen the authority's position and bring stability and confidence to the organisation as an exciting journey of transformation begins.

Reflecting on a number of key achievements and success stories delivered over the past few years a short video clip was played in order to better illustrate the fantastic work that this Council has been doing and the positive impact made on the lives of people across the borough. The Leader expressed her thanks to the Communications Team for producing the video and to the staff at every level across the organisation for their ongoing commitment to delivering high quality services. On behalf of all Members she expressed her thanks for their dedication, professionalism and pride in their efforts.

The Leader confirmed that there were no changes to the composition of the Cabinet however portfolio areas had been adjusted and this would provide Cabinet with a renewed focus to better serve the needs of the organisation and residents. In addition to reviewing the roles, there would also be a temporary reduction in the number of Cabinet Members from nine to eight until the end of the financial year which would contribute to the authority's financial savings.

Looking to the future Members were advised that the key focus would be one of transformation and an exciting new programme that will bring positive change across the Council and the County Borough of the next few years. Team Caerphilly – Better Together is an ambitious and bold new venture. The Leader explained the need for the Authority to do things differently, embrace innovation and empower staff, partners and communities to be bold, brave and brilliant in the way they deliver services. It was noted that the use of financial reserves would be looked at in order to invest in this transformation and help delivery the key changes identified as part of service reviews and place-shaping plans.

The pivotal role that each individual Elected Member would have in shaping these plans was explained as their knowledge of their communities would be vital when engaging with local people to ensure positive future outcomes.

Key priorities would be Education, Housing, Regeneration and Transformation as the power and impact of these areas when they are aligned underpins all that we do as an Authority. Consider that children live in families, families create communities and communities bring hope and ambition so everyone can be the best they can be. Council were advised that the Leader would champion these causes and as a passionate trade unionist would do her utmost to uphold those principles in particular protecting and promotion the interests of a diverse and dedicated workforce.

The Leader confirmed that she would continue as the Council's Youth Champion and would continue to promote and protect the interests of young people across the county borough whose voice is vitally important in the democratic process.

In closing, Members were advised that although the budget settlement for 2020/21 was more positive than originally anticipated the Authority cannot be complacent and savings would still need to identified and delivered wherever possible. However the list of draft savings proposals was being reviewed in light of that brighter outlook and feedback from the consultation process would be reflected in any changes made.

The Leader re-emphasised her belief that this is an excellent Council but there was a real need to press the reset button and start a new chapter in history of Caerphilly County Borough Council and she looked forward to working with everyone in order to achieve this.

## **7. MINUTES – COUNCIL – 19TH NOVEMBER 2019**

RESOLVED that the minutes of Council on the 19th November 2019 (minute nos. 1-15) be approved as correct records and signed by the Mayor.

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

To ask the Leader of Council to define the measures in regard to working together with opposition and backbench Councillors in moving issues forward in regard to Team Caerphilly, and how the Leader proposes to make Scrutiny Committees more challenging and effective in dealing with issues of concern for our residents, and if the Leader will make a statement on the new working approach with a timescale and action plan.

Response from the Leader of Council – Councillor P. Marsden

Councillor Etheridge I wondered why you are asking me these questions is it because you are feeling ineffective and superfluous as a Councillor?

Cllr Etheridge you have asked me if I could define measures where opposition can work together and if I will propose how I could make scrutiny more challenging and effective, well for many years we have worked in fair and balanced way, in the way that scrutiny committees and task and finish groups have a pre-prescribed balance of members of the ruling party and members of the opposition groups, so are you obviously asking for your group to have more input into these committees.

As the Independent Group currently refrain from positions offered by the current way of working, in refusing to take up positions on Health & Social Care Scrutiny Committee, Waste Task and Finish Group, Planning and the Disciplinary Committee. I must say I find it very strange that you should be asking for more involvement in democracy when your Group constantly fail to be involved in it as it stands.

Supplementary Question from Cllr K. Etheridge

Ineffective as a Councillor, fair and balanced way, could I then ask the Leader why in her Cabinet she ignored the 5700 named petition from Pontllanfraith Leisure Residents they ignored the 3000 named petition on closing of the public toilets. Could I ask the Leader to refer to the new chapter Shared Purpose and Direction and I'm sure that she would take a more partnership approach with all Councillors in driving Caerphilly forward. Can she confirm how this will be achieved as she has decided not to do an amendment to Cabinet?

Please note a correction to the Leaders Statement as the Independent Group did take up their position on the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

Response from the Leader of Council – Councillor P. Marsden

In relation to the petition etc, I think that you will find that we put a halt to the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre, we listened to the public. Sorry I didn't quite catch all the other things that that you talked about in your question, as obviously there was quite a lot of text in there Councillor Etheridge. So that's all I'm going to say, we have listened to the public and on one occasion we have stopped and halted the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre.

#### **9. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2020/21**

Councillor D. Cushing declared a personal and prejudicial interest in that she has recently applied for a reduction under the scheme and therefore could potentially benefit from it and left the Chamber when the matter was discussed.

Consideration was given to the report which sought Council approval for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2020/21 financial year along with the previously agreed local discretions.

Having fully considered its content and for the reasons given in the Officer's report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation contained therein be approved and by way of the electronic voting system this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme continues for the 2020/21 financial year along with the previously agreed local discretions.

#### **10. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2018/19**

Consideration was given to the report which had been presented and unanimously supported by Social Services Scrutiny Committee in its meeting on the 22nd October 2019.

The Annual Report of the Director of Social Services provides a summary of the effectiveness of the Caerphilly County Borough Council in delivering Social Services to its citizens. Following a format prescribed by CIW it details how the priorities for 2018/19 were address and list the priorities for 2018-19 together with comparable information for 2017/18 and 2016/17.

The challenges in relation to regional working were emphasised and were noted to becoming significant for Social Services departments. Council was advised that the Regional Partnership Boards were becoming the 'vehicles of choice' for Welsh Government in implementing policy changes and as recipients of grant funding to assist partners implement these changes. This regional work is becoming increasingly intensive and time consuming and poses challenges on the engagement of elected members prior to the implementation of new service delivery models. Members were advised that a report on the work of the Regional Partnership Board in Gwent and how it impacts Caerphilly is scheduled for Social Services Scrutiny Committee on the 4th February 2020.

Key achievements were outlined and priorities were outlined and included the development of a Corporate Volunteering Scheme, the opening of second Children's Home, developing services for carers to support them in their caring role, which has seen an increase in the number of people who see themselves as carers. Recruitment within Children Services would continue to be monitored, however the introduction of a market supplements has helped with the recruitment and retention of staff. Other priorities would include the expansion of the discharge to access model in the local hospital, funding for a third Children's Homes and the continued development of Community Hubs, the Gwent Children Partnership and Dementia Care.

Members welcomed the report and the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee confirmed that the Committee had expressed significant concern in relation to the Regional Partnership Board as there was a clear democratic deficit and total lack of oversight in regard to its decision making.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services confirmed that the Regional Partnership Board was the vehicle wanted by Welsh Government and explained that there were five General Cabinet Members for Health on the Board and gave assurances that as one of these Members he would always put Caerphilly County Borough's interests first. Although it was not a vehicle of CCBC making it did furnish a platform to utilise the spending of grant money in a short time frame.

How best oversight could be achieved was under consideration and although post decision scrutiny could be easily accomplished, the greater challenge would lie with how to secure pre-decision scrutiny due to the timeframes involved. The Director of Social Services confirmed that this was conversation he would be more than happy to have with Social Services Scrutiny.

A Member confirmed his intention to attend Scrutiny on the 4th February 2020 as he shared the concerns raised in particular whether the Board was fit for purpose, provide value for money and its lack of accountability. The Cabinet Member advised that the Board had provided a lifeline for service delivery and a great deal of collaborative work would not have been possible without its funding. Although he agreed with the concerns in relation to its governance he assured Members again that he would pursue this with Welsh Government and ensure its continued benefit for the people of Caerphilly.

Members queried how far away we were from securing a full compliment of Foster Carers and Social Workers and were advised that strives had been made in increasing Foster Carer numbers and recruitment was continuing. In relation to Children's Services Social Workers the introduction of a market supplement had made a difference however there was a lot of alternative employment within this field so it would be continually monitored.

Clarification was sought in relation to the increase in delayed transfers of care, percentage of adults who completed a period of reablement and have a reduced package of care and support 6 months later and the increase in the percentage of re-registrations of children on the Child Protection Register.

It was explained that the year on year people are presenting with more and more complex needs and although performance has improved these increasing complex cases require the appropriate packages of care to be put in place before discharge. Although the pressures on the NHS are considered any discharge must be done safely. Reablement provision had been changed from targeted to a more blanket approach, which has cast the net and therefore the number being support has increased.

In terms of the Child Protection Register it was again noted that cases were becoming more and more complex in nature however Caerphilly have performed well and work with partners to ensure that each individual child has the best placement to meet their specific needs.

Members expressed their support for the outstanding work of both Adult and Children's Social Services and the outcomes that they achieve.

Reference was then made to the opening of a second Children's Home and the plans for a third and queried why the move back to building homes.

It was noted that Welsh Government had made capital funding available for more in house provision in order to expand in county and in country placements and this ambition is one shared by Caerphilly County Borough.

The Member asked for assurances and there would be no potential risks to the safety of children by bringing placement in house. It was noted that very often placements were court ordered and would therefore be strictly adhered to, however where placement are need in an emergency this in house provision would be a vital asset and provide a safe place locally for a child.

The Director of Social Services confirmed that no child's safety would be put into jeopardy because of costs. Meeting the needs of the individual child and ensuring their safety would always be the overriding priority. The demand for accommodation for children with complex needs where adoptive or foster care is not possible has exceeded demand and there has been a reliance on the private sector to meet that need. Caerphilly want to have a better balance of in house provision, however should the needs of the child require an external placement for whatever reason be it choice, to be closer to family or for safety reasons then that placement would be provided.

Having fully considered the Director of Social Service's Annual Report it was moved and seconded that it be adopted and by way of the electronic voting system this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2018/19 be adopted.

**TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ITEM UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 16.2(B)**

**11. APPROPRIATION OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES (URGENT ITEM CABINET 27TH NOVEMBER 2019)**

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Constitution requires that any decision taken as a matter of urgency to Cabinet must then be reported to the next meeting of Council, giving the reasons for its urgency and is therefore being presented for Members to note.

The report and reasons for its urgency were noted by Council.

The meeting closed at 18:30pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March 2020 they were signed by the Mayor.

---

MAYOR