

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CABINET**

Minutes of the Hybrid.meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 23 January 2023 at 4.00 pm.

This meeting was live streamed, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Crimmings Councillor R Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon Councillor M Norris
Councillor B Harris

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services
Mr N Elliott, Interim Director of Social Services
Ms A Richards, Temporary Service Director - 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Mr A Critchlow, Parking Services and Streetworks Manager
Mr C Davies, Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager
Mrs D Hughes, Head Of Organisational Development
Ms Z Lancelott, Head of Community Wellbeing & Resilience
Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager
Ms C Harvard, Senior Workforce Development Officer

98 Declaration of Interest

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

99 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meetings held on 5th December 2022 and 12th December 2022 as an accurate reflection.

100

UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund: Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Grant

The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries provided a proposal for the establishment and delivery of a Community Grant for Rhondda Cynon Taf, via allocation from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund.

With the intention to strengthen the social fabric of communities, support community engagement, and build a sense of local pride and belonging in local community places, it was explained that the Council has allocated £4.3 million of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund to build capacity and infrastructure to restore community places, thus creating the foundations for social, environmental, economic & cultural development, building relationships at a local neighbourhood-level.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health & Communities welcomed the recommendations to establish a Community Grant and invited applications from organisations within the Third Sector and Community Groups, Community Interest Companies, and Companies to apply, via a competitive process, that would ensure an open and transparent approach.

The Leader took the opportunity to thank officers and commented that the grants would be at a larger scale in phase two of the programme. The Leader believed that it would be welcomed by the Third Sector and explained that the money could be used to lever in additional funding. The Leader added the other Local Authorities had followed a similar approach to RCT.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the content of the report;
2. To the establishment and delivery of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund – Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Grant, as set out in the report; and
3. To agree that ensuring the Community Grant operates within the terms and conditions of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund be delegated to the designated Senior Responsible Officer, the Director of Prosperity and Development.

101

Human Resources Strategy and Council Workforce Plan 2023-2028

The Senior Workforce Development Officer provided the Cabinet with the Human Resources Strategy 2023-28 and the Council Workforce Plan 2023-28.

The strategy and workforce plan set out a strategic and operational direction in terms of how the Council will utilise and develop the workforce to achieve the Councils' vision and priorities in a climate of change and financial uncertainty.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the officer for the comprehensive report and commented that final position statement demonstrated flexibility of the workforce and ensures that staff have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of residence, which was highlighted during Storm Dennis and Covid pandemic.

The Deputy Leader was of the view that the Plan cited cautious ambition, in light of the financial challenges faced by the Local Authority and stated that it would assist with a diverse workforce, support performance and ensure staff wellbeing.

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The Deputy Leader added that the Plan reflected the positive working relationship with Trade Unions and encouraged all staff to become members.

Upon conclusion, the Deputy Leader emphasised the importance of the positive relationship with the Armed Forces and was pleased to note that the Gold Award had been retained.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the Human Resources Strategy 2023-28;
2. To approve the Council's Workforce Plan 2023-28;
3. To agree that outcomes will be delivered through related plans and strategies such as departmental Delivery and Workforce Plans, the Council's Strategic Equality Plan, Digital Strategy and Office Accommodation Strategy; and
4. To agree that monitoring will be in the form of an annual position statement providing data regarding progress towards meeting the Human Resources Strategy and Council Workforce Plan aims.

102 Waste Services - Revised Waste Management Strategy

The Head of Streetcare Services provided the Cabinet with feedback from the 5-week public consultation period during December 2022 – January 2023 with respect to proposed revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes regarding future arrangements for the collection of refuse and recycling designed to aid an increase in the rate of recycling across RCT, whilst also offering financial efficiencies and to help inform a Cabinet decision on the way forward.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure took the opportunity to thank the officer for the detailed report, the consultation team for the work undertaken and the residents for engaging with the process.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged Wales' ambition to achieving a 70% recycling target of household waste by 2025 and was pleased to note that Rhondda Cynon Taf was striving to meet the target, with a current recycling figure of 67.48%, to avoid facing heavy penalties.

The Cabinet Member was in support of the proposals outlined within the report, which would see an improvement in recycling rates, a reduction in the Council's Carbon footprint and potential financial savings of almost £1.5M. The Cabinet Member agreed with officers that clear communication and engagement with residents would be key to the success and implementation of any changes.

In respect of the 4000+ consultation responses received, the Cabinet Member was pleased to note that concerns of residents with the standard 120L wheelie bins, had been addressed and that an additional side waste bag would be permitted. In terms of the trial of the reusable recycling sacks for dry mixed recycling, the Cabinet Member noted that a high percentage of residents were in support of the change but acknowledged that some streets lend themselves better than other, hence the need for a trial.

The Cabinet Member questioned what mitigations were in place to alleviate the concerns of residents with larger families, young families or for those living in smaller houses with a limited amount of space, should the Cabinet be minded to approval the proposals. The officer thanked the Cabinet Member for the question

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and emphasised that in terms of the refuse collection, the service would remain the same as there would be three black bags collected every three weeks. In terms of larger families, the officer explained that an additional side waste bag would be permitted for those with the standard 120L wheelie bins to help mitigate the impact. In terms of the storage of the reusable recycling bags, the officer emphasised that it would be a trial and as such, any views of residents, positive or negative, would be fed back to the Cabinet to determine a way forward. In terms of the storage of black bags, the officer emphasised that most household waste would continue to be collected weekly, such as nappies, food and recycling and therefore, black bag waste should be minimal. The officer explained that a comprehensive media campaign would be undertaken with regards to the importance of recycling to better inform and educate residents and benefit those with concerns about a greater volume of waste and limit the adverse impact. The officer added that the Council offer an additional black bag allowance to residents who are struggling with the waste allowance, a process which was under review.

In respect of the point made about large families, the Leader clarified that officers would work with families and ask them to contact the Council with any problems. Officers would then be able to support the families with recycling and to ensure the absolute minimum is going in the black bag waste but if they were to still struggle due to having a large family or increased pet waste, officers can verify and offer an additional black bag. The Leader also emphasised the need to work with housing providers in respect of collection points going forward.

The Leader sought to address the potential financial aspect of the proposals, which would save over £1M and explained that it would be the equivalent of closing three sport centres. The Leader advised that a number of areas operate this way and that it was important to learn from their findings. It was explained that several Local Authorities in Wales had also announced similar reviews of waste services as part of their Budget Strategies and if they were all to approve the proposals, approximately 2/3 of Local Authorities in Wales would be undertaking similar service changes.

The Deputy Leader echoed previous comments around the importance of communication and education to improve recycling figures in RCT and engagement with social landlords and tenants. In terms of the Local Authorities already undertaking waste collection on a three-weekly basis, the Deputy Leader questioned if any issues had arisen and if so, how they had been dealt with. A concern raised by residents was in relation to the disposal of women's sanitary products, the Deputy Leader requested further information from the officer in respect of those concerns. The officer advised that, at present, the only method of sanitary products disposal was via refuse collection, which had been noted as a negative equality impact. However, the officer explained that of those Local Authorities across the country, with three or four weekly refuse collections, all had faced the same issue but none, to the officer's knowledge, had had to revert to weekly or fortnightly refuse collection. The officer assured Members that all aspects of the consultation would be kept under review and mitigations would be put in place, where possible and when required.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services noted the environmental benefits of the proposal. The Cabinet Member noted that the concerns raised from residents with disabilities and those without access to a vehicle. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that an additional bag could be problematic and potentially heavier, if filled with cat litter and animal waste etc

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and asked what mitigations were in place. In terms of cat litter, the officer advised that consideration was being given to taking it to the community recycling centres on a controlled basis, which should mitigate concerns. In terms of the additional bag and any difficulties moving it to the curb side or collection point, the officer emphasised that the Council would continue to assist those residents. The Leader added that, residents who obtain a lot of animal waste in their refuse, would have the opportunity to speak with officers and acquire an additional waste bag to spread the weight of the litter.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the content of the report and duly resolve to approve the introduction of the following revisions to the Council's Waste Management Strategy:
 - (i) The collection of residual household waste on a 3-weekly basis for all domestic waste collections.
 - (ii) The presentation of waste on a 3-weekly basis will be as follows; strict volume control measures will apply to all domestic waste, namely:
 - (a) A maximum of 3 black bags per household, (for those properties with existing black bag waste collections),
 - (b) The "no side waste" rule continues for those households with large 240L wheelie bin collections, (but 1 bag of side waste, no larger than 70L, is allowed for the standard 120L bins).
 - (iii) The initiation of a trial of the use of reusable recycling sacks for the collection of dry mixed recycling, (DMR).

103 Community Meals Service Service Review

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services advised the Cabinet of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposals for the future of the Council's Community Meals Service.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language expressed his gratitude to officers in both the Education service area and the consultation team for conducting the consultation; and to those who engaged during the consultation period.

The Cabinet Member spoke of the challenging financial climate and the rise in inflation, which had prompted the review and subsequent consultation. The Cabinet Member went on to emphasise the challenge of delivering the service in its current form with the increase in costs and fall in numbers of users.

In response to the consultation responses, the Cabinet Member explained that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council was one of few Local Authorities in Wales to offer a community meals service and noted that the responses had emphasised the importance of maintaining it. Although regrettably, the Cabinet Member was of the view that Option 3 would be the best way forward to ensure

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a sustainable service. The Cabinet Member stated that the 50p compared favourably to other providers, particularly private providers.

In response to concerns raised from members of the public in respect of the hot or frozen meal option, the Cabinet Member emphasised that the users currently in receipt of a hot meal would see no change in the service; and explained that those who opt for a frozen meal would have the flexibility of when they wish to have their meal. The Cabinet Member added that Members recognise the importance of maintaining the welfare checks, which is a positive step to tackling loneliness.

The Cabinet Member concluded and requested that, should Members be minded to choose Option 3, officers conduct a review of the service users, to ensure they have the necessary equipment in their homes to warm the meals, should they wish to choose the frozen option.

The Deputy Leader was in support of Option 3 and emphasised the importance of the welfare checks and praised the staff for their work. The Deputy Leader noted the comments of the Scrutiny Committee, which were also of the view that Option 3 was the preferred way forward.

The Leader pointed out that the Community Meals Service was not statutory but explained that the administration had endeared to protect it throughout the years of austerity. The Leader explained that the budget gap was much larger than previous years and as such, all areas of the Council had to be reviewed.

The Leader noted that one option was to remove the service but felt it important to maintain an in-house service, where possible. The Leader echoed the Cabinet Member's comments around the need for a vulnerability assessment to ensure users have the correct, working equipment, should Cabinet agree the way forward; and recognised that the 50p increase could seem a lot, but noted that a neighbouring Local Authority currently charged £6 for the service, which would likely increase as part of its budget.

The Leader also referred to comments within the consultation regarding the quality of the meals procured and asked the Director for a further explanation. Members were assured that the higher quality meals would be offered to service users, with a combination of both meal and dessert. It was explained that officers would conduct taste testing to ensure the best meals are chosen and offered to the service users.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the information contained within the Consultation Report, which included feedback received from the online survey, emails and telephone calls, the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 14th December 2022 and the frequently asked questions posted out to service users;
2. To agree the preferred service change option moving forward, in respect of the Community Meals Service:
Option 3: to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal Home Delivery Service with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal; and
3. To delegate authority to the Director of Education and Inclusion Services, in consultation with the Director of Human Resources, to undertake and conclude necessary actions to implement the preferred option.

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104 Council Run Nursery Provision - Revised Service Delivery Arrangements

The Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience provided the Cabinet with details of the current arrangements for the delivery of childcare provision at Council run nurseries and to set out revised service delivery options for consideration to further improve the local childcare offer available to families, informed by a recent market testing exercise.

The officer set out the preferred option for Cabinet's consideration, which was Option 4 – to transfer the running of all four Council run nursery settings to alternative experienced registered childcare providers, which had been informed by a recent market testing exercise.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language thanked the officers for preparing the detailed report and for carrying out the review. The Cabinet Member was in support of Option 4 as the way forward and stated that within RCT, there were many Third Sector providers that have access to large pots of funding, that were able to offer a greater range of services with more flexibility. The Cabinet Member was in support of transferring the service as it meant little to no impact on service users, families, and staff and was pleased to note that Expressions of Interest had been received from Third Sector providers within the four settings.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care echoed previous comments and it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To consider:
 - the current service delivery arrangements and associated resources as set out in Section 5 of the report;
 - the proposed service delivery options as set out in Section 6 of the report; and
 - the findings of the market testing exercise as set out in paragraphs 6.5 to 6.7 of the report.
2. To implement the preferred option (Option 4) to transfer the running of all four Council run nursery settings to experienced registered childcare providers as set out in paragraph 6.4 of the report;
3. To agree to the formal procurement of experienced registered childcare providers as set out in paragraphs 6.7 to 6.9 of the report; and
4. To delegate authority to the Interim Director of Social Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to award contracts following completion of the procurement process and to make all necessary arrangements for the subsequent transfer.

105 The Council's Fees and Charges Policy 2023-2024

The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services provided the Cabinet with the proposed revisions to Council fees and charges levels for the 2023/24 financial year to be consulted on as part of phase 2 of the 2023/24 budget consultation process (with the proposed revisions to be effective from 1st April 2023 or as soon as is practicable thereafter); and the details of fees and charges decisions previously approved and to be included in the 2023/24 proposed Budget Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services acknowledged

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that fees and charges income is a critical part of the Council's funding arrangements for many services. The Cabinet Member explained that at a local level, the proposals intend to ensure a continued provision of a comprehensive range of quality of services at affordable prices for residents. The Cabinet Member was pleased to note that the proposals compliment the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in helping to provide a much-needed resource and services which are adequate and fit for future.

The Leader was in support of the report and explained that in several areas, the Council would be picking up the shortfall to ensure residents aren't left with all of the increased costs during the cost-of-living crisis. The Leader felt that the proposals were balanced and explained that inflation was around over 10%, but many of the fees and charges were increased by approximately 5%, to absorb some of the pressure from residents. The Leader added that many of the prices were competitive to other Local Authorities, which would be undergoing a similar budget review.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To consider proposed revisions to Council fees and charges for the 2023/24 financial year;
2. To agree for fees and charges proposals (as set out at paragraphs 5.2.1 to 5.2.29 of the report) to be consulted on through phase 2 of the Council's 2023/24 Budget Consultation process and reported back to Cabinet for consideration as part of formulating a recommended Budget Strategy for 2023/24; and
3. To note the fees and charges decisions previously approved and to be included in the 2023/24 proposed Budget Strategy.

(Note: The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication advised that the approval of the Council's Presiding Officer would be sought to exempt this item from Call-In, to enable the consultation to commence with immediate effect.)

106 The Council's 2023-2024 Revenue Budget

The Director of Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with information in respect of the 2023/24 local government settlement and the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 exercise, to assist with its deliberations in formulating the revenue budget strategy for the financial year 2023/24, which it would recommend to Council, for approval.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services thanked the Director for the report and recognised the incredibly challenging times for all Local Authorities in Wales making financial decisions. The Cabinet Member stated that the report had demonstrated how a balanced budget could be delivered in 2023-2024, without the need for compulsory redundancies and with only marginal service delivery changes in comparison to other Local Authorities. The Cabinet Member was pleased to note that the proposed Council Tax increase would likely be one of the lowest in Wales, whilst fees and charges increases would be well below inflation.

The Deputy Leader emphasised the importance of the Budget consultation and spoke of the numerous areas consulted to form the budget strategy. In respect of the consultation responses, the Deputy Leader noted that a high percentage

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of people were in favour and supportive of how the Council manage finances in current climate.

The Leader spoke of the substantial uplift for schools, which was outlined within the report and explained that there was a £13.7M increase in Council resources. The Leader explained that even with the proposed service changes, savings identified and the increased provisional settlement by the Welsh Government, there would still be a £9.1M budget gap, £5M of which would be covered by the energy reserves and £4.1M covered by transitional reserve funding.

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. To review and consider the draft 2023/24 Revenue Budget Strategy, detailed in the attached Discussion Paper ‘Appendix A’ of the report;
4. To consider and determine the level of Council Tax increase for 2023/24 which it would wish to build into the strategy to form the basis upon which a second phase of consultation will take place.
5. To agree the draft timetable for setting the 2023/24 revenue budget as set out at Appendix A2 of the report;
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.

(Note: The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication advised that the approval of the Council’s Presiding Officer would be sought to exempt this item from Call-In, to enable the consultation to commence with immediate effect.)

This meeting closed at 5.35 pm

**Councillor A Morgan
Chair.**