



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET**

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 23 January 2020 at 10.30 am at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypandy, CF40 2XX.

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

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor R Bevan
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor M Norris
Councillor R Lewis	Councillor C Leyshon

### **Officers in attendance**

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

### **Others in attendance**

Councillor G Davies

#### **91 Apology for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor J. Rosser.

#### **92 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no Declarations of Interest made pertaining to the agenda.

#### **93 Minutes**

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

#### **94 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 contents of the Leader's Scheme of Delegation
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.

#### **95 Recycling within RCT - Recommendations of the Climate Change Steering Group**

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, which considered a report on the recycling performance for the first 6 months of 2019/20, the new Materials Recovery Facility, future developments at Bryn Pica and potential legislative changes.

The Service Director informed Members that following discussion at their meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019, the Steering Group were of the view that RCT Council is at the forefront of continuous improvement in the area. The Steering Group felt that the Council is in a positive position to change the recycling target to 80% by 2024/25, in conjunction with a suitable marketing campaign informing resident enforcement action will be taken if they do not recycle.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and;
2. To change the recycling target to 80% by 2024/25.

#### **96 Taffs Well Thermal Spring - Recommendations of the Climate Change Steering Group**

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, which considered a report on the current situation with regards to the Taffs Well Spring Renewable Energy Project.

The Service Director informed the Cabinet that at their meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019, the Steering Group were provided with a detailed PowerPoint presentation, which sought to explain the background to the project, the proposed way forward and the cost implications. The Steering Group were particularly pleased to learn that the current expected core project was expected to save 37.1 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and agreed to recommend to Cabinet the approval of the project.

The Leader and Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the Steering Group for their work and the Local Member for pushing forward such a positive project.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report considered by the Climate Change

- Cabinet Steering Group on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and;
2. To approve the next steps of the project.

**97 National Adoption Service Wales Annual Report 2018-2019**

The Service Director, Children's Services provided the Cabinet with the National Adoption Service for Wales Annual Report, which is required to be brought before Cabinet as part of Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and Section 15(c) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Regulations)(Wales) Directions 2015.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report, where the Annual Report for 2018-19 was detailed. They learned that there had been an increase in the number of children placed for adoption and that the recruitment of parents remained a challenge. The officer went on to speak of the £2.3M investment from Welsh Government, which had been established to support the priorities and potentially improve the performance.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

**98 Delegate authority to enforce the provisions of the Renting of Homes (Fees etc) (Wales) Act 2019**

The Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services provided the Cabinet with the report, which sought delegated authority to the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services and to the single Licensing Authority in Wales (Rent Smart Wales) to use the enforcement powers of the Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019.

The Director spoke of the Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019, which came into force on 5th May 2019. It was explained that letting agents and landlords who manage their own properties are prevented from charging any fees before, during or after a tenancy unless specifically exempt in the Act.

The Director drew Members' attention to Section 4.4 of the report, where the permitted payments that can be required by letting agents and self-managing landlords was outlined. It was explained that the enforcement of the new requirements could be undertaken by the Council and Rent Smart Wales and would contribute to a fairer and more transparent experience for tenants relying on the private rented sector.

Prior to discussion, the Director advised Members of an error in Section 2.1 of the report and asked that should they be minded to approve the recommendations, the word 'of' be removed from 'Renting of Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019'.

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and the Welsh Language spoke positive of the Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019, commenting that it improves the rights of tenants, whilst providing financial security to residents.

The Deputy Leader queried whether the Act would have a positive effect on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), to which the Director confirmed that it was a positive step forward in that respect and would prevent loan agreements etc.

The Cabinet were happy to provide support, subject to the amendment of Section 2.1 and it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To give delegated authority to the Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services for enforcing the provisions of the Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019 and note that the Monitoring Officer would make any consequential amendment(s) required to the Council's Constitution; and
2. To give delegated authority to the Operational Manager for Rent Smart Wales for enforcing the provisions of the Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019 on behalf of Cardiff City Council and note that the Monitoring Officer would make any consequential amendment(s) required to the Council's Constitution.

## **99 The Council's 2020/2021 Revenue Budget**

The Director, Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with information in respect of the 2020/2021 local government settlement and the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 exercise, to assist with deliberations in formulating the revenue budget strategy for the financial year 2020/21.

The Director drew Members' attention to Appendix A of the report, where a discussion paper had been prepared by the Council's Senior Leadership Team in response to the 2020/21 Local Government Settlement. The officers had due regard to the new draft Corporate Plan "Making a Difference" 2020-2024, when formulating the proposals set out in the report. The report detailed officer's views, which is to levy the Council Tax for 2020/21 at a level which balances the desire for fair and equitable service provision, with the need to recognise the impact that excessive tax burdens can have on local households.

The Director spoke of the *Provisional* 2020/2021 Local Government Settlement, which projected RCT Council's increase in resources to be set at 4.5%. It was explained that, whilst the Council's overall financial position remains sound, its level of General Fund Balances are not excessive. Therefore, it must retain its focus on holding a minimum level of General Fund Balances of £10M, in order to mitigate any risk of future budget instability. Alongside this, there is the opportunity to pragmatically use the Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve as transitional funding without compromising the Council's financial stability, or reducing our General Fund Balances below £10M.

In respect of setting the level of Council Tax, the Director, spoke of reasonable and approach, which would balance the impact upon services and the ability of the public to pay. He continued by informing the Cabinet of the feedback from Phase 1 of the consultation process, which sought the views of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee, residents and stakeholders in relation to the key strategic building blocks used to construct the Council's budget. Members noted that the original modelled proposal was to increase Council Tax in 2020/21 by 3.00%, but it was proposed that Council Tax be increased by 2.85% instead, which would increase the remaining budget gap by £0.132M.

The Director drew Members' attention to Section 8 of the Senior Leadership Team report where the 2020/21 Budget proposals were set out for Cabinet consideration. The proposals sought to continue to protect the frontline services

and prioritise key areas, such as the School's Budget (ISB) increase from £148.9M to £161.6M, an increase of £12.7M, or 8.5%.

The Director provided detail into the following proposals:

- NDR Local Relief Scheme
- Youth Engagement / Youth Offending
- Paddling Pools
- Prudential Borrowing for Investment in our Infrastructure
- Supporting the Muni Arts Centre
- Fees and Charges
- Home to School Transport Re-tender Savings
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)
- Supported Accommodation Strategy and Savings

The Director concluded by informing the Cabinet that should they be minded to approve the proposals before them, Phase 2 of the consultation would commence with immediate effect. The draft Budget Strategy would be presented to Cabinet for approval on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and then to Council for ratification on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

The Leader took the opportunity to thank the Senior Leadership Team, finance officers and service managers for the robust report, which would allow the Council to further reduce the budget gap, whilst maintaining or increasing key services for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Leader was pleased to note that the proposals showed the largest cash increase for schools at almost 13M, 9.3M increase for social care, 13% increase in the youth provision budget and £50,000 for paddling pools. The Leader advised that whilst significantly investing in its services, RCT had proposed possibly the lowest increase in Council Tax in comparison to its neighbouring Local Authorities, where service cuts were still being proposed.

Referring to the Phase 1 consultation feedback, the Leader advised that 80.8% of residents indicated that they would pay a 3% increase in Council Tax to maintain the current level of services, and that the proposed increase was in fact 2.85%.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services also took the opportunity to thank the officers for the comprehensive report. The Cabinet Member welcomed the proposal, commenting that although under significant pressures, the Council remained focussed on uplifting areas such as schools and youth provision.

The Deputy Leader spoke of the consultation process and was pleased to note that 90% of the residents consulted agreed on the 5 key priority areas; and went on to thank OPAG, the County Youth Forum and the Disability Forum for their valued input. The Deputy went on to speak of the investment into the Muni Arts Centre, YMCA and Taff Vale developments, which would contribute to making Pontypridd a vibrant town centre.

Discussions ensued around the proposal to include £50,000 in the Budget Strategy for paddling pools. The Cabinet recognised the success stories and added value of involving community groups for wider developments.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Heritage Services spoke of the 50p increase for adult swims at the Lido, commenting that it was pleasing to

see that residents value the facility and are willing to pay more.

With the agreement of the Leader, as Chairman of the Committee, County Borough Councillor G. Davies spoke on the item, to which the Cabinet Members responded.

In response to the Member's suggestions, the Leader emphasised the need to prioritise across service areas, whilst strongly taking into consideration, the impact that excessive tax burdens can have on residents.

Discussions ensued around youth provision, with Cabinet Members commenting that the Council's investments in education, town centre Wi-Fi, leisure, play areas, theatre and sport groups all benefit young people as the people of the future. Members also spoke of the Council's Graduate and Apprenticeship Scheme, which provides young people with training, skills and employment opportunities, despite being a revenue cost to the Council.

The Leader advised that other political Groups were welcome to put forward alternative budget proposals for consideration.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services proposed freezing the charges for school meals for two years, after the 5p increase in 2020/2021, to which the other Members agreed.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note that the procedures relating to revenue budget construction, the budget consultation process, and reporting to Council, are set out in the "Budget and Policy Framework" within the Council's Constitution;
2. To note and consider the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 process;
3. The draft 2020/2021 Revenue Budget Strategy, detailed in the attached Discussion Paper 'Appendix A', as the basis upon which a second phase of consultation will take place;
4. To propose freezing the charges for school meals for two years, after the 5p increase in 2020/2021;
5. The draft timetable for setting the 2020/2021 revenue budget as set out at Appendix A2;
6. To receive feedback from the second phase of budget consultation in order to consider and determine the final budget strategy for submission to Council; and
7. That the Council continues to support the medium term financial strategy aimed at maximising ongoing efficiency in service delivery, targeted service transformation and other changes that maintain the financial integrity of the Council whilst still aiming as much as possible to protect jobs and key services.

## **100 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".

**101 Corporate Asset Management Plan Interim Update**

Following the consideration of the report of the Director, Corporate Estates containing exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To increase the target to 35% for the reduction of the office accommodation footprint by 2021/22.

**102 Write Off of Irrecoverable Debts**

Following the consideration of the report of the Director, Finance and Digital Services containing exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To write-off the accounts set out in Appendix 2 to the appropriate Bad Debt Provision contained within the Council's accounts (if further information on any debt becomes available, payment to be pursued).

**This meeting closed at 11.45 am**

**Cllr A Morgan  
Chairman.**