



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CABINET**

Minutes of the Hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 17 July 2023 at 1.00 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
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr R Waters, Director – Frontline Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr A Stone, Head of Flood Risk Management and Strategic Projects
Ms A Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Mr G Roberts, Integrated Transport Manager

25 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of interest were made:

The Leader, County Borough Councillor A Morgan OBE declared a personal interest in respect of item 9 of the agenda (Cardiff Capital Region Housing Viability Fund). "I Chair the Housing Investment Fund in the City deal."

The Service Director of Transportation, Enforcement and Strategic Investment declared a personal and pecuniary interest in respect of Item 10 of the agenda (Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited – Council Officer Directorship). "My post is referenced within the report."

The Director of Frontline Services declared a personal and pecuniary interest in respect of Item 10 of the agenda (Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited – Council Officer Directorship). "I am a Director of Amgen."

The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services declared a personal and pecuniary interest in respect of Item 10 of the agenda (Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited – Council Officer Directorship). “I am a Director of Amgen.”

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure declared a personal interest in respect of Item 10 of the agenda (Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited – Council Officer Directorship). “I am a member of the Board”; and a personal interest in respect of Item 5 – of the agenda (SACRE). “I am a Member of the SACRE Group”.

26 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2023 as an accurate record.

27 Cabinet Work Programme

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with an update on the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by Cabinet over the 2023-2024 Municipal Year.

Members were reminded that the Cabinet work programme was considered by the Overview & Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee at its meeting on 24th May 2023 to inform the work programmes of the individual Scrutiny Committees. If approved by Cabinet, the Service Director advised that the updated Cabinet Work Programme would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of its quarterly update.

The Deputy Leader noted the amendments cited in the revised programme and was content that Scrutiny Chairs are cited upon such changes and flexibility which is required within their own work programmes to accommodate.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve the Work Programme for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year (with appropriate amendment where necessary) and to receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis.

28 Pre-Scrutiny: Estyn's Report on Education Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with the feedback and comments of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee following its pre-scrutiny of Estyn's report on Education Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, at its meeting on the 20th June 2023.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services then provided the Cabinet with an overview of Estyn's processes and procedures for inspecting a local authority, as well as the strengths and areas for development for the Education Directorate as a result of its most recent inspection by Estyn.

The Leader thanked the officers for the update and was encouraged to note that the areas of improvement raised by Estyn, were areas already identified by the Local Authority.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language endorsed the Leader's comments and was pleased to note the positive findings of Estyn's report. The Cabinet Member took the opportunity to thank the Estyn inspection team for a fair and accurate report; all those who took part in the inspection process and also extended his thanks to the Director and staff for their continued hard work.

The Deputy Leader reiterated the above-mentioned comments and took the opportunity to extend her gratitude to the Director and the team.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the comments and observations of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee; and
2. To endorse Estyn's report on Education Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, as attached to the report as Appendix B.

29 Standard Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services provided the Cabinet with information on the Council's statutory duties to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and the constitution of Rhondda Cynon Taf SACRE; and informed Members that the Annual Report of the RCT SACRE for the academic year 2021-2022 was available.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language was happy to support the recommendations contained within the report and commented that it was a reflection of the broad remit of the group and the duties of the Local Authority. The Cabinet Member took the opportunity to thank all Members of the SACRE Group for its work during the previous academic year.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure, as a Member of the SACRE Group, informed Members that the Group work well together to achieve its goals and that its current aim was to enhance its engagement with young people.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the content of the Annual Report 2021-2022.

30 Council Performance Report - 31st March 2023 (Quarter 4)

The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services provided the Cabinet with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, for the financial year ended 31st March 2023.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services acknowledged that the ongoing cost-of-living crisis had made for a difficult year for both the community and the Council. Despite this, the Cabinet Member was pleased to note the £135M in Capital Investment and the positive progress made against the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. The Cabinet Member was also pleased with the work of the Council's Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee to deliver the Council's Climate Change Strategy and the ongoing work to manage and mitigate risks of extreme weather events. The Cabinet Member took the opportunity to thank the Service Director and the team for ensuring robust financial arrangements are in place to ensure continuous service delivery for the residents of RCT.

The Deputy Leader was in support of the recommendations contained within the report and noted that the devastating effects of the pandemic and Storm Dennis was still suffered within the County Borough. Despite the financial pressures, the Deputy Leader recognised the strong investment and collaborative work and took the opportunity to thank the Service Director.

The Leader extended his thanks to the finance team and spoke of the fine financial management of grant funding. The Leader explained that, as a whole, the Council was successful in securing both capital and revenue grants but spoke of the work behind the scenes to deliver projects in compliance with audit and procurement rules.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the context of the Council's Services continuing to manage the on-going effects of communities recovering from the pandemic and 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 31st March 2023 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary).

Capital

3. To note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 31st March 2023 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
4. To note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 31st March 2023 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

Corporate Plan Priorities

5. To note the year-end position regarding progress made against agreed 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).
7. To note the progress update in respect of the Council's response to tackling Climate Change (Section 7 of the Executive Summary).

31

Report to commence formal statutory consultation of the authority's review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan

The Service Director of Transportation, Enforcement and Strategic Investment provided the Cabinet with an update on progress of the Authority's review of the revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) and Action Plan (formerly known as a Flood Risk Management Plan), as required under Section 10 of the Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) 2010.

The Leader thanked the officer for the comprehensive report. The Leader advised that since 2020, the Council had been successful in securing funding to improve flood resilience and that the Strategy would ensure funding is prioritised going forward.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care took the opportunity to thank officers for their continuous hard work and spoke of his own experiences during Storm Dennis in 2020. The Cabinet Member spoke of the heart-breaking scenes at Trehafod and Britannia; and of the resilience of those communities affected.

The Cabinet Member spoke of residents' fears of extreme weather events in the future and was pleased to note that the Council was putting measures in place to mitigate the risks.

The Deputy Leader echoed previous comments about mitigating the risk, where possible and spoke of a successful flood alleviation scheme in her ward which had given the community a degree of comfort. The Deputy added that it was important for communities to recognise where responsibilities lie in terms of the Council and National Resources Wales and its prevention measures.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To commence formal statutory consultation on the Draft LFRMS and Action Plan and accompanying Environmental assessments (Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)), as per the programme of work which was agreed by Cabinet on 15th May 2023.

32 Renovation and Redevelopment of the Rock Grounds Buildings, Aberdare

The Director of Prosperity and Development provided the Cabinet with details of a proposal to repurpose the Rock Grounds Buildings in Aberdare into a quality hotel facility with restaurant, bar and spa; and sought approval to commence formal procurement of a development partner to deliver such a scheme.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity voiced his support in respect of the ambitious proposal. The Cabinet Member spoke of the recent Tourism report, which had highlighted a shortage of tourist accommodation in RCT, particularly the upper valley; and of the recent Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, which highlighted the need to increase tourist accommodation to benefit the region, as a whole. The Cabinet Member felt that the proposal before Members, would build upon those needs, whilst bringing a historic building back into use for tourism and for the local population.

The Leader was in support of the proposals and commented that it would be pleasing to see investment into the building. The Leader referred to the unique venture, Lanelay Hall, within the South of the Borough, as an example of successful tourist accommodation.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the strategic framework provided by the Aberdare Regeneration Strategy, the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy and the Council's Tourism Strategy as a basis for redeveloping the Rock Grounds Buildings in Aberdare Town Centre;
2. To consider the draft proposals for the repurposing and refurbishment of the Rock Grounds Buildings, Aberdare into a quality hotel facility with restaurant, bar and spa;
3. To progress to a formal procurement stage to secure a development partner to deliver a hotel on the site subject to future update reports on progress; and
4. To receive a further report following the completion of the procurement stage and identifying any changes to the current ideas for the site following further feasibility work with the agreed development partner.

33 **Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Housing Viability Fund**

The Director of Prosperity and Development presented the report, which sought Cabinet approval to progress the CCR Housing Viability Gap Fund on Cwm Coking Works to a stage to enable the draw-down of £8 million of available funding.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity felt that the proposal before Members was a great opportunity for the Council to open a site, which was previously considered unviable as a commercial offering. The Cabinet Member commented that it would remediate a difficult site but would also help towards the Council's house building targets with a potential of over 600 new homes being constructed.

The Leader emphasised that without the capital investment, the site would not be developed and that it had been subject to an appraisal process as part of the CCR Housing Viability Fund.

The Deputy Leader referred to concerns expressed in respect of biodiversity at the site and questioned if consideration would be given during the process. The Director assured Members that biodiversity would be a key consideration going forward in terms of the remediation of the site and any future housing development.

With the agreement of the Chair, County Borough Councillor R Yeo addressed the Cabinet on this item.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve and authorise the Agreement between the developer and RCT to enable the draw-down of £8 million of funding from the CCR Housing Investment Fund.

34 **Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited - Council Officer Directorship**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services sought Members approval in respect of a change to one of the appointed Council officer directors of Amgen Rhondda Limited and Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited (the 'Companies') as a result of the forthcoming retirement of Mr. Roger Waters, Director of Frontline Services and deletion of that post from the Council's management structure.

Cabinet Members were in support of the recommendation contained within the report and took the opportunity to thank the Director of Frontline Services for his excellent work and wish him well in his future endeavours.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. That the appointed Council officer director of Amgen Rhondda Limited and Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited, which was previously aligned to the post holder of Director of Frontline Services, be realigned to the post holder of Director – Highways, Streetcare & Transportation Services with effect from 1st September 2023.

N.B- Having previously declared a personal and pecuniary interest (Minute No.

25) in respect of this item, the following officers left the meeting, whilst the item was discussed and voted upon:

- The Service Director of Transportation, Enforcement and Strategic Investment;
- The Director of Frontline Services; and
- The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services.

35 URGENT ITEM - SUBSIDISED BUS TRAVEL SCHEMES ACROSS RHONDDA CYNON TAF DURING THE 2023/24 FINANCIAL YEAR

The Chairman of the meeting, was of the opinion that the report of the Director of Frontline Services be considered, in accordance with the provision of section 100(b)4(B) of the Local Government Act 1972, as a matter of urgency by reason of special circumstance i.e. To enable the immediate implementation of the proposed scheme on the 24th July.

The Director of Frontline Services presented the report, which sought Cabinet's approval to introduce a £1 maximum single bus fare for travel between 24th July 2023 – 3rd September 2023 (inclusive), for all journeys that start and terminate within the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) county boundary. This would apply to all operators currently operating a scheduled service. Subject to the continuation of Welsh Government Bus Funding beyond 24th July 2023. The report sought approval to delegate authority to the Director of Frontline Services to introduce a £1 maximum single bus fare for travel between 1st December 2023 – 31st December 2023 (inclusive), for all journeys that start and terminate within the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) county boundary – subject to the outcomes of the School Summer Holidays scheme and available funding, and in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure. Subject to the continuation of Welsh Government Bus Funding beyond 24th July 2023; and approval to introduce a 1 year 7-day bus travel pilot scheme for all school and college students that are in receipt of a public bus season ticket to attend school or college between 4th September 2023 and the end of the respective academic year 2023/24.

The Leader was in support of the recommendations contained within the report and took the opportunity to thank officers for the work undertaken to bring forward the positive report. The Leader advised that the scheme would save residents £1.1M and spoke of the previous scheme agreed by Cabinet for March 2023, which increased patronage by 7% the following month. The Leader advised that there had been some anti-social behaviour during the last bus travel scheme and hoped that the £1 maximum single bus fare fee would alleviate that, as well as making the money go further.

The Leader reminded Members that he had asked officers at a recent Council meeting to consider potential support packages for residents during the cost-of-living crisis and felt that the scheme before Members would be an additional benefit, which could save some families hundreds of pounds for the remainder of the year.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure endorsed the Leader's comments and spoke of the success of the previous initiative. The Cabinet Member hoped that the scheme would help families have a more financially viable summer by allowing them to travel across RCT and visit its attractions at an affordable cost; and take some pressure off residents during the Christmas

period.

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication informed Members that the permission of the Presiding Officer would be sought to exempt the matter from call-in, to enable the immediate implementation of the proposed scheme on the 24th July.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the content of the report and approve the proposals to:
 - (ii) Introduce a £1 maximum single bus fare for travel between 24th July 2023 – 3rd September 2023 (inclusive), for all journeys that start and terminate within the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) county boundary. Subject to the continuation of Welsh Government Bus Funding beyond 24th July 2023.
 - (iii) Delegate authority to the Director of Frontline Services to introduce a £1 maximum single bus fare for travel between 1st December 2023 – 31st December 2023 (inclusive), for all journeys that start and terminate within the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) county boundary – subject to the outcomes of the School Summer Holidays scheme and available funding, and in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure. Subject to the continuation of Welsh Government Bus Funding beyond 24th July 2023.
 - (i) Introduce a 1 year 7-day bus travel pilot scheme for all post-16 school and college students that will be in receipt of a public bus season ticket to attend school or college between 4th September 2023 and the end of the respective academic year 2023/24.
2. To review the outcomes of the bus travel schemes during the 2023/24 financial year and seek to develop further bus travel initiatives during the 2024/25 financial year, subject to funding.

This meeting closed at 2.10 pm

**Councillor A Morgan
Chair.**

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh