



## **CABINET**

### **MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 13TH JANUARY 2021 AT 10.30 A.M.**

#### **PRESENT:**

Councillor P. Marsden (Leader) - Chair

#### **Councillors:**

S. Cook (Social Care), N. George (Waste and Public Protection), C. Gordon (Corporate Services), S. Morgan (Economy and Enterprise), L. Phipps (Housing and Property), J. Ridgewell (Environment and Infrastructure), E. Stenner (Performance and Customer Services) and R. Whiting (Learning and Achievement).

#### **Together with:**

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

#### **Also in Attendance:**

C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), A. Dallimore (Regeneration Services Manager), C. Davies (Private Sector Housing Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), A. Southcombe (Finance Manager – Corporate Finance), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), M. Woodland (Senior Solicitor), S. Harris (Head of Corporate Finance and Section 151 Officer), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

#### **Observing:**

Councillors C. Mann and J. Pritchard

### **RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Leader reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here To View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services and Housing).

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

**3. CABINET – 9TH DECEMBER 2020**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2020 were approved as a correct record.

**4. SPECIAL CABINET – 16TH DECEMBER 2020**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2020 were approved as a correct record.

**5. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE**

Cabinet were provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports from 13th January 2021 to 27th January 2021. Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and therefore subject to change.

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.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme be noted.

**6. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2021/22**

The report provided Cabinet with details of the draft budget proposals for the 2021/22 financial year to allow for a period of consultation prior to a final decision by Council on 24th February 2021.

Cabinet noted that that 3.1% uplift in the Provisional Finance Settlement along with the proposed increase in Council Tax of 3.9% will mean that there will be no requirement for any new savings to be identified to balance the budget for 2021/22 financial year.

In addition, it was noted that the proposals will also maintain service provision across the Council, fund increasing demand and service pressures in key areas such as Social Services and Education, enable new community focussed investments in areas such as Caerphilly Care and the proposed Community Empowerment Fund, Provide the capacity and resilience required to drive forward the Team Caerphilly Transformation Programme and 'Place Shaping' investments and address legacy issues in respect of income shortfalls in a number of service areas.

Cabinet noted that the Council is on a journey of recovery, improvement and transformation and the proposals set out in the report will provide a sound platform to move forward with the ambitious plans.

Members noted that the Financial Settlement does not cover the financial implications of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, both in terms of the additional costs that continue to be incurred and income losses. These will continue to be funded through grants and the position will be kept under close review as the new financial year approaches.

Whilst the 3.1% uplift in the Financial Settlement is welcomed, the future funding situation for Local Government is likely to be challenging due to the unprecedented fiscal impact of Covid-19 and the strain that will put on public finances for years to come.

Cabinet were asked to note that section 5.4 of the report provided details of the financial outlook for the four-year period 2022/23 to 2025/23 and significant savings will be required

moving forward. Members were assured that the Council is well placed to deal with this challenge and the Transformation Programme will be the key driver in ensuring that financial resilience is maintained in future years.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Members discussed the report at length and sought further information around support for vulnerable residents. Cabinet were assured that 16,800 households receive support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, with up to 63% receiving 100% relief.

Discussions took place around property Bands and it was noted that 79,754 properties in the Borough are between Band A and C, a percentage of 76.02%. In comparing Band D costs, it was noted that compared to a neighbouring Authority, Caerphilly charge £527 lower than Blaenau Gwent.

In discussing Community focussed investments, maximum community benefit was paramount, and following discussion, it was noted that a criteria and process would be devised and presented to Cabinet prior to implementation.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

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

- i) The draft 2021/22 budget proposals be endorsed;
- ii) The proposal to increase the Council Tax by 3.9% for the 2021/22 financial year to ensure that a balanced budget is achieved (Council Tax Band D being set at £1,230.57) be supported;
- iii) The proposal to appoint four fixed-term project managers for an initial period of 2 years to support the delivery of the Council's Transformation Programme and "Place Shaping" agenda, with the total cost of £368k being funded from a £1.8m reserve previously approved by Council to support the delivery of the MTFP be endorsed;
- iv) the draft budget proposals now be subject to consultation prior to final 2021/22 budget proposals being presented to Cabinet/Council in February 2021;
- v) the indicative potential savings requirement of £20.7m for the four-year period 2022/23 to 2025/26 be noted.

## **7. TEACHERS PAY AWARD 2020-21**

The report provided Cabinet with details and subsequent implications relating to the Teachers September 2020 pay award, outlined details of a funding shortfall and provided a proposal with regards to how this could be funded in the current financial year.

The report provided details of the teachers pay award for September 2020 and the subsequent financial implications for the Authority if the strategy is to fully support uplift in funding, for this purpose, to our schools. It was noted that an in-year grant from Welsh Government does not find this cost in full (circa 50%).

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of and by verbal confirmation and Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report: -

- i) A proposal to fund the estimated shortfall relating to the teachers' pay award (pre-16 learners) in 2020-21 of £286k be agreed;
- ii) This shortfall be funded from the in-year projected underspend within Miscellaneous Finance budgets.

## 8. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL CAR PARKS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The report, which was considered by the Joint Scrutiny Committee (Environment and Sustainability and Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committees) on 15th December 2020 outlined the findings of the Caerphilly County Borough Council Car Parks Task and Finish Group and the recommendations supported by the Joint Scrutiny Committee, and sought Cabinet approval of the recommendations.

It was noted that the report Appendix 1 outlined the findings and recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, which was established to consider car parks in the Caerphilly County Borough. This was considered and debated by the Joint Scrutiny Committee who supported some of the recommendations, including a proposal for the same hourly rate at all car parks across the county borough, with a suggestion that this be a 70p starting tariff. Further suggestions for the use of free car parks close to schools to reduce congestion and removal of parking charges at country parks, with the exclusion of Cwmcarn. Some were not supported, which included offering reduced parking permits for local businesses and the introduction of charges at park and ride car parks due to concerns that this would result in increased parking in residential areas. A number of recommendations were deferred for consideration following the Pandemic, which included the non-enforcement of charges on St Davids Day, introducing charges at free car parks and further recommendations were deferred for a further report to the relevant Scrutiny Committee on zoning and residential parking areas.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

A Cabinet Member sought assurances that Enforcement Officers will have the appropriate powers to allow parents to utilise the car parks to minimise congestion and sought further information around funding for the new pay and display machines. Officers assured Members that Officers will be instructed not to enforce parking penalties to parents in certain car parks at school times. In addition, it was noted that there will be a shortfall as a result of the reduced parking charges and free parking in some country parks, which has been written into the budget proposals. It was also noted that grant funding of £172k has been secured to assist with funding new pay and display machines, however Officers explained that additional funding of £178k will be required from Capital Earmarked Reserves in order to fund the machines.

Following consideration and discussion and with the inclusion of an additional recommendation at *vii*), it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report and including the additional recommendation at *vii*): -

- i) The current hourly tariffs at publicly available pay and display highway owned car parks be standardised across the county borough for long term and short-term parking respectively. It is suggested that charges are set at a current lower level;
- ii) Parking charges at the 5 country parks agreed in 2014 be removed in order to recognise the significant health benefits to residents;

- iii) Where there are car parks in close proximity to schools, that are having parking issues during school drop off and pick up times, Officers be given discretion to allow a free parking concession to parents/carers for a limited time and in consultation with local ward members;
- iv) The current approach to the use of car parks for trading and events be allowed to continue and Officers be permitted to continue to use discretion in respect of applications that have community benefit;
- v) Opportunities to improve existing CCTV be explored where grant funding or match funding is available;
- vi) A programme to upgrade pay and display machines across the county borough be agreed and implemented.
- vii) *The residual funding requirement of £178k to upgrade pay and display machines be funded from Capital Earmarked Reserves.*

## 9. ENFORCED SALE POLICY

The report, which was considered by the Joint Scrutiny Committee (Environment and Sustainability and Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committees) on 15th December 2020 outlined a proposal to set out a framework for Caerphilly County Borough Council to use statutory powers under the Enforced Sale Procedure with a view of targeting long-term problematic empty properties, and to bring these properties back into use where possible.

It was noted that long-term empty properties can have a negative impact on the visual amenity in the immediate neighbourhood and cause nuisance to adjacent occupiers. Therefore, an Enforced Sale Policy will aim to free up public sector resources, recoup debts owed to the Authority, improve local communities and may increase the supply of affordable housing.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and highlighted some of the comments from the Scrutiny Committee, which were detailed in the covering report and included concerns that this proposed policy would only apply to empty properties and if elements of the criteria are weighted for example where there are debts or does a property vacancy trigger the enforced sale procedure, for which assurances were provided at the meeting, and detailed responses to the queries outlined within the covering report.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Queries were raised in relation to the Policy and Enforcement and it was noted that following inspection of the properties and debts accrued above £500, support can be offered to owners to source grants or loans in order to bring the properties back into use. However, should the owner pay the debts, the Policy can no longer be utilised.

A Member raised queries around the inspection criteria, which was detailed within 5.7 of the report and noted that the information is received from Annual Council Tax information, inspections are undertaken, and risk assessments carried out, along with consideration of complaints and neighbours etc. properties presenting the highest risk are then targeted.

Following consideration and discussion the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of and by verbal confirmation and Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

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

- i) The adoption of an enforced sale policy as an enforcement tool for Caerphilly

County Borough Council's use be agreed;

- ii) A figure of £500 be adopted as the level of debt at which this policy can be implemented.

The meeting closed at 11.29am

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 27th January 2021.

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CHAIR