



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 14 January 2021 at 3.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

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

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Mr C Nelson, Transportation Manager

45 Declaration of Interest

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

46 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of 3rd December 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

47 2021 Census Update

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with an initial update on the planning arrangements for the 2021 Census and the requirements on the Local Authority to work in partnership and assist the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The Service Director informed the Cabinet that the Census would adopt a 'digital

first' approach, which Members were familiar with from previous engagement due to the current circumstances with Covid-19. It was noted that it would be essential for the Council to work with residents to ensure that the process is as accessible and inclusive as possible.

In order to shed light on long-term trends, while also reflecting the changing society in which we live today, Members were informed of the following three additional areas of information, which would be covered in the 2021 Census:

- previous service in the UK Armed Forces
- gender identity
- sexual orientation

In addition, it was explained that the ONS would provide support for schools in terms of raising awareness of the Census.

The Deputy Leader thanked the Service Director for the report and commented that Census information is vitally important in helping the Council with its forward planning. The Deputy Leader was particularly pleased to note the inclusion of the Armed Forces question and explained that no Council in Wales currently held the appropriate information in relation to serving war veterans.

The Deputy Leader acknowledged the challenges of a digital approach during the current restrictions, but was confident that the Council would provide support to its residents to ensure the Census is accessible.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Council provides support to the ONS for the 2021 Census process;
2. That the support, as in previous years, will be coordinated by the Council's Census Liaison Managers with the support of other departments where identified; and
3. To await further updates leading up to the 2021 Census and a summary of the data post Census in early 2022.

48 Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2019-2020

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with the fifth Annual Report for the Corporate Parenting Board for the 2019-2020 Municipal Year.

The Service Director referred the Cabinet to Section 5 of the report and explained that despite the circumstances with Covid-19 and a number of cancelled meetings, the Corporate Parenting Board had considered a range of reports during the Municipal Year and had set out its key areas of focus for the 2020-2021 Municipal Year.

The Service Director added that the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, as the responsible Cabinet Member, had attended the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 13th January 2021 to answer any questions the Members had in respect of the Annual Report.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services explained that the Corporate Parenting Board consisted of cross-party Elected Members and officers, who meet on a regular basis as critical friends, to support, challenge and strive to

ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and young people in RCT. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that there was a rise in number of children who become looked after, both on a local and national level, but remained committed to ensuring that the children and young people of Rhondda Cynon Taf are safe from harm and given the care and support that they deserve, regardless of numbers.

The Cabinet Member took the opportunity to thank the officers and Members of the Corporate Parenting Board for their work during the year and added that the report was welcomed by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 13th January 2021.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To provide comment as appropriate on the Annual Report.

49 National Adoption Service Wales Annual Report 2019-2020

The Service Director, Children's Services provided the Cabinet with the National Adoption Service Wales Annual Report for the 2019-2020 Municipal Year.

The Service Director explained that the National Adoption Service for Wales (NAS) was launched in November 2014, bringing all local authorities in Wales together into a unique collaboration for the delivery of adoption services.

The Service Director informed the Cabinet that during the year, there had been a reduction in demand for the Local Authority but advised that during the beginning of the 2020-2021 year, the demand for adopters had increased. As such, the Service Director explained that a suitable supply of adopters was an area of focus moving forward, both on a regional and national level.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services thanked the officer for the report and acknowledged that during the year there had been a reduced demand for adopters but commented that it was likely due to the looked after prevention initiatives undertaken. The Cabinet Member echoed the importance of increasing adopters going forward and informed the Cabinet that, despite the circumstances with Covid-19, the adoption process had continued throughout with a business as usual attitude.

Prior to concluding, the Cabinet Member noted the improvements made to the Life Journey Work during the year, which was vital for the young people.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of the report.

50 Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) - Request to all Councils to sign up to the BES 2 Scheme

The Service Director, Frontline Services, presented to Cabinet the report, which set out the wider context, the background to, and reasons for the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) and sought the agreement of the authority to sign up to the BES 2 scheme.

The Service Director spoke of the detrimental affect the Covid-19 pandemic had had on bus services. The Service Director explained that the social distancing measures had significantly reduced the passengers and therefore buses were

often running at a financial loss.

Members were informed that furlough arrangements had supported those drivers who were currently not working, but emphasised the need for additional support to maintain a network of services in place during the Covid-19 emergency. As such, Welsh Government, working with Transport for Wales had requested that Local Authorities agree to the principles of the BES 2 scheme, which builds upon previous funding packages announced earlier in 2020, in order to protect the services.

The Service Director referred the Cabinet to Appendix 2 of the report and explained that the BES 2 agreement seeks to exert more control over the services to ensure they are efficient and more complimentary to the network of rail services within the area.

Members were informed that Monmouthshire County Council were the lead authority for South East Wales and were assured the Rhondda Cynon Taf Council would ensure an agreement is in place with Monmouthshire County Council to ensure its specific needs are met.

The Leader acknowledged the huge amount of work put in by officers and took the opportunity to thank them. The Leader commented that bus services do not have a regular income stream due to the fall in passengers and that without the funding, the service would simply not be sustainable in the current circumstances.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Heritage Services echoed the comments of the Leader and expressed her gratitude to officer for their continued dedication throughout the pandemic.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To the principles of the BES 2 agreement (Appendix 2) to secure (conditional) financial support for the bus sector and to establish a relationship with Monmouthshire County Council, as signatory and the lead authority for South East Wales, that ensures that the ongoing emergency funding meets this authority's priorities and is delivered on its behalf;
2. To delegate authority to the Group Director Prosperity Development and Frontline Services to negotiate and agree any further amendments to the agreement that may be required following Cabinet approval; and
3. To call for a further report on bus reform proposals relating to the future management of bus services in Wales.

This meeting closed at 3.20 pm

**Cllr A Morgan
Chairman.**