

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet meeting held on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2016 at 2pm 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    M.Norris            E.Hanagan

### **Other County Borough Councillors in attendance**

C Leyshon

#### **Officers in attendance**

Mr C Bradshaw – Chief Executive

Mr P Lucas – 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, HR

Mr B Davies – Director, Financial Services

Mr N Jones – Service Director, Operational Finance

Ms E Thomas – Temporary Director, Education & Lifelong Learning

Mr C Atyeo – Director, Corporate Estates & Procurement

Mr N Wheeler – Director, Highways & Streetcare Services

Mr P Mee – Service Director, Public Health & Protection

Mr A Griffiths – Head of Highways & Engineering

Ms C O'Neil – Strategic Arts & Culture Manager

Mr D James – Head of Communities & Prosperity

## **90 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

## **91 MINUTES**

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

## **92 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The Secretary to the Cabinet provided Members with an update on the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by Cabinet over the 2016 – 17 Municipal Year, commenting that utilising the programme assists with openness and transparency of the decision making process within the Council and gives greater opportunity for Pre-Scrutiny.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report to consider the information set out in the work programme. Members were advised that the programme is a live document to allow for any additional / deletion of reports throughout the year.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Approve the Updated Work Programme for the 2016-17 Municipal Year (with appropriate amendment where necessary) and receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis.

## **93 SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS - GOVERNING BODIES ACROSS RCT**

The Secretary to the Cabinet provided Members with the conclusions and recommendations of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Working Group, which conducted a review in respect of the effectiveness of the Governing Bodies across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Cabinet Members were referred to Section 4 of the report where it was explained that the Working Group had identified four areas for consideration, which were believed to improve the effectiveness of the Governing Bodies across RCT and ultimately improve the quality of outcomes for school children.

The Chair of Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee was provided with an opportunity to speak on the item and advised that the Group were due to meet again in January, once Welsh Government had introduced the new legislation in respect of Governing Bodies.

The Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning expressed her gratitude towards the Working Group for their valuable work in challenging and identifying issues within the service.

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

- a) To note the review provided by the Council's Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee provided in Appendix A of the report.
- b) To agree in principle the recommendations contained within the report, subject to further consideration by the Cabinet Portfolio holders for the area, following which a detailed response is provided to the relevant Scrutiny Committees.

#### **94 PRE SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS – DIGITAL WORKPLACE – AGILE WORKING**

The Secretary to the Cabinet presented the report, advising Cabinet Members of the scrutiny arrangements in place in respect of Digital Workplace – Agile Working. The officer advised that a successful meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had occurred and the results would be reported back to Cabinet Members in the future, to assist with any decisions.

The Cabinet Members agreed that the development of agile working opportunities was a key corporate priority and took the opportunity to thank the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in strengthening accountability.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services added that he looked forward to hearing the results.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the arrangements in place in respect of Pre-scrutiny
- b) To consider the report at a future meeting following pre scrutiny by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

#### **95 ARTS CONNECT**

The Secretary to the Cabinet provided Members with a report of the works of ArtsConnect.

Members were advised that ArtsConnect enables people across the region to be creatively active by supporting arts services to collaborate in terms of participation and programming opportunities. The officer explained that ArtsConnect is key to demonstrating the value of the arts locally, regionally and nationally.

Cabinet Members spoke positively on the works of ArtsConnect, commenting that it was pleasing to see the continuous collaborative work between local authorities to provide high quality experiences for their visitors.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure & Culture took the opportunity to praise ArtsConnect, commenting that it's a thrilling provision to be part of. The Member referred to the Forte Project launch, explaining that it was an exciting scheme which would provide vast opportunities to the talented musicians emerging across South Wales.

Cabinet Members **RESOLVED:**

a) To note the contents of the report regarding the works of ArtsConnect.

## **96 THE COUNCIL'S HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES**

The Director, Human Resources provided the Cabinet Members with a report, informing of a recent review in respect of the Council's Human Resource policies.

The officer advised that as a consequence of the recent Welsh Language Measure, all of the Council's Human Resource policies had to be reviewed and the full revision of the said policies including the required translation was anticipated to be completed by the end of January 2017.

Cabinet Members were advised that the review would be conducted on an annual basis to ensure the Council continue to meet the requirements in respect of employment legislation.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee. The Member commented on the importance of adhering to legislation to ensure effective practice across the Council.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the content of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Boards Annual Reports for 2015/16.
- b) To endorse the priorities identified for 2016/17.

## **97 MOUNTAIN ASH CROSS VALLEY LINK**

The Director, Highways & Streetcare Services presented the report to the Cabinet to seek approval for the submission of a planning application for the Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link and subject to a successful planning application and obtaining funding, authorisation for the making, confirming and implementation of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link.

Cabinet Members were advised that the development of the link would bring connectivity within the region, resulting in less congestion and greater economic opportunities for residents.

The Leader of the Council praised the project, explaining that if achieved, it would be a fundamental improvement on the A4509, highlighting the Council's commitment to investing in highways infrastructure.

The Cabinet Members recognised the positive feedback from residents and the opportunities the project would bring in respect of investment to the area.

Following further discussions, the Cabinet **RESOLVED** to authorise the Director, Highways & Streetcare:

- a) To submit a planning application for the Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link
- b) That subject to the grant of planning permission and the obtaining of funding to take all steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the CPO for Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link in respect of the land identified on the plan at Appendix A including but not limited to, the following procedural steps:
  - Seeking confirmation of the CPO by the Welsh Government (or, if permitted, by the Council pursuant to Section 14A Acquisition of Land Act 1981), including the preparation and presentation of the Council's case at any Public Inquiry which may be necessary.
  - Publication and service of notices of confirmation of the CPO and thereafter to execute and serve any General Vesting Declarations and/or Notices to Treat and Notices of Entry.
  - Referral and conduct of disputes, relating to compulsory purchase compensation, to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber).

## **98 NATIONAL ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016**

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services shared with the Cabinet the National Adoption Service Wales Annual Report 2015-2016.

The Cabinet Members were reminded of the six key priorities identified at the last meeting and were advised that overall, these points had been met or would be continued to be worked on in 2016-2017.

Cabinet Members were pleased to be presented with an update, commenting on the importance of the service within the County Borough.

As this was the first annual update since the report had been established, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Equalities & the Welsh Language commented that it would be useful for himself and the Cabinet Member for

Education & Lifelong Learning to invite the Director, National Adoption Service to a future meeting to provide further briefing.

Following further discussions, the Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

a) To note the contents of the report.

## **99 NATIONAL ADOPTION SUPPORT FRAMEWORK**

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services updated the Cabinet on the work that is being undertaken to develop a common Wales wide policy for the payment of financial allowances in adoption cases.

Members were referred to Section 6 of the report, where the current position in respect of national policy was identified. The officer explained that the implications for RCT would not be identified until the report had been finalised.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Equalities & the Welsh Language commented that it was pleasing to see an overdue review of the service and that improving and making consistent arrangements for timely placement of children was a key priority.

Following further discussions, the Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

a) To note the contents of the report.

## **100 TACKLING POVERTY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS: PROGRESS REPORT**

The Service Director, Public Health & Protection presented the report, updating Members on progress made since the report to Cabinet of 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015, that set out the recommendations following a strategic review into the Council's approach to tackling poverty. This included:

- The creation of one Tackling Poverty Service that brings the tackling poverty programmes and the commissioning of services together to support their integration for greatest effect.
- The restructuring of Communities First to include a strategically delivered "core offer" of intervention/activity across all eight Clusters, but retaining an element of local flexibility through community involvement activity and local engagement staff.

Cabinet Members were referred to section 5 of the report where the progress was outlined. The officer assured the Members that overall, the progress made in implementing the tackling poverty review had been positive and in line with the priorities of Welsh Government.

The Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Well-being & Communities thanked the officers for their work in conducting and implementing the review, commenting

that it was pleasing to see a stream-lined and single approach which provides a good footing for the future.

The officer explained that the Council would await guidance from Welsh Government in respect of the Communities First programme with the Leader adding that the changes already made as a Council indicates a good position for the future.

Cabinet Members **RESOLVED:**

- a) Note the information contained within the report.
- b) Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

## **101 WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Director, Education & Lifelong Learning presented the Cabinet with a draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-2020 for their approval for submission to Welsh Government by 20<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

The officer referred Members to the draft strategy at Appendix 1, advising that WESPs are expected to be implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, with the plan being published by 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning highlighted the Council's positive commitment to the Welsh Language Standards and ensuring its duty to promote and facilitate the language across the County Borough. The Member advised that this commitment would continue to be reflected through education but that parental choice would remain an important factor.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Equalities & the Welsh Language spoke positively on the plan, commenting that the previous WESP had developed significant changes into Welsh Language investment and that there was a lot to celebrate.

The Secretary to the Cabinet advised that in order to submit the plan to Welsh Government, the decision would be treated as a matter of urgency.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To consider the objectives contained within the WESP, put together in consultation with key internal and external stakeholders
- b) That as part of the required process, approve the document for submission to Welsh Government by the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

## **102 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chief Executive presented the report to the Cabinet, setting out the Council's performance management arrangements in a formal Performance Management Framework, and how they are being implemented.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report, with the Chief Executive assuring that the Council had made positive progress in the delivery of its performance management arrangements.

It was explained that the Council remained committed to delivering robust financial management and governance arrangements which would continue to evolve, not least with the implementation of the Well-being Act.

Cabinet Members spoke positively on the contents contained within the report, commenting that the WAO were complimentary of the governance arrangements in the authority.

The Leader praised the internal challenge sessions conducted within the Council, which continued to identify areas for improvement and development across the service areas.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To consider the content of the Performance Management Framework
- b) To review and challenge the arrangements in place
- c) That subject to any changes, agree to the publication of the Performance Management Framework, as part of the Council's overall governance arrangements.

## **103 COUNCIL TAX BASE 2017-18**

The Service Director, Operational Finance presented the report to the Cabinet, intending to formally set the Council Tax Base for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 for tax setting purposes and to set the level of discount applicable to properties considered as second homes, long-term unoccupied and unfurnished properties.

The officer reminded Members that it is a statutory requirement to agree and set the Council Tax base for the forthcoming financial year prior to 31<sup>st</sup> December each year.

Members were referred to section 3 of the report where the Council Tax Base 2017-18 was outlined. The officer advised that the gross Council Tax base calculated for 2017/18 was £76,900.74 and in determining the net Council Tax Base for 2017/18, a collection rate of 97.5% had been estimated.

Members considered the contents contained within the report and following further discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

- a) That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations 1995 as amended, the amount calculated by the Council as its net tax base for the financial year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, shall be £74,978.22.
- b) That for each area of the County Borough, the 2017/18 tax base for Council Tax setting purposes, shall be as shown at Appendix 1.
- c) To set the level of discount at: -
  - 0% - for those properties falling within Class A and Class B of the Prescribed Classes of Dwellings Order
  - 50% - for those properties falling within Class C of the Prescribed Classes of Dwellings Order.

#### **104 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information which relates to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority that holds that information).

#### **105 WRITE OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS**

The Service Director, Operational Finance provided Members with a position statement on irrecoverable debt.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To agree to write-off the accounts set out in the attached schedule to the appropriate Bad Debt Provision contained within the Council's accounts (if further information on any debt becomes available, payment to be pursued).
- b) To note the issues raised in respect of the recommendations of the Social Care & Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 in paragraph 5 regarding revised debt collection processes and the impact this may have on future recovery of such debt.

## **106 PRIVATE FINANCIAL INITIATIVE**

The Director, Financial Services provided Cabinet Members with an update on progress following the decision to voluntarily terminate the Council's Private Finance Initiative ('PFI') Contract in respect of the Lifelong Learning Centre at Garth Olwg.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

- a) Note the contents of the report and update with regards to the ongoing voluntary termination process of the PFI Contract relating to the Lifelong Learning Centre, Garth Olwg
- b) To receive any further information in respect of the ongoing voluntary termination process at this juncture
- c) To note that details of the commercially agreed termination settlement will be reported to Cabinet once the arrangement has been concluded.

## **107 CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Director, Corporate Estates and Procurement presented the report in respect of progress with implementation of the work plan of the Corporate Asset Management Plan for Property Assets 2013/2018 (AMP).

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the contents of the report

**The meeting closed at 14:45pm**

**Cllr A Morgan  
Chair**