



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF

### RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 21 November 2019 at 10.30 am at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

#### County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor R Bevan
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor G Hopkins
Councillor M Norris	Councillor J Rosser
Councillor R Lewis	Councillor C Leyshon

#### Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive  
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services  
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services  
Mr P Mee, Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services  
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources  
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates  
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development  
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services  
Ms W Edwards, Service Director – Community Services  
Mr. M. Phillips, Revenues Services Manager

#### 66 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of interest were received:-

- County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings declared a personal interest in respect of Item 3 "I am a Member of the Llwydcoed Crematorium Committee"
- Mr N Wheeler, Group Director, Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services declared a personal and pecuniary interest in respect of Item 13 and left the meeting when the item discussed "I am on the Amgen Board"
- Mr B Davies, Director, Finance and Digital Services declared a personal and pecuniary interest in respect of Item 13 and left the meeting when the item was discussed "I am on the Amgen Board"

#### 67 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

## 68 Direct Cremations

The Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services provided the Cabinet with the report, which proposed that the Council pilot a reduced cremation fee for funeral directors offering direct or simplicity cremations in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Director spoke of the increase in funeral costs, which can be unaffordable to those on the lowest incomes and advised of the increase in demand for a more affordable “direct”, “simplicity” cremation or “cremation without ceremony”, where a funeral director arranges a service with no mourners and brings the deceased directly to the crematorium with no religious service or attendees. The Director proposed that the Council offer a 12 month pilot of a reduced fee of £560 for a direct cremation, which is comparable with other crematoria in Wales that offer this service and would provide assistance to those who struggle to meet funeral costs.

The Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being & Cultural Services endorsed the proposal and was pleased to see that it would offer greater choice for residents and help towards tackling poverty, whilst meeting the demand for a non-traditional funeral.

The Leader and Deputy Leader spoke positive of the proposal and requested that it be clearly advertised on the Council’s website and that families are notified of the option when registering a death, to which the Director confirmed.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve a twelve month pilot of a reduced cremation fee for funeral directors offering a direct cremation service in Rhondda Cynon Taf; and
2. That the fee is set at £560 with effect from 1st December 2019.

## 69 Developments in the funding and delivery of Adult Community Learning

The Service Director, Community Services provided Members with information in relation to the future of Adult Community Learning.

Due to a number of significant changes to the funding and delivery of community based adult learning over the coming years, the officer advised that there was an opportunity to review the current County specific partnership model in Rhondda Cynon Taf and to explore the potential of developing a wider Cwm Taf Morgannwg Adult Community Learning Partnership with colleagues in adjoining Counties.

The Service Director explained that cross-boundary Adult Community Learning Partnerships were now the norm in Wales as they can offer significant advantages to learners and economies of scale to the organisations involved in delivery. An example given was the 5 Counties of the former Gwent have pooled all resources to a central pot and the partnership is administered by the local FE institution (Coleg Gwent).

Members were referred to Section 5 of the report, where the potential benefits and potential risks of a partnership approach were outlined for their consideration.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion Services questioned if RCT

had the capacity to take a potential partnership forward and the Service Director advised that the initial step would be thorough discussions with Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend Councils to ensure resources can be pooled together and that there is an understanding of the challenges.

The Leader and Deputy Leader agreed that it was a great initiative but placed emphasis on the need for all the Local Authorities to show commitment and to be mindful of their capacity, before reporting back to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the initiation of discussions with Merthyr CBC and Bridgend CBC for the establishment of a Cwm Taf Morgannwg Adult Community Learning Partnership by September 2020.

## **70 Council Tax Base for 2020/21**

The Head of Revenues and Benefits provided the Cabinet with the report, which formally set out the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2020/21.

The officer advised that the gross Council Tax Base calculated for 2020/21 was £79,317.31 and proposed that the collection rate continues to be estimated at 97.5%. This produces a net Council Tax Base of £77,334.38. This meant that for every £1 levied in Council Tax next year, a sum of £77,334 would be generated to meet the budget requirement of the Council.

The Leader thanked the officer for the report and commented that he hoped Community Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner would be responsible with their rates. The Deputy Leader added that it would be discussed at the next meeting of the Community Liaison Committee.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. 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 2020/21, shall be £77,334.38; and
2. That for each defined community area of the County Borough, the 2020/21 tax base for Council Tax setting purposes, shall be as set out at Appendix 1 of the report.

## **71 Council Performance Report (Quarter 2)**

The Director, Finance and Digital Services provided Members with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first six months of the financial year (to the 30th September 2019).

The Director discussed in detail the Executive Summary of the report, which included financial data and progress against the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. The Director spoke of the recent announcement from Welsh Government that additional one-off funding would be made available for the preparations for winter and new emergency care measures across the health and social care system. It was explained that once confirmed, the specific impact for Rhondda Cynon Taf would be

incorporated into future Performance Reports.

The Cabinet Member, Corporate Services spoke positive of the report and in particular, the £152.226M Capital investment, which included 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools, highways, Community Hubs, agile working, town centre regeneration scheme, extra care, leisure and parks. The Member was also pleased to note that the sickness absence rate was lower than that of the same time in the previous year.

The Deputy Leader echoed the Cabinet Member's comments and stated that the level of investment was down to robust financial management. The Deputy Leader spoke on behalf of the community about the investment in the local play areas with the Leader commenting that 112 play areas within RCT had been subject to investment.

The Leader spoke of the projected overspend of 1.67M in the quarter and the pressures within Social Care across Wales. The Leader advised that Local Authorities continued to lobby Welsh Government for funding to alleviate the growing pressures.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

#### Revenue

1. To note and agree the General Fund revenue position of the Council as at the 30th September 2019 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary) and note that the allocation of additional one-off Welsh Government funding to support preparations for winter and new emergency care measures across the health and social care system will be incorporated into Performance Reports later in the year.
2. To approve the virements listed in Sections 2a - e of the Executive Summary that exceed the £0.100M threshold as per the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

#### Capital

3. To note the capital outturn position of the Council as at 30th September 2019 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
4. Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 30th September 2019 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

#### Corporate Plan Priorities

5. To note the quarter 2 position regarding progress made against the agreed Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – d of the Executive Summary), Other National Measures (Section 5e of the Executive Summary) and comparison of 2019/20 targets set against prior year and 'All Wales Average' performance information (Section 5f of the Executive Summary).

## **72 Council Tax Premiums - Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes**

The Director, Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with information

concerning the discretionary powers that the Council has to charge higher amounts of Council Tax (a premium) on certain properties provided for by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and requested that they consider a formal period of consultation on a proposal to introduce a premium.

The Director informed the Cabinet that despite the removal of a 50% discount in the council tax in April 2018, there remained over 2,000 long-term empty properties across Rhondda Cynon Taf, with 40% owned by people living outside of the Borough. It was proposed that a Council Tax Premium is introduced on long-term empty properties at 50% for those which have been empty for up to 5 years. The level of premium would then increase to 100% for those properties which have been empty for more than 5 years.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services spoke positive of the proposal, commenting that a premium on the council tax bill would hopefully encourage more property owners to bring their empty homes back into use.

The Deputy Leader was encouraged by the proposal and sought assurance that officers would hold a robust and broad engagement process.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the details of the discretionary powers relating to Council Tax Premiums as outlined in this report;
2. To initiate a consultation exercise on the proposed use of these powers in respect of empty properties as set out in Section 9 of the report; and
3. That a report, including the results of the consultation exercise, be presented to full Council to consider and determine the proposed way forward.

### **73 Supporting Town and Retail Businesses in Rhondda Cynon Taf - Local Business Rate Reduction Scheme**

The Director, Finance and Digital Services provided Members with details of a proposed new Business Rate Reduction Scheme, which would provide town centre and retail businesses with help towards their business rates liability during the financial year 2020/21.

The Director spoke of the Welsh Government (WG) High Street and Retail Rates Relief Scheme (HSRR) for 2019/20, which increased the level of relief available to qualifying businesses to £2,500 (subject to state aid limits) for all occupied retail properties with a rateable value of £50,000 or less. In order to support the town centre and retail businesses further for 2020/21, the officer proposed that a further local discretionary relief be provided in addition to the WG HSRR of up to a maximum of £300 per qualifying business.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services welcomed the proposal, commenting that the additional support would help small businesses thrive and maintain vibrant town centres.

The Leader praised the proposal and stated that Rhondda Cynon Taf would be the only Local Authority in Wales to provide the additional support for small businesses. The Leader hoped that Welsh Government would continue the level of relief available in their future budget.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. That a consultation exercise be undertaken on the proposed scheme; and
2. To receive a further report outlining the results of the consultation exercise in order to determine whether and if so how to proceed with the scheme.

**74 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) - Use of RIPA in 2018-19 by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**

The Director, Legal Services provided Members with an annual update on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (as amended) ('RIPA') for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and confirmed that it had been used in a consistent and appropriate manner with the two corporate policies. Members were given assurance that the policies are kept under constant review and any changes required would be reported to Cabinet at the appropriate time.

The Deputy Leader thanked the Director for the update and stressed the importance and effectiveness of RIPA.

1. To note the contents of the report; and
2. To acknowledge that RIPA has been used in an appropriate manner that is consistent with the Council's RIPA policies during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

**75 The impact of the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000 on charging for spare seats on mainstream school / college transport**

Following an announcement from the Leader, that further information had been received from Welsh Government about a potential extension of time for the implementation of the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR), Members **RESOLVED:**

1. To defer the consideration of the item until the New Year.

**76 Welsh Language Steering Group Recommendations - List of Standardised Welsh Place-Names**

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group, which considered a report of the Welsh Language Commissioner's revised recommendations for their List of Standardised Welsh Place-names.

The Service Director advised that during consideration of the report at the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group meeting, Members were unanimous in their feelings towards adopting any of the recommended changes to the place names within RCT and remained of the view that any proposed changes should be consulted upon with the Local Member and community prior to implementation. Therefore, the Steering Group agreed to recommend that Cabinet refuse to adopt the List of Welsh Place-names as applicable to Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Service Director drew Members' attention to section 7 of the report and explained although the Steering Group had due regard to compliance with the Welsh Language Standards when formulating the recommendations made to Cabinet, as with any decision taken by the Council, the Commissioner may

determine to review compliance with those standards in line with its regulatory powers.

The Leader and Deputy Leader both spoke of the Commissioner's List and conveyed their disappointment that it was not subject to public consultation prior to its publication. Having due regard to the legal advice provided, Members agreed to approve the implementation of the List of Welsh Place-names as applicable to Rhondda Cynon Taf in part excluding the four significant changes relating to Treorchy, Rhydyfelin, Llanwono and Treforest, as recommended by officers in the report considered by the Steering Group.

Cabinet Member for Adult Community Services & Welsh Language and Chair of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group advised that he would write to both the Welsh Language Commissioner and Welsh Government Minister on behalf of the Council to express the concerns of Members detailed above.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report considered by the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group on the 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2019 and;
2. To approve the implementation of the List of Welsh Place-names as applicable to Rhondda Cynon Taf in part excluding the four significant changes relating to Treorchy, Rhydyfelin, Llanwono and Treforest.
3. That the Chair of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group writes to the Welsh Language Commissioner and Welsh Government Minister to express the Local Authority's disappointment that the List was not subject to consultation prior to its publication.

**77 To consider Passing the Following Resolution:**

It was **RESOLVED:** "That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph XX of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

**78 Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited - Annual General Meeting**

**(Note:** Having previously declared an interest (Minute No. 66), the Director, Finance and Digital Services and the Group Director, Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services left the meeting prior to this item)

The Director, Legal Services provided Members with an overview of his report which contained exempt information. Members were referred to the appendices of the report which provided the financial statements of the Companies which are to be presented to the Annual General Meetings ('AGM's') of the Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited (the 'Companies'), to be held at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019 at the Amgen Education Centre, Bryn Pica, Llwydcoed, Aberdare.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the current intention to continue the operation of Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited (the 'Companies') as Local Authority controlled companies into the future is confirmed;
2. Subject to the Head of Finance – Education and Financial Reporting being satisfied that there are no irregularities in the accounts of the Companies that the accounts be received on behalf of the Council;
3. That Baldwins Audit Services Limited be re-appointed as auditors to the Companies for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020;
4. The Directorships of the Group Director – Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services and the Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services for both Companies continue;
5. To note the appointment of a Non-Executive Director to the Board of the Companies with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019;
6. That the Director of Legal Services and/or his nominee be authorised to exercise the Council's vote at the Annual General Meetings of the Companies in accordance with recommendations 2(ii) to 2(iv) above; and
7. That the Council be represented at the Companies' Annual General Meetings by a Cabinet Member.

#### **79 Leader's Scheme of Delegation**

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication updated Members with the changes to the Leader's Scheme of Delegation and it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the Leader's Scheme of Delegation; and
2. To note that the Leader of the Council is able to amend the Scheme of Delegation relating to executive functions at any time during the year; and that an update of the 3A will be presented to Members at the next meeting of the Cabinet.

**This meeting closed at 11.30 am**

**Cllr A Morgan  
Chairman.**