



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

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

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 26 September 2022 at 1.00 pm.

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

Councillor M Webber    Councillor G Caple  
Councillor C Leyshon    Councillor M Norris  
Councillor B Harris

#### **Officers in attendance**

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive  
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services  
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services  
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development  
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services  
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates  
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services  
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion  
Ms A Richards, Temporary Service Director - 21st Century Schools and Transformation  
Catherine Silver, Interim Service Manager For Carers, Direct Payments And Service User Engagement

#### **40 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors A. Crimmings, R. Lewis, and A. Morgan.

#### **41 Declaration of Interest**

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

#### **42 Minutes**

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

#### **43 Cabinet Work Programme**

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with an update on the Cabinet Work Programme, which included the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by Cabinet over the 2022-23 Municipal Year

The Deputy Leader and Chairperson commented that the Work Programme strengthens the Council's decision making process and allows for the timely scheduling of Pre-Scrutiny items

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the updated Work Programme for the 2022-23 Municipal Year (with appropriate amendment where necessary) and to receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis.

#### **44 Council Performance Report (Quarter 1)**

The Service Director, Finance & Improvement provided Members with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first three months of this financial year

The report summarises the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 30th June 2022 (quarter 1).

The Quarter 1 revenue budget position is projecting a £10.405M overspend. This full year projection, forecasted at June 2022, takes into account estimated increases in demand for services, particularly social care services; additional inflationary cost pressures, for example, home to school contract costs; and where less income is anticipated to be received by services due to reduced take-up, for example, Leisure Services. Work is underway as part of the Council's robust financial and service management arrangements to review all areas of expenditure and income, in parallel with on-going discussions with Welsh Government around additional funding requirements, to bring the revenue position closer in line with budget by year-end.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement advised that the Capital investment as at 30th June 2022 is £13.842M, with a number of schemes being re-profiled during the quarter to reflect changes in costs and updated delivery timescales, and also new external grant funding approvals received during quarter 1 being incorporated into the Capital Programme. The Capital Programme for the year ahead represents the continuation of a long-term programme of investment that is supporting visible improvements to infrastructure and assets across the County Borough.

The Cabinet Member Climate Change and Corporate Services commented that the report sets out significant challenges services are facing due to the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK cost of Living Crisis.

The Cabinet member relayed her concerns at the increased pressure on Social Services which have seen increased demands and costs. Other

significant pressures had also been placed on Home to School Transport with the costs of fuel also impacting this service. Leisure Services were also facing increased pressure due to lower numbers of people reported to be using the services due to the Cost of Living Crisis. She advised the Cabinet that a prioritised programme of work is underway which includes how the council will fund the National government Pay Scheme and Capital programme Investment. This represents long term investments into School Modernisation Programmes, Highway Improvement works and site works for Extra Care facilities and supported accommodation. Progress is also underway to install Electric Vehicle Charging Points at 30 Council run Car parks.

The Deputy Leader stated that we are facing a hard winter which will impact on a wide range of Council led services including social care. She reassured that managers are striving to see where savings can be made, however, this would not resolve the pressures alone. She concluded that communications with Welsh Government is ongoing and she was confident they will also lobby Westminster to deliver funding.

The Cabinet Member Prosperity and Development added there is a huge amount of investment going into Rhondda Cynon Taf of pressures we are facing such as fuel and food prices having impacts. We are doing the best we can to put lots of investment into RCT, though we appreciate we cannot continue should the pressures continue and call on National Government to pass on the funding to support the cost of living crisis.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the context of the Council's Services managing the on-going effects of communities recovering from the pandemic and more recently the United Kingdom wide cost-of-living crisis, both of which are contributing to increases in demand for many services and significant inflationary cost pressures.

### **Revenue**

2. To note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 30th June 2022 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary).

### **Capital**

3. To note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 30th June 2022  
(Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
4. To note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 30th June 2022 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

### **Corporate Plan Priorities**

5. To note the Quarter 1 progress updates for the Council's Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary).
6. To note the progress update to enhance the Council's short term and long-term response to extreme weather events (Section 6 of the Executive Summary).

#### **45 Medium Term Financial Plan Update**

The Director Finance and Digital Services presented the report to Members on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2022/23 to 2025/26, based on current modelling assumptions in advance of formulating the detailed budget strategy proposals for 2023/24 during the autumn.

He explained to Members that the detailed modelling assumptions are included as part of the updated 'Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26' and is attached at Appendix 1 to the report. He advised that the updated plan sets out the detailed basis of the medium term strategy with references to revenue spending, capital plans, income levels and reserves.

The report also sets out that the current indicative funding allocations for 2023/24 and 2024/25 in no way reflect the demands and pressures facing local government. Consequently, in the absence of any assurances from UK Government and thereafter Welsh Government of additional funding, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC must embark on a review across all its services to urgently identify options which can be considered to close the budget gap being faced and enable the Council to discharge its statutory duty to set a balanced budget for the financial year 2023/24 by the 11th March 2023.

The Cabinet Member Climate Change and Corporate Services commented that significant and unprecedented challenges are ahead and we must continue to lobby Welsh Government and Westminster for funding as reducing Council services is not a position we want to be in. She advised the Authority will do all they can to be more efficient but all cost saving measures will need to be explored.

The Deputy Leader stated that the projection is quite frightening and advised that the 2% rise in Council tax is up for further discussion and consideration, she added that job losses are looked at as a last resort.

Following discussions the Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the current position modelled in respect of the 'Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26' and receive further updates in the

autumn as part of the annual budget setting process; and

2. To note that the MTFP will be presented to Council in September and will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in line with their terms of reference alongside our budget consultation arrangements.

#### **46 Proposal to develop a new Special School in RCT**

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services presented the report to provide an update on our current special school provision following previous reports to Cabinet in February and October 2021 where Cabinet agreed to additional scoping work being undertaken to inform proposals for change in our special school provision.

The opening of a new special school will be subject to a statutory school organisation consultation and further work to develop the proposal will need to be undertaken. If permission to develop this proposal is granted, then in accordance with the School Organisation Code a consultation document will be written and brought to Cabinet to seek approval to commence the statutory consultation process in due course.

Seek approval to submit a revised Strategic Outline Programme for Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme to increase the Council envelope of Band B investment programme of funding.

Local authorities must ensure that additional learning provision is kept under review and if pressures on the service arise then we must take reasonable steps to remedy the situation. It is evident that there are currently significant pressures on special school placements and doing nothing at this juncture will mean that we will be unable to meet our statutory duties in future. There is a clear duty placed on local authorities to ensure that there is sufficient provision in place to meet need.

As part of this proposal, consideration will need to be given to transport costs and provision, including transport links to any potential site and traffic impact considerations on communities, which will all included as part of the detailed consultation report and risk assessments

The Director concluded As Cabinet will be aware, the Council has successfully made a bid to Welsh Government to include a new special school provision within its overall funding envelope of the Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, noting the preferential rates afforded to special school projects, with a Welsh Government intervention rate of 75%.

The Deputy Leader thanked the Director for the Comprehensive report and detailed information. She acknowledged the increase on demand and pressures and of the limitations on current school sites to deliver

services to children with complex needs. The Deputy Leader concluded that she was extremely pleased to hear that Welsh Government will be contributing 75% to the increased costs.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of this report.
2. To review the updated data which highlights the increasing pressure on our current special school provision.
3. To agree to submit a variation to the approved Strategic Outline Programme to the Welsh Government, in accordance with the Sustainable Communities for Learning funding approval processes, to request an increase to the agreed capital funding envelope to deliver this much needed facility.
4. To agree to receive a further report setting out feedback from WG, the conclusions of the site appraisal and a proposed consultation document for consideration.

#### **47 Update on the Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act in RCT**

The Head of Inclusion Services provided an update to Cabinet on the implementation of the ALNET (Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal) Wales Act (2018) in Rhondda Cynon Taf, including the use of additional resources approved by the Council to enable the Access and Inclusion Service to fulfil its increased statutory duties in line with the requirements of the new ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) and ALN Code for Wales (2021) during Years 1 and 2 of the 3-year national ALN Implementation timetable.

The report also identifies potential risks and the further possible additional resources needed to ensure that the Council is able to fulfil its statutory ALN duties at the end of the 3-year transitional period when the new ALN system will be fully implemented, having replaced the outgoing Special Educational Needs (SEN) system.

Members were referred to section 4 of the report which provided wider context on the legislative background to the ALNET Act and ALN code and the use of grant funding to support Local Authorities and schools to transition to the new ALN system. The head of Inclusion continued that As a result of the scoping exercise a delegated operational decision was made by the Director of Education and Inclusion Services in discussion with the Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion Services in December 2021 to approve the deployment of additional funding of £500,000 to the Access and Inclusion Service from existing financial resources that the Council had set aside in anticipation of the need for

enhanced resources

Members were advised that a range of key priorities and actions have been identified in order to implement year 2 and to ensure appropriate forward planning for year 3 of the 3-year national implementation timetable which was further detailed in the report. The report details an overview of further risks in terms of additional capacity and resources required by Access and Inclusion and their potential associated costs that are considered necessary to ensure that RCT will be able to fulfil its increasing statutory ALN responsibilities.

The Deputy Leader commented that the report outlines several complex responsibilities of the Authority but was pleased to see the readiness of the Authority for the implementation. The Deputy Leader added she had noted the increase in early year's referrals and was pleased that we are now able to provide a full time education psychologist to support the Access and Inclusion Service

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of this report.
2. To note the actions undertaken to date by the Access & Inclusion Service to implement the ALN reforms.
3. To note risks to the Council that are highlighted in the report and approve any actions recommended in section 8 to address these risks during Phase Two and Three of the national ALN Implementation timetable from 2022 to 2024.
4. To note that funding for the financial implications as outlined in Section 11 continues to be transitioned into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan alongside the use of one-off resources and maximising grant funding opportunities wherever possible.
5. To agree to receive a further report on ALNET (Wales) Act implementation at a later date if necessary.

#### **48 Cwm Taf Carer's Annual Report**

The Interim Service Manager for Carers, Direct Payments and Service User Engagement presented the report to Cabinet to seek their approval for the submission to Welsh Government the 2021/22 Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Annual Report.

Members were advised that RCT has supported the work across the region and has maintained many of the carer support services that were offered throughout the pandemic, whilst developing a hybrid model and

delivering face to face services where appropriate. The officer highlighted the developments during the year for RCT which were detailed in section 4 of the report and included Contingency and emergency planning, Young Carers and Sibling Carers, Young Adult Carers (YACs), RCT Carers Support Project and working carers

The Cabinet Member Health and Social Care thanked the officer for the comprehensive report. The provisions were developed throughout the pandemic to ensure carers were supported during the difficult time. He added that it was reassuring that the Authority works closely with the Health Board when addressing matters such as support for our carers and ensuring support and advice is available to them.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

To approve the 2021/22 Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Annual Report (Appendix 1).

#### **49 Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Annual Report**

The Group Director Community and Children's Services presented the Annual Report for 2021-2022 for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board to the Cabinet. He explained that The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board has a statutory responsibility to publish an Annual Report on 31st July each year, to demonstrate its effectiveness in exercising its functions in the preceding financial year.

The Group Director continued that this year, the Board continued to maximise opportunities to use virtual platforms to hold meetings and deliver training. Three virtual Learning Events were held to support Practice Reviews. The Board also wanted to ensure that those most at risk were able to re-engage with services. Agencies maximised virtual platforms and a variety of communication methods to facilitate this. The Group Director added that the Board ensured that outstanding actions from the previous year, which were delayed due to the pandemic, were completed.

The Group Director continued that good links have been maintained with the Community Safety Partnership at both a strategic and operational level. The Group Director then referred members to section 4.18 which highlighted a report in October 2021 the Safeguarding Board commissioned the National Safeguarding Team (NHS Wales) to carry out an independent rapid review into multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Bridgend. This followed five unexpected child deaths, which were all unrelated. He continued that the independent review was completed separately to any forthcoming Child Practice Reviews, audits, or individual reviews in relation to the five cases. The overall outcome was to provide assurances to the Board that multi-agency safeguarding arrangements were effective in Bridgend. He advised that an action plan



had also been developed in response to the recommendations.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care commented that the report ensures that people of all ages are protected from abuse, neglect and any other kind of harm. The Board has a statutory responsibility to publish the report outlining their priorities. The report emphasises a greater need to improve approaches to public protection concerns in partnership with agencies. He continued that the tragic death of Logan Mwangi is lesson for us all.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note and endorse the content of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Annual Report for 2021-2022.

**This meeting closed at 1.47 pm**