

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet meeting held on Thursday 18th January, 2017
at 10am at the Council Headquarters, Clydach Vale.

County Borough Councillors – Cabinet Members in attendance:-

A.Morgan (Chair),

R.Bevan M.Forey A.Crimmings G. Hopkins

J.Rosser M.Webber E.Hanagan

Other County Borough Councillors in attendance

C Leyshon, C Middle, G Smith, G Davies,

P Griffiths, M Griffiths, M Davies

Officers in attendance

Mr C Jones – Director, Legal & Democratic Services

Mr C Hanagan – Director, Cabinet & Public Relations (Secretary to the Cabinet)

Mr C Lee – Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services

Mr G Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children’s Services

Mr T Wilkins – Director, Human Resources

Ms E Thomas – Temporary Director, Education & Lifelong Learning

Mr N Wheeler – Director, Highways & Streetcare Services

Ms M Warburton – Human Resources Advisor, Equality & Diversity Team

Mr R Waters – Service Director, Highways & Streetcare

108 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interest made pertaining to the agenda.

109 MINUTES

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 24th November, 2016 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

110 REVIEW OF CAR PARKING CHARGES

The Service Director, Highways & Streetcare Services presented the report to the Cabinet with detailed feedback from the 6-week public consultation period during November – December 2016 with respect to proposed changes to the Council's existing car park charging regime and to help inform a cabinet decision on the way forward.

The Officer explained that, although the Council continues to support town centres through a range of initiatives and promotion strategies with the current Council administration freezing car parking charges, there was a continuous need to provide more support as shopping habits change.

It was explained that a public consultation exercise took place from the 3rd November 2016 to the 15th December 2016, which provided a clear outcome that reductions in car parking charges would be welcomed by the general public.

The officer added that the potential reduction of car parking charges could be perceived as encouraging car usage at a time when there are initiatives promoting active public transport but this would encourage more local car journeys, rather than longer journeys to out of town retail sites.

The Leader of the Council took the opportunity to thank the officers for their hard work during the consultation process, commenting that the feedback received was positive and enlightening.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Tourism & Planning referenced meetings which took place with the local traders, advising that they were very cooperative and responsive to the proposals and welcomed Council initiatives.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Social Services referred to the proposed new regime contained within section 5 of the report, commenting that rounded tariffs would be more convenient for residents.

The Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning referred to the Equality and Diversity Implications outlined in section 6 of the report, noting that the authority does not charge disabled drivers using the disabled parking

bays and that it was pleasing to see that the proposal did not seek to change this aspect of the policy.

With the agreement of the Chairman, County Borough Councillors C Leyshon, C Middle, G Smith, G Davies, M Davies and P Griffiths were granted permission to speak on this item. All County Borough Councillors were in favour of the proposals, commenting that it was a continuous priority of the Council to increase footfall in the town centres, and that the implementation of these changes would only add to that.

Councillor P Griffiths expressed concerns over the current lease tenure arrangements in place at Pontyclun town centre car park, commenting that the any changes to the agreement would have to be discussed with Pontyclun Community Council.

Discussions continued with the Leader of the Council questioning officers on the annual level of income from smaller car parks. The Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services explained that the income was dependent on the town centre and could, of course, differ year to year but was approximately £60,000-65,000. With this in mind, the Leader proposed to introduce free parking in Pontyclun, Tonypany, Porth and Mountain Ash town centres. The Leader proposed that, based on feedback received during the consultation period, the current recommendations remain the same in respect of Aberdare and Pontypridd town centres, with traders aware that these are of a larger scale and would still benefit from reductions.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Tourism and Planning welcomed the Leader's recommendation, commenting that it would be highly beneficial for residents and traders and that it would echo current Council initiatives such as the VVP Programme in Pontypridd, the heritage money in Aberdare and the reintroduction of the maintenance budget.

Cabinet Members spoke positively of this proposal, adding that free parking would benefit the smaller town centres by encouraging local car journeys and boosting the local high street economy.

Following further discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

- a) That in Pontypridd and Aberdare, the Council's car parking charges, including season ticket charges, be revised as per the proposed new tariffs consulted upon
- b) That a flat rate of £1 for all day parking is introduced across long-stay car parks for Saturdays in Pontypridd and Aberdare.

- c) That the Council retain the existing period of a month of free parking, after 10am, across car parks in Pontypridd and Aberdare town centres during the month of December.
- d) That a feasibility study be undertaken with regard to the possible future introduction of card payment facilities and mobile technology
- e) To introduce free parking in Pontyclun, Tonypany, Porth and Mountain Ash town centres and to authorise the responsible Directors to take forward discussions with Pontyclun Community Council in respect of the Lease Tenure arrangement for Pontyclun car park.
- f) To introduce a maximum-stay parking restriction of 4-hours across Council short-stay pay and display car parks and at those short-stay car parks where charging has been abolished.
- g) To reaffirm the Council's commitment to continue providing free car parking for disabled badge holders in disabled parking bays in all Council car parks
- h) That these changes be implemented on 1st April, 2017.

N.B County Borough Councillors G Davies and C Middle left the chamber following this item.

111 WALES INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION SERVICE

The Equality & Diversity Advisor provided Members with an update on the proposal to transfer the hosting of the shared service of the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) from Gwent Police to the County Council of the City and County of Cardiff.

The officer advised that being a partner of WITS is beneficial to the Council in a number of ways including sourcing interpreters, the credibility and reliability of interpreters, costs effectiveness and ease of use.

Cabinet Members were assured that the transfer of the host of the organisation would have no operational impact and that the financial status of the WITS was monitored on a quarterly basis with safeguards in place to ensure organisations cannot withdraw without notice.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Equalities and the Welsh Language commented that the WITS service is predominately and regularly used by our Children's Services teams for translation for contact sessions, child protection investigations, school meetings and parenting assessments and that it would be in the Council's favour to continue to operate as a WITS partner.

Following further discussions, it was **RESOLVED:**

- a) That the Council continue to operate as a WITS partner with the County Council of the City and County of Cardiff being the new hosts.

N.B County Borough Councillors M Davies and G Smith left the chamber following this item.

112 SAFELY MANAGING CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services provided Cabinet with an update on the numbers of Children Looked After within Rhondda Cynon Taf, to make Members aware of the actions being taken to ensure that those who are looked after remain looked after for the shortest period possible.

The officer explained that the rates of children looked after continue to rise and remains a priority locally and nationally.

Questions formulated around the reasons children become looked after, at a time when the economy is growing. It was explained that the reasons why children become looked after are complex, including an interaction of demographic and socioeconomic trends but that it was vital for the authority to have a sufficient early intervention process in place.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Equalities and the Welsh Language was pleased to note that despite the rise in CLA placements, the authority continued to manage the costs effectively.

The Cabinet Member made reference to section 7 of the report, speaking positively of the development of a team to challenge the decisions made internally.

Cabinet Members were pleased with the progress shown within the report, commenting on the importance of addressing this issue safely and collaboratively.

Following further discussions, it was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the information contained within the report and the actions being taken to address areas of further improvement.

113 KEY STAGE 4 AND KEY STAGE 5 EXAMINATION RESULTS AND PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORISATION FOR 2017

The Temporary Director, Education & Lifelong Learning provided Members with the final confirmation of the Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 examination results and the draft Welsh Government Primary and Secondary School Categorisation for 2016-17.

The officer explained that, overall, education performance in RCT at Key Stage 4 had made a positive improvement in 2016 with a number of schools making significant progress.

Members were referred to section 5 of the report, where they were pleased to see that the gap between the achievements of learners eligible for free school meals compared to those learners not eligible for free school meals had reduced. However, it was explained that there were still nine schools in the authority, this year, which are still performing below the three-year rolling average target set by the Welsh Government of 32% for the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and mathematics.

The officer explained to the Cabinet Members that although there had been improvements since last year, there still remained a gender gap between boys and girls throughout RCT. To address the underperformance of the boys when compared to the girls' the focus has to continue to be on improving literacy standards in primary schools and at Key Stage 3.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong learning spoke positively of the report, explaining that no school was left unsupported and that the aim was for them all to move out of the red category. The Cabinet Member added that publicised data had resulted in a change in ethos within the education department, in that there was an element of healthy competition between schools to improve.

The Leader of the Council took the opportunity to thank the officers of the Council and the Consortium for their hard work, commenting that difficult decisions had been made resulting in significant improvements in the past seven years.

Members were pleased with the results contained within the report and the commitment to go on to achieve even better educational outcomes in 2017 and onwards.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the information contained within the report.
- b) To note the action taken to date and the action planned to be taken by the Temporary Director of Education and Lifelong Learning in partnership with the Central South Consortium to support those primary and secondary schools in Categories Amber and Red.

114 COUNCIL CORPORATE AND SERVICE SELF ASSESSMENTS

The Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services presented the report to Members for them to consider the corporate and service self assessments of the Council for 2016.

The Officer explained of the need for all organisations, whatever their size, to identify their agenda for improvement, promote innovation and sector-leading practice and improve the quality of their products and services to meet the changing needs and demands of their customers or service users.

Members were reminded of the success of the self assessment process last year and were referred to Appendix A where the further developed model was outlined. The officer advised that the corporate self assessment considers the performance of the corporate body of the Council. The corporate self assessment was based on the Wales Audit Office questions that are posed to local authorities as part of the WAO's Corporate Assessment audits.

Cabinet Members were referred to section 6 of the report where the key areas for improvement had been identified since conducting the Corporate Self Assessments.

The Leader of the Council praised the process outlined within the report and took the opportunity to thank service areas, the Deputy Leader and the Chief Executive for their willingness to scrutinise, challenge and improve services.

The Deputy Leader spoke of her experience in conducting the challenge meetings, commenting that it not only identified the good but recognised areas in which to be improved on, thus placing RCT in a better position.

Cabinet Members **RESOLVED:**

- a) To review the corporate self assessment and consider whether it is an accurate and robust reflection of the position of the Council and its services.
- b) To require the Chief Executive to make any appropriate adjustments and to present this report to the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee for their review at the next possible meeting.
- c) To request that the areas for improvement identified in the corporate and service self assessment are incorporated into the Council's Corporate Performance Report for 2017/18, which is audited by the Wales Audit Office.

The meeting closed at 11am

Cllr A Morgan

Chair