



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CABINET**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 21 February 2024 at 1.00 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 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, Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr S Williams, Director for Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr. M. Phillips, Revenues Services Manager

106 Declaration of Interest

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

107 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2024 as an accurate record.

108 Pre-Scrutiny Feedback

For information, the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided Cabinet with the feedback and comments of the items that were pre-scrutinised by the Council's thematic Scrutiny Committee's following its last Committee cycle.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the comments and observations of the Scrutiny Committees following pre-scrutiny of the items listed within section 5 of the report.

109 The Council's 2024/25 Revenue Budget

The Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services provided Cabinet with the opportunity to consider and amend as necessary the draft budget strategy which they would wish to recommend to Council.

The Leader thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for the report.

Although the Leader welcomed the additional £25M for Local Governments in Wales, he explained that English councils needed an additional £1.5B for pressures but only £600M was announced and of the £600M, just £500M of that was new money. Consequently, only £25M was given to Wales.

The Leader admitted that of all the years he had been in his role, this had been the most challenging budget gap faced due to pay pressures, service pressures and inflation; and at a time where there is no increase in RSG funding. The Leader was of the view that the proposed 2024/25 Revenue Budget was the best it could be in such a challenging time and noted that it was favourable in comparison to other Local Authorities, where Council Tax rises were in the range of 7/8% with some over 10%.

The Leader noted that the proposed council tax rise for RCT was 4.9% but moved that it be amended to 4.99% and explained that the additional 0.9% would help with public transport pressures.

The Leader referred to the base budget increase for schools, which was 6.4% and proposed that a further £500,000 of additional one-off funding is allocated to Schools, which would help with the costs faced by schools.

The Deputy Leader was in support of the Leader's amendments to the recommendations contained within the report. The Deputy Leader praised the sound financial management of the Council which had enabled the proposal of one of the lowest council tax rises in Wales. Referring to the consultation responses, the Deputy Leader felt that the dire financial position of local authorities had been recognised amongst the communities.

The Deputy Leader stated that the Local Authority has no remit over the presets of the Community Councils but advised that the Council had been approached by several of the community councils to look at joint working arrangements, which could be beneficial in the future.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity wished to place on record his thanks to the Senior Finance Officers for bringing forward a positive budget proposal; and welcomed the additional one-off payment towards schools.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language echoed previous comments and was supportive of the Leader's additional recommendation in relation to support for schools. The Cabinet Member stated that as a Cabinet, Members has always sought to financially protect schools, where possible. The Cabinet Member felt that this would further support schools, along with the Local Authority's commitment to fund the increase in pay costs, which had not been funded by Welsh Government.

Upon concluding his comments, the Cabinet Member took the opportunity to thank the School Leaders and recognised that it was a particularly challenging

time for schools.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To the Budget Strategy which they wish to recommend to Council on the 6th March 2024;
2. To amend the proposed Council Tax increase for 2024/25 to 4.99% to support public transport provision and determine that this level forms part of the Cabinet's Budget Strategy to be presented to Council on 6th March 2024;
3. To allocate £500,000 of additional one-off funding to Schools and determine that this forms part of the Cabinet's Budget Strategy to be presented to Council on 6th March 2024; and
4. That the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services be authorised to amend the final budget consequential to the receipt of the Final Settlement as set out in Section 4 of the report.

110 The Council's Capital Programme 2024/25 - 2026/27

The Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services provided Cabinet with a proposed three year capital programme for 2024/25 to 2026/27 that if acceptable, would be presented to Council for approval.

The Leader thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for presenting the report.

The Leader referenced the additional £19.292M of substantial funding listed in Section 6.2 of the report and explained that the investment priorities are linked to either the Council's Corporate Plan or the Cabinet's manifesto commitments. The Leader clarified that the figure was in addition to the wider capital programme, which included millions of pounds of investment for regeneration, housing grants and schools etc. The Leader added that, if successful, the pending bids that had been submitted to Welsh Government would be added to the Capital Programme.

The Leader drew attention to the investment in the Coed Ely Solar Farm, which would allow the Council to generate its own renewable energy and reduce future energy costs; and the Hawthorn Hockey Pitch, which had been a previous commitment.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services praised the Southern Gateway development at Pontypridd and commented that it would make a positive difference within the town centre by enabling footfall for businesses from the North to the South.

The Deputy Leader, as the Armed Forces Champion, took the opportunity to thank the Leader for the support given to the families of veterans. The Deputy Leader spoke of the inclusion of £100,000 towards the digitalisation of war memorials, which was the first project of its kind in the Country and would involve schools, groups and communities. The Deputy Leader recognised that she was one of the only Armed Forces Champions with a working budget and stated that it was greatly appreciated by the armed forces community.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To propose the attached three-year capital programme at Appendix A of the report to Council on 6th March 2024 which includes:
 - A proposed allocation of resources as detailed in paragraph 5 of the attached report;
 - Proposed investment priorities as detailed in paragraph 6.2 of the attached report;
 - The Council's core capital programme;
 - The Council's total capital programme including additional non core funding.
2. To authorise the Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services to amend the level of Council Resources required to fund the Core Three Year Capital Programme as shown at Appendix 2 of the report as a consequence of any change to the Council's capital resource levels announced in the Final Local Government Settlement.

111 Non-Domestic Rate (NDR) Relief Schemes 2024/25

The Head of Revenue and Benefits provided Cabinet with details of the Welsh Government Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief (RLH) Scheme for 2024/25; details of the Council's local business rate reduction scheme; and details of new Non-Domestic Rate reliefs available to qualifying business rate payers from 1st April 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services welcomed the recommendations contained within the report, recognising the pledge to businesses within the Council's Corporate Plan. The Cabinet Member commented that the adoption of Welsh Government's RLH Scheme and the local discretionary scheme would further provide much needed financial support for businesses throughout RCT.

The Leader was pleased to note that the local business rate relief scheme would continue to provide financial support for the smaller town centre businesses and explained that RCT were one of the only Local Authorities in Wales to establish such a scheme.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the details of the Welsh Government (WG) RLH Scheme and formally adopt the scheme for the year 2024/25;
2. To note the continuation of the proposed local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for 2024/25; and
3. To note the new Non-Domestic Rate reliefs available to qualifying business rate payers from 1st April 2024.

112 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA): Use of Investigatory Powers during 2023 by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services provided Cabinet with the report, which enabled them to review the Council's use of the Regulation of

Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (as amended) (RIPA) for the period 1st January to 31st December 2023; and the Council's use of the Acquisition of Communications Data under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA) for the same period.

The Deputy Leader noted that the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 covered a wide range of Council services, including the licensing regime. The Deputy Leader emphasised the importance of using the powers in an appropriate manner and was satisfied from the update that it had been.

In terms of the increase in social media monitoring, the Deputy Leader felt that this was indicative of how individuals lead their lives.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To acknowledge that investigatory powers in respect of covert surveillance and acquisition of communications data have been used in an appropriate manner that is consistent with the Council's RIPA and IPA policies during the period 1st January – 31st December 2023.

113 The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy

The Chief Executive presented the report, which sought Cabinet approval of the revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

The Leader emphasised the importance of the document and was happy to agree to the recommendations contained within the report.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care took thanked the Chief Executive for the all-encompassing policy document and also took the opportunity to thank the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which undertook pre-scrutiny to of the arrangements at its meeting on the 29th January 2024.

The Cabinet Member emphasised the importance of safeguarding both children and adults from harm and neglect and welcomed the recommendations before Members.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the information contained in the report;
2. To note the feedback provided by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee which met on 29th January 2024; and
3. To approve the new Corporate Safeguarding Policy, presented at Appendix I to the report.

This meeting closed at 1.31 pm

**Councillor A Morgan
Chair.**

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