



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CABINET**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 20 November 2023 at 12.30 pm.

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

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present:

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

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

Non-Committee Members in attendance

Councillor K Morgan
Councillor K Johnson

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr S Williams, Director for Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr N Elliott, Director of Social Services
Ms L Kidner, Business Manager, Catering
Ms A Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation

Apologies for absence

Councillor M Webber

68 Declaration of Interest

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

The Director HR – Item 3 – The Council’s Revenue Budget: “My daughter works within the Library Service.”

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services– Item 14 - Management of the Council's Land and Buildings Portfolio: Interim Update on Progress Report: “Graig Community Centre is in my ward”

69 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October 2023 as an accurate reflection.

70 The Council's Revenue Budget 2024/25 - Early Budget Reduction Measures

The Director Finance and Digital Services presented an update on the operational decisions and base budget reduction measures which have been identified and the consequential financial implications which can now be factored into the Council’s Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Director continued that the report set out a number of early budget reduction measures and budget updates amounting to £9.086M to be factored into the budget requirement and draft budget strategy for 2024/25. The report also sets out the timetable for the agreement of the 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy, Council Tax Setting and the 3-year Capital Programme.

The Leader stated that the proposals do not address the entire budget gap but this emphasises the scale of the measures the Authority are facing. He added that the Authority will continue to take decisions to ensure a balanced budget is maintained whilst remaining as efficient as possible and ensuring the impact on communities is kept to a minimum. He reassured that the report proposes minimal operational changes which take into account demand led by evidence and that minor adjustments are proposed to minimise impact on users.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services commented that a proactive approach previously adopted by this Council has stood the authority in good stead in challenging times we have faced previously. She added that we need to continue to make decisions in a timely manner to ensure successful delivery of Council services in the future

With the agreement of the Leader, Non-Committee Member County Borough Councillor K Morgan was granted permission to address the Cabinet.

The Leader responded to comments raised and stated that the proposals

relate to non-pay areas of the local authority, and do not allow for an inflation uplift. He stated that Trade Unions have been engaged in advance and service staff have been engaged to inform the reports before Members in terms of service usage. He reminded Cabinet that the council will work together with managers to ensure effective services continue to be delivered. He concluded that the proposals will be reported to Scrutiny prior to presentation to full Council to agree.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the operational changes and base budget reduction measures / updates which have been identified by the Senior Leadership Team and which can now be factored into next year's budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan; and Note the 2024/25 budget and Council Tax setting timetable as attached at Appendix 2 to the report

71 Review of the Council's Home to School Transport Policy

The Director of Highways, Street care and Transportation presented the report which sought Cabinet's approval to initiate a consultation with interested parties and relevant stakeholders in respect of a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure stated that for almost 10 years, the Council has provided over 9,000 learners with access to free school transport on a discretionary basis going above and beyond the legal requirement set out by Welsh Government. She continued that the Authority has consistently chosen to do this as we understand the significant impact free school transport has on our community. However, she advised that as a result of significant underfunding from the UK Government and a budget gap of £85m over the next three years, Cabinet must consider proposals put forward by Officers that review where our services go beyond the statutory requirement. She concluded that this proposal, if approved by Cabinet, will seek consultation with parents/ carers to discuss the service changes put forward and discussion will be welcomed with those who are impacted.

The Leader stated that the proposals set out by Officers would bring the provision for mainstream primary, secondary and college pupils in line with the statutory distance requirements set out by Welsh Government and deliver savings of £2.5m in a full year. Even after these proposals thousands of learners would be provided with Home to School Transport. In response to a question by a Member, the Director of Education and Inclusion confirmed that no changes will be made to those with additional Learning needs and transport will continue to be provided to these pupils. She added that learners with disabilities may be entitled to assistance with transport from home to school or college setting.

In response to a question around how future consultation will be undertaken with parents / carers the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications confirmed that six week consultation will take place with opportunities for the public to participate online and open access meetings convened to allow for the public to engage face to face with the Council

With the agreement of the Leader the following Non-Committee Members were granted permission to address the Cabinet.

- County Borough Councillor K Johnson
- County Borough Councillor K Morgan

In response to the Members comments, the Leader commented that officers have for many years worked on route maximisation, and ensured that regular engagement is undertaken with schools and with regular cross directorate planning taking place to offset costs, however, the Council has seen over a £4m increase in the last two years and will continue to grow. The Leader add that most other Local Authorities are already doing this, and whilst this is not a decision we wanted to take, but due to the financial challenges ahead for the Authority we could not avoid this option any longer. He confirmed that school attendance will be taken into account during the consultation phase and the Authority also has school engagement officers to work with families to ensure attendance is maintained.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Consider the information in the report in respect of the Council's current Home to School Transport Policy and a proposal to introduce a revised policy, together with the associated impact assessments appended to the report;
2. Initiate a consultation with interested parties and relevant stakeholders in respect of a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy, namely providing mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary school, secondary school and college transport in line with relevant statutory distance criteria, which would be implemented from the start of the 2025/2026 academic year;
3. Note that under the proposed Home to School Transport Policy the discretionary elements of:
 - Allowing a learner to select their nearest suitable school in accordance with choice of English or Welsh Medium language or preferred religious denomination would continue; and
 - providing pre-compulsory school age transport and post-16 transport would continue;
4. Note that under the proposed Home to School Transport Policy the discretionary elements of Additional Learning Needs transport

would not change; and
Subject to paragraph 2 above, agrees to receive a further report detailing the results and feedback from the consultation process, updated Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments and any necessary further information in order for Cabinet to determine whether and, if so, how it wishes to progress with the proposed new Home to School Transport Policy.

72 Continuation of Free Breakfast Club Provision in Primary and Special Schools with the Introduction of a Charge for the additional childcare element

The Director Education and Inclusion Services presented the report to seek permission to consult on the introduction of a charge for the additional childcare element, which is available prior to the commencement of free breakfast club provision in primary and special schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf, noting eligible Free School Meal (eFSM) pupils would be exempt from any charge. In addition, Members were advised that the proposal would generate additional income, which would be ring fenced and reinvested back into school budgets.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language stated that the Council recognises the significant value breakfast club provisions hold in our community. He continued there is however a need for the Council to review areas where we provide a service above and beyond what we are funded to provide. He continued that all 92 primary schools and 3 special schools across the County Borough provide a free breakfast club and all pupils, from nursery to year six are eligible and welcome to attend. The Cabinet Member reiterated that the free breakfast service will in no way be impacted or reduced by the proposals put forward by Officers. The proposal to introduce a £1 daily childcare fee being would only be introduced to parents/carers who make use of the extra childcare provision offered BEFORE the breakfast club begins from 8- 8:30am. He welcomed that the proposal is for any potential income generated from this proposal to be re-invested into schools funding, to offset cost pressures.

The Leader advised that the Council's three-year budget gap is currently estimated to be £85.4m, and this includes a £35m gap for 2024/25. These proposals could generate an estimated annual income in a full year of £495 with no change in the level of service provided to those in need of Free School Breakfasts. He welcomed further discussion through the consultation process proposed.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Consider the contents of this report together with associated impact assessments;
2. Agrees to initiate a consultation with service users, key stakeholders

and prospective service users on the proposal to charge a fee for the additional childcare element which is available prior to the commencement of free breakfast club provision;

3. Agrees that eFSM pupils should be exempt from the proposed charge and that views be sought through the consultation process on whether consideration should be given to any further categories of concession (such as a capped charge for parents/carers with more than one child making use of the provision); and
4. Subject to 2.2 above, agrees to receive a further report summarising the results and feedback from the consultation process, together with updated impact assessments, to determine whether Cabinet wishes to proceed with the proposal or not, and if so, how.

73 Learning Disability Day Services Offer

The Director Social Services presented the report which informs the Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation on the proposed co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model for people with a learning disability. It also sets out recommendations regarding the next steps for the remodelling of the Council's day services in line with the Day Service Strategy and operating model.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care stated as part of a review to improve social care the proposals will enhance the provision for people with learning disabilities and their families by promoting independence and using local facilities. He added the proposals are based on comprehensive consultation process and emphasised the level of care will not change, but will provide opportunities to avoid isolation, improve independence, assist in a choice of accommodation and gain paid employment.

The Leader confirmed that a consultation will be undertaken to work with staff, service users and Trade Unions to support the changes outlined. He concluded that any savings made as part of this change will be reinvested back in to social services

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Consider the feedback to the consultation on the proposed co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model for people with a learning disability and the information provided in this report, the Equality Impact Assessment (including Socio-Economic Duty) and Welsh Language Impact Assessment.
2. Subject to 1 above, approves the implementation of the proposed co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model for people with a learning disability as consulted upon, including the proposed commissioning intentions and market developments as part of the planned learning disability transformation programme.
3. Subject to 2 above, approves the remodelling of the Council's day

service provision to a new East and West structure, including smaller community-based groups to ensure that services are delivered in a way that achieves the best possible individual outcomes for people, based on need and demand, whilst making the best use of Council resources.

4. Subject to 2 above, approves the permanent decommissioning of Treforest Learning Curve which has been closed since February 2020, due to significant damage sustained by Storm Dennis.

Subject to 2 above, approves a co-produced review of the Council's work-based projects to explore alternative care and support options for individuals who access them with commissioned third sector and supported living providers, and supported employment agencies and employers to better meet their personal outcomes while being more cost effective.

74 Council Tax Base 2024/25

The Head of Revenue and Benefits presented the report to Cabinet which sets the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2024/25. The Officer advised that the gross Council Tax Base calculated for 2024/25 is £81,950.53. It is proposed that the collection rate is estimated to be 97.25%. This produces a net Council Tax Base of £79,696.89. This means that for every £1 levied in Council Tax next year, a sum of £79,697 will be generated to meet the budget requirement of the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services welcomed the report and stated that the proposals are in line with the Corporate plan and are a statutory requirement.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations 1995 as amended, the amount calculated by the Council as its net tax base for the financial year 2024/25, shall be £79,696.89.
2. That for each defined community area of the County Borough, the 2024/25 tax base for Council Tax setting purposes, shall be as set out at Appendix 1.

75 Council Performance Report - 30th September 2023 (Quarter 2)

The Service Director Finance and Performance presented the report to Cabinet which provided an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first six months of the financial year (to the 30th September 2023).

The Cabinet Member Climate Change and Corporate Services thanked the Service Director for the report which provides a comprehensive overview of the significant cost pressures on frontline services. She

advised that she is assured that work is underway to bring projected overspend in line with budget by year end and progress is being made to deliver the Corporate Plan priorities.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

Revenue

1. Note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 30th September 2023 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary).
2. Request that Cabinet approve the virements listed in Sections 2a - e of the Executive Summary that exceed the £0.100M threshold as per the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

Capital

3. Note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 30th September 2023 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
4. Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 30th September 2023 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

Corporate Plan Priorities

5. Note the Quarter 2 progress updates for the Council's Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary) that include updates in respect of the Council's on-going work to deliver its Climate Change ambitions.

76 Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2022/23

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented report is to provide Cabinet with the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

The Cabinet Member Health and Social Care thanked officers for the very comprehensive report and to continue to ensure that support is given to our children and young people post Covid-19 pandemic. The report highlights our dedication to investing and supporting our children and young people he also paid thanks to Members of the Corporate parenting Board for their work.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report.

77 Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects - Supplementary Capital Programme

The Director Of Highways, Street care And Transportation Services presented the report which set out the supplementary capital programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects. The report set out a number of proposals for improvements to be delivered in improving the Council's Highways Infrastructure as well as funding allocated to improve drainage works and structures.

The Leader supported the recommendations in the report which set out a number of investments in key services and projects which are in line with the manifesto commitments and the corporate plan with over £5m investment proposed in structures, roads and drainage throughout the Borough

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the Supplementary Capital Programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects as detailed within this report.

Agree that the current allocations form part of a 3-year capital programme and delegate authority to the Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services, to extend activity to deliver additional projects during the financial year. Furthermore, where capacity exists to accelerate delivery in accordance with the purpose of the wider programme, or to suspend programmes/projects and reallocate funding to optimise delivery.

78 Director of Social Services Annual Report 2022 / 2023

The Director Social Services presented the report to Members the final draft of the Director of Social Services Annual Report for 2022/23 for approval prior to its publication. The report set out how the Council's Social Services performed last year, highlighting the direction and priorities the Council has set for the year ahead.

The Cabinet Member Health and Social Care thanked officers for the comprehensive and excellent report which demonstrates the Council's commitment to the delivery of Social Services to our most vulnerable residents. He continued that the report highlights the tremendous breadth of work delivered by the committed hard working staff and demonstrates the Council's accountability to those in community to those who rely on the Authority for vital support.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the Director of Social Services Annual Report for 2022/23 (Appendix 1).

79 Pre-Scrutiny Committee Feedback

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications

presented the report to Cabinet which detailed the pre-scrutiny undertaken by the Council's thematic Scrutiny Committees, namely the Director Social Services Annual report which was part of today's Cabinet agenda.

The Cabinet Member Health and Social Care was supportive of the recommendations outlined within the report and took the opportunity to thank the Community Services Scrutiny Committee for its valuable contribution

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the comments and observations of the Scrutiny Committees following pre-scrutiny of the item listed within section 5 of the report.

80 To consider Passing the Following Resolution:

It was **RESOLVED**: "That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

81 Management of the Council's Land and Buildings Portfolio: Interim Update on Progress

The Director of Corporate Estates presented the report to provide an interim update on progress for the management of the Council's land and buildings portfolio until a future Corporate Asset Management Plan (2024-2030) is approved by Cabinet

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to consider the progress update for the management of the Council's land and buildings portfolio as detailed in the report.

82 Urgent Items

None

This meeting closed at 14:10

**Councillor A Morgan
Chair.**