



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 18 October 2021 at 10.00 am

Details of the webcast for this meeting can be found [here](#)

County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan

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 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
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Ms L Lawson – Performance Manager

65 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct County Borough Councillor M Norris declared the following personal interest in respect of agenda item 6 - The Council's Approach To Tackling Empty Homes, which is set out in the Empty Homes Strategy for the Period 2018-2021:- "I have made an application to the Valley Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme".

66 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the 21st and 23rd September Cabinet meeting as an accurate record, subject to the inclusion of a formal apology from Councillor Norris in respect of the 23rd September meeting.

67 GAMBLING ACT 2005 - STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES (LOCAL POLICY) 2022 - 2025

The Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services provided Members with a report which consider the revised Statement of Principles, under the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005 (i.e. the local policy statement for the

management of gambling activity within the boundary of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council), for the period 2022 – 2025 in accordance with statutory requirements.

Members were advised that there is a statutory requirement to review the Statement of Principles on a 3 yearly basis and the current statement had therefore been subject to review. The Director advised that that the current Statement of Principles (2019-2022) remains broadly fit for purpose, however they had been reviewed to take account of legislative change and best practice.

The Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being and Cultural Services commented on the report and the required review that needed to be undertaken highlighting the minor amendments that were being suggested within the principles as highlighted in 4.6 of the report before Members, which strengthened safeguarding arrangements for children, which the Member welcomed.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That following consideration of the new Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Principles (Local Policy) 2022-25 to commend to the statement of Principles to Council for adoption in line with statutory requirements.

68 RCT THEATRES: 2021 CHRISTMAS OFFER SCREENINGS

The Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services provided Members with a report which sought Cabinet approval for screening RCT Theatres' 2021 digital Christmas offer of 'Aladdin' at the Coliseum and Park and Dare Theatres free of charge, following the change to covid restrictions.

The Director explained that the offer would provide a festive family experience that was close to the regular festive offer. Members were provided details of the proposal which was to screen 'Aladdin' over a series of dates in December 2021 at each of the Council's theatres with tickets available free of charge to ensure equitable access to the Christmas offer for residents and children who may be digitally excluded.

The Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well Being and Cultural Services welcomed the proposal and the opportunities for families with the free production. The Cabinet Member reflected on the difficult time experienced by the Arts and Culture service due to the pandemic and the positive position this opportunity provided going forward, while still ensuring public safety.

The Leader echoed the comments of the Cabinet Member and spoke of the activities missed out by young children and families due to the pandemic and the positive position the proposal provided in offering the screening to families to enjoy.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve the proposal to screen RCT Theatres' digital Christmas offer of 'Aladdin' at the Coliseum and Park and Dare Theatres in December 2021 as a cinema experience with tickets available free of charge.

69 LIVING LANDSCAPES PROJECT

The Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services provided Members with an update on the progress made with the Living Landscapes Project and sought approval for the future progression of the Project to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

Members were advised that the Project had identified key programmes of work across 29 potential locations that would be of significant benefit to promoting the biodiversity of areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Director sought Cabinet consideration to progress appropriate external funding applications related to the Pilot areas and deliver the Pilot phase of the Project as set out in the report.

The Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being and Cultural Services thanked the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group for their consideration of the project over previous months and commented that the Authority was rich in biodiversity opportunities as illustrated with the 29 key locations identified within the report. The Cabinet Member welcomed the advancements being made with project and referenced the extreme weather events witnessed across the County Borough and how some of the proposals would assist with water management across the landscape.

The Deputy Leader spoke of the climate change agenda and its high priority for the Council and referenced the importance of engaging with the voluntary sector to take forward this agenda.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. That following consideration of the current progress of the Living Landscapes Project and the work highlighted within the report to further enhance the countryside and natural habitats of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Cabinet agreed to approve the list and delivery of the 29 sites identified by the Living Landscapes Project and associated funding arrangements

70 THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO TACKLING EMPTY HOMES, WHICH IS SET OUT IN THE EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD 2018-2021

The Director, Prosperity and Development provided Members with an update on the progress being made with the implementation of the Council's approach to tackling empty homes, which is set out in the Empty Homes Strategy for the period 2018 -2021.

Members were advised that despite the covid pandemic steady progress had been made with the implementation of the strategy and Members were given an overview of the types of work undertaken. The Director advised that the Council's approach to tackling empty homes was having a positive impact on the number of empty homes across the borough, with 1,144 interventions delivered over the last 2 years, which was above the provisional target of 400 per year. It was highlighted that 501 properties had been brought back into use through the strategy.

The Director concluded by advising that the current RCT Empty Homes Strategy was coming to an end therefore, extending the current strategy would allow time for a new strategy to be developed in readiness for implementation in April 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Housing spoke positively of the outcomes identified through the strategy and the large number of properties being brought back into use.

The Leader thanked the officers involved in taking forward the strategy for their hard work and spoke of the importance of the grant funding received to help assist in the development of projects and initiatives within the strategy.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the information contained within this report and the progress made in bringing empty properties back into use in line with the RCT Empty Homes Strategy.
2. To approve that the current RCT Empty Homes Strategy be extended until March 2022, with a new strategy being developed for implementation in April 2022.

(**N.B** At the conclusion of this item the Leader left the meeting.)

71 THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22

The Performance Manager provided Members with an overview of the Council's draft Corporate Performance Report (CPR) which contained progress for 2020/21 and plans for 2021/22 in respect of the Council's strategic priorities. It was also advised that the report before Members set out how the CPR enables the Council to meet its statutory reporting requirements.

Members were advised that the draft report for 2021/22 had been prepared against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and the content had been challenged and reviewed by Officers. The Performance manager explained that the report demonstrated the positive progress made over the last year in the context of the global, national and regional challenges in 2020/21, and puts in place ambitious and clear plans for the Council for 2021/22.

The Deputy Leader agreed that the report was an accurate reflection of the Council's position and provided information across all Council services of how well the Council were delivering to meet the needs of the residents and users of services across the County Borough. The Deputy Leader noted the challenges faced by the Council in respect of the covid pandemic and the extreme weather events which were reflected within the performance report.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services thanked officers for the comprehensive report, which he commented reflected the difficulties experienced over the past 12 months but also illustrated the improvements accomplished during such difficult times.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To endorse the draft Corporate Performance Report attached as Appendix 1 to the report and recommend its approval by Council on 20 October 2021.

72 ENGAGEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET 2022/23

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication informed Cabinet of the proposed approach to resident engagement and consultation in respect of the 2022/23 budget setting process, which looked to provide residents with the opportunity, via a range of methods, to provide feedback to the Cabinet on the budget setting process.

Members were advised of the proposed approach considered which would be taken forward across 2 phases. The first phase would take place in the autumn of 2021 and would aim to collect views on investment priorities, council tax levels and efficiency savings. Phase 2 would take place early in the New Year and provide opportunity to engage with residents on the draft strategy proposed by Cabinet. The Service Director advised that the specific dates were dependent on the release dates of the Welsh Government Settlement.

The Deputy Leader spoke of the importance of the engagement with the public in respect of the Council's budget and spoke of the options available to undertake such engagement through a mixture of online and face to face engagement.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To support an online approach to the Council's budget consultation for 2022/23, using the Council's new Let's Talk Engagement website along with the re-introduction of some face-to-face events in the community. Agreed that as part of the suggested approach, the Council will continue to provide alternative means of engagement for those having reduced or no access to the Internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods.
2. To support the Council's statutory requirements regarding consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax levels, which will be met via the proposed approach.
3. To support the budget consultation process taking place during the autumn of 2021, with the dates to be confirmed following clarification of the Welsh Government budget settlement timescales.
4. To authorise the Service Director – Democratic Services & Communications to plan the necessary timeline of engagement once the details of the Provisional Local Government Settlement are known, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member & Director of Finance & Digital Services.

73 UPDATE ON THE EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS AND PRUS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Director, Education & Inclusion Services provided Members with an overview of the progress the authority had made in relation to recommendations from the overarching thematic report Estyn published in January 2021, which involved a thematic review of practice across all 22 local authorities across Wales.

Members were provided with positive progress updates in relation to each of the 5 themes identified by Estyn and the Director advised that the authority would continue to work in close partnership with the regional School Improvement

Service and all its schools to ensure that strong progress is made against all the recommendations identified by Estyn in the thematic report.

The Cabinet Member for Education & Inclusion Services welcomed the report and the encouraging feedback provided through the engagement meetings and commented on the positive progress made against the recommendations.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. That following consideration of the Estyn's letter on the Council's work to support schools to provide a quality provision during 2020-21, to note the report.

74 LEADERS SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communications provided Members with an update in respect of the recent changes by the Leader to the Scheme of Delegation, which included a change of membership to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering group and some admin updates to the scheme to reflect the changes within the Senior Leadership Team.

Members **RESOLVED** to note the update.

This meeting closed at 10.41 am

**Cllr M Webber
Vice Chair.**