



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CABINET**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 20 March 2024 at 10.30 am.

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

Non-Committee Members in attendance

Councillor K Morgan
L Tomkinson
Councillor C Preddy
Councillor K Johnson
Councillor G Stacey
Councillor S Emanuel
Councillor C Lises

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms L Davies, Director of Public Health, Protection and Community 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 D James, Service Director – Prosperity & Development
Mr N Elliott, Director of Social Services
Mr. M. Phillips, Revenues Services Manager
Mr A Critchlow, Parking Services and Streetworks Manager
Lawson, Performance Manager
Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager
Ms A Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Mr G Roberts, Integrated Transport Manager
Mr A Stone, Head of Flood Risk Management and Strategic Projects
Ms M Warburton, HR Advisor, Equality & Diversity Team

114 Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Cabinet.

115 Declaration of Interest

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

- The Leader declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 10 – Education and Inclusion Services Planned Capital Programme 2024-2025: “There are schools referenced within the report of which I am Chair of Governors”;
- The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 10 – Education and Inclusion Services Planned Capital Programme 2024-2025: “I am on the Governing Body of Maes y Coed Primary School, which is referenced within the report”;
- The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 10 – Education and Inclusion Services Planned Capital Programme 2024-2025: “I am on the Governing Body of Cwm Clydach School, which is referenced within the report”
- County Borough Councillor K. Johnson declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 6 – Review of the Council’s Home to School Transport Policy: “I am on the Governing Body of Maes y Bryn Primary School which is a feeder school to one of the comprehensive schools; I am a parent of two children who will, in the future, travel to a comprehensive school; and I am also an employee of Transport for Wales”; and
- County Borough Councillor C Lises declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 10 – Education and Inclusion Services Planned Capital Programme 2024-2025: “I am on the Governing Bodies of Hawthorn Primary School and Hawthorn Secondary School which are referenced within the report”.

116 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21st February 2024 as an accurate record.

117 Leader's Scheme of Delegation - 3A

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the update to the Leader’s Scheme of Delegation.

118 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.

119 Cabinet Work Programme

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication presented, for Cabinet Members' comment and approval, an update on the Cabinet Work Programme on the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by Cabinet over the remainder of the 2023-2024 Municipal Year.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

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

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

The Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services reported the results of the public consultation exercise initiated by Cabinet, together with updated Equality and Welsh Language impact assessments in relation to a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy to assist Cabinet in its determination of whether or not it wished to progress with implementation of a new Home to School Transport Policy.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure firstly took the opportunity to thank officers for providing the Cabinet with the correspondence and responses to the consultation; and to thank the contribution of residents, reflected in the report with 2858 valued responses.

The Cabinet Member noted that for over 10 years, the Council had provided discretionary transport for more learners than almost every other Welsh Council's Home to School transport operations; and that the Council had consistently gone above and beyond its legal requirement, as set out by Welsh Government, in delivering free transport to its pupils.

The Cabinet Member continued and stated 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 the proposals put forward by Officers that review where the service goes beyond the statutory requirement and how savings can be made. Prior to concluding, the Cabinet Member emphasised that rising costs had made the Council's current Home to School Transport policy unsustainable and acknowledged the reason for the report being brought for

Cabinet's consideration.

In terms of the significant rise in Home to School Transport costs, the Leader added that it had increased from £8M in 2015 to over £15M in recent years.

The Leader reiterated the Cabinet Member's comments in respect of the Council going above and beyond in comparison to other Local Authorities and explained that if the Cabinet were to agree to the recommendations contained within the officer's report, the Council would still be providing one of the most generous Home to School Transport policies in Wales, with a large number of individuals benefiting from discretionary transport. The Leader stated that there were 18 other Local Authorities which had either made significant changes or had not provided the discretionary element for years.

The Leader stressed that this was a decision the Cabinet did not take lightly but that every option must be considered as part of the budget setting process, due to the extraordinary financial challenges as a result of low funding from central government and the continued pressures on social care.

The Deputy Leader firstly took the opportunity to thank the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for its valuable comments and feedback and noted the letter produced as part of the papers before Members.

The Deputy Leader recognised the concerns expressed by residents through the consultation process and echoed the Leader's comments that Members faced a difficult decision, but one which was deemed necessary given the current financial circumstances.

Referring to the consultation feedback and comments made during the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, the Deputy noted that there were some concerns raised about safety and asked if officers could confirm that all routes would be reviewed and re-assessed, where appropriate, prior to eligibility confirmation; and if a route was not deemed to be safe, then pupils who are affected would retain free transport to school. The Deputy Leader spoke of a specific route in her ward, Rhydyfelin to Garth Olwg, and explained that officers had been helpful in addressing the concerns and questions raised by residents within the boundary.

The Deputy Leader also sought reassurance as to what impact, if any, the recent publication from Welsh Government regarding the review of the Learner Travel Measure would have upon the proposals recommended to Cabinet for consideration.

In respect of the Equality Impact Assessment, the Deputy Leader felt that it was a comprehensive assessment and emphasised the importance of having due regard to the relevant legislation and socio-economic impacts. It was noted that the Impact Assessment highlighted some negative impacts, if the proposal were to go ahead but that it set out a range of mitigating actions as to how any impacts should be monitored following implementation and actioned including considering alternative options as put forward by consultees and set out in section 14 of the report.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language commented that there was naturally a concern about how the proposals would impact the attendances at schools. In terms of how the Council were seeking to tackle low attendance levels, the Cabinet Member spoke of the significant

investment in recent years into a number of support services such as the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and the Resilient Families Service and also the introduction of Family Engagement Officers. The Cabinet Member noted from the report that there was an *increased likelihood* of a pupil not attending school if they are in receipt of home to school transport.

The Cabinet Member then sought to address another key point raised from the consultation, which was the potential impact on the Welsh language. The Cabinet Member spoke of the significant steps taken as a Local Authority to promote access to Welsh medium education through an extremely ambitious WESP and expansive Capital Programme investment into new Welsh medium school builds and refurbishments; in addition to the Council's efforts to reach Welsh Government's ambition of 1M Welsh speakers by 2050.

With the agreement of the Leader, the following County Borough Councillors were granted permission to address the Cabinet in respect of the item:

- County Borough Councillor K Morgan;
- County Borough Councillor L Tomkinson;
- County Borough Councillor C Preddy;
- County Borough Councillor K Johnson;
- County Borough Councillor G Stacey;
- County Borough Councillor S Emanuel: and
- County Borough Councillor C Lisles.

N.B The Leader noted that a petition had been circulated and received by the Cabinet prior to the meeting.

In response to comments made, the Leader stated that lobbying Welsh Government in relation to the [Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations](#), was not an option as it was not a devolved matter. In terms of building new schools and access to schools, the Leader noted that there were 116 schools in the County, which was a lot more than many other Local Authorities.

Officers were then provided with an opportunity to respond to the questions and queries raised so far in the discussion. The Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services noted that a common point raised was in relation to routes and explained that each route is assessed against the Learner Travel Operational Guidance 2014 criteria outlined within the report and thus deemed 'available' or 'unavailable'. Referring to the route mentioned by the Deputy Leader, the Director advised that despite perception, the route had been assessed in 2018 and was deemed available. The Director assured Members that, where applicable, routes would be reassessed to ensure the criteria is met.

In terms of the review of the Learner Travel Measure, the Director advised that it was concluded that there should be no immediate amendment to the legislation which underpins the learner travel in Wales and it had been acknowledged that the costs for the Local Authorities current statutory responsibilities had increased significantly with no aspect of this changing. The Director advised that, although the final amendments had not been made, the review makes several recommendations to improve the consistency, quality and safety of Learner Travel provision across Wales but assured the Cabinet that none of the recommendations had impact on the recommendations contained within the report before them.

In terms of the Director's comments in respect of the routes, the Leader added

that Cabinet were being asked to make a policy decision and that the assessment of the routes would then be undertaken independently. In terms of the anticipated savings relating to the proposal, the Leader advised that figures were based upon current figures, rather than future forecasting figures to enable the most accurate projection; and explained that a definite figure would not be available until the routes had been independently checked and verified. The Leader acknowledged that the saving could be more than anticipated due to inflationary transport costs over the coming years year or that it could be less in the event that some of the walking routes are deemed unavailable.

The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services echoed the Leader's comments and assured Members that in terms of the costing, officers would take into consideration the impact of any changes to routes, current contracts in terms of costing and inflation impacts. The Service Director advised that the any changes would be built into the Council's medium-term financial planning to inform future budget setting processes and stated that any decision would not have an impact of the Council's 2024-2025 Revenue Budget.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its feedback and noted the comments made by Members in respect of the climate change agenda. The Cabinet Member stated that from a carbon reduction perspective, there would be benefit in reducing the number of vehicles on the road. The Cabinet Member referred to Sections 18.6 to 18.8 within the report, which outlined that the majority of existing vehicles used for home to school transport were far from environmentally friendly and were some of the most polluting vehicles on the Council's highways. The Cabinet Member noted the potential impact of private vehicle usage increasing but explained that modelling this was not feasible or a prudent use of officer time.

The Leader added that it would be impossible to determine the impact in terms of private vehicle usage as individuals may choose to walk, cycle, car share or use public transport, if available.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care acknowledged that any decision would bring consequences and impact on families; and echoed the Leader's earlier comments that it was a position the Cabinet did not want to be in. The Cabinet Member stated that due to the position the Council was in, as a result of funding pressures, all departments had been asked to identify potential savings, which can lead to some difficult decisions having to be made.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity advised that in his own ward, parents had taken it upon themselves to organise their own bus company and agreed that it would be impossible to determine impact on private vehicle usage. Taking into account the comments from the consultation exercise and from Scrutiny Members, the Cabinet Member was of the view that Section 14.2 of the report would be the most balanced in terms of achieving savings whilst reducing potential impacts. This option would be to maintain the Council's current discretionary distance criteria of providing transport for all primary schools, (English, Welsh, and Faith). Transport whilst provision to all secondary schools and colleges (English, Welsh, and Faith) would change to move in line with the relevant statutory distance criteria as set out in the Measure. The Cabinet Member noted that, if agreed, it would still see RCT offering a more generous eligibility than 18 of the 22 Councils in Wales.

The Leader noted that 1 in 5 Councils in England had suggested they would have financial difficulty in the next year with potential section 114 Notices being issued; and explained that in order to make up the funding through Council Tax, the Council would need an additional 8%+ in Council Tax. The Leader noted that Members of the opposition did not provide an alternative budget for consideration and voted against a rise in Council Tax.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities agreed with Councillor S Emanuel's point about capitalising on the benefits of the new South Wales Metro and working with Transport for Wales to mitigate some of the impacts on secondary school age children in Treorchy and Treherbert, in particular.

The Leader added that, if any changes were agreed, he would discuss with Transport for Wales whether there would be opportunities in terms of bus or metro travel to mitigate impacts, where possible. However, the Leader reminded the Cabinet that any decision made today must be based upon the facts before them and not on the assumption that such mitigations would be made in the future.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language was in agreement that the preferred option was detailed under section 14.2 of the report, to maintain the Council's current discretionary distance criteria of providing transport for all primary schools, (English, Welsh, and Faith). Transport provision to all secondary schools and colleges (English, Welsh, and Faith) would change to move in line with the relevant statutory distance criteria as set out in the Measure. The Cabinet Member felt that the option provided some assurance that the effects on Welsh medium education would be mitigated, as far as possible, whilst also recognising that the Cabinet decision could not be based solely on this basis. The Cabinet Member felt that this would be a reasonable approach, based upon the many factors for consideration, and that it should not hinder the ambitions that the Council strives to achieve within its WESP. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that there had been concerns raised around the impact on future parents selecting Welsh medium education, but the Member concluded that the option would mitigate the concerns, minimise the effect on Welsh language learners in particular and would continue to provide the discretionary distance criteria for all primary schools.

Referring to comments made by the opposition to maintain the status quo, the Deputy Leader stated that no alternative options to make savings or maintain a balanced budget had been submitted.

In terms of safe walking routes, the Deputy Leader was reassured by officers and their professional advice provided based on Welsh Government guidance and took the opportunity to extend her gratitude.

The Deputy Leader emphasised that the Council had managed its finances as well as possible, despite outside factors and blamed the UK government for the position in which all Councils had found themselves in.

The Deputy Leader was also of the view that 14.2 was the most balanced approach and commented that the Cabinet must take a broad view and examine all of the reasons as to why they must take a decision. The Deputy leader noted that, if agreed, an additional 305 primary school pupils would retain the provision, whilst there would also be a manageable reduction in the savings generated. The Deputy Leader concluded by stating that the Cabinet must take

a balanced view upon any proposal and take into consideration a range of factors. As such, the Deputy Leader was satisfied based upon the need to maintain financial stability, taking into consideration the feedback to received, that the option, on balance, would be the correct approach to take.

The Leader advised that due regard had been given to all comments made as part of the consultation and by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as the representations made by the speakers at the meeting and the petition received. The Leader also noted that due regard had been given to the comprehensive impact assessments. Although the recommendation had not been formally moved, the Leader acknowledged that the option suggested by Cabinet would reduce the potential savings to the Council but would be a positive step in terms of primary school transport.

The Leader echoed the Deputy's statement and commented that although the decision was not about politics, the economy had crashed and that all public services had been affected by many areas such as energy costs and high inflation as a result of such actions. The Leader stressed that he did not want the Local Authority to be in a position whereby it can only afford to provide statutory provision in its different service areas.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure moved the recommendations and specifically the proposal set out in (option 1) 14.2 & 14.3 of the report, which was:

14.2) The first option would be to maintain the Council's current discretionary distance criteria of providing transport for all primary schools, (English, Welsh, and Faith). Transport provision to all secondary schools and colleges (English, Welsh, and Faith) would change to move in line with the relevant statutory distance criteria as set out in the Measure.

14.3) Whilst the Council would be introducing a change to its secondary school and post-16 eligibility criteria, it would nevertheless continue to provide all other areas of its discretionary transport provision in excess of the current minimum Welsh Government statutory requirement.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the content of the report and outcome of the public consultation, together with the associated Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments appended to the report;
2. To consider, in light of the feedback from the public consultation and analysis of the Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments, whether it wishes to amend the proposal as consulted upon, including consideration of alternative options presented within section 14 of the report;
3. To proceed with implementation of a revised Home to School Transport Policy as follows:
 - To maintain the Council's current discretionary distance criteria of providing Home to School transport for all primary schools (English, Welsh and Faith);
 - To change Home to School transport provision to all secondary schools and colleges (English, Welsh and Faith) in line with the relevant statutory distance criteria as set out in the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008;
 - To continue to allow a learner to select their nearest suitable school in accordance with choice of English or Welsh Medium language or preferred religious denomination;
 - To continue to provide discretionary pre-compulsory school age

transport (in line with current discretionary distance criteria) and to provide discretionary post-16 transport (in line with the relevant statutory distance criteria); and

- To continue to provide discretionary Additional Learning Needs transport.
- 4. To publish the revised Home to School Transport Policy by 1st October 2024, in accordance with statutory requirements, and for the policy to be implemented for the commencement of the 2025/26 academic year; and
- 5. To delegate authority to the Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services to develop, introduce or amend any operational policies/guidance incidental to the implementation of the revised Home to School Transport Policy.

N.B - In terms of comments made by some Elected Members in relation to the conduct of other Elected Members, the Leader advised that the matter would be dealt with outside of the meeting.

121 Working with our Communities - The Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2030

The Chief Executive set out a new draft Corporate Plan from 2024/25 – 2029/30.

The Leader took the opportunity to thank officers for the work undertaken to develop the comprehensive draft Corporate Plan. The Leader emphasised the importance of the strategic plan, which is used to shape the Council's priorities, budget and Capital Programme; and it was acknowledged that a smaller, 'easy read' Plan would be developed as a result.

The Leader was pleased with the new six-year Plan and explained that there may be additions and changes as and when the Council need to respond to situations.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services echoed the Leader's comments and was pleased to note that climate priorities had been embedded throughout the Plan. The Cabinet Member added that the Council's ambitions outweigh its challenges.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To review the contents of the draft Corporate Plan 2024-30;
2. To consider the outcome of the consultation and engagement process;
3. To consider the comments and feedback, following pre-scrutiny by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee; and
4. To recommend the draft Corporate Plan to Council for approval at its meeting scheduled for 24th April 2024.

122 Council's Performance Report - 31st December 2023 (Quarter 3)

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, based on the first nine months of this financial year (to the 31st December 2023).

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services recognised the difficult environment which services were operating in; and the cost pressures across the Council, impacted by increased demand and higher level of inflation. However, the Cabinet Member remained reassured by the robust service management arrangements and proactive work across services to address the challenges. The Cabinet Member was particularly pleased to note the significant Capital Programme expenditure, which demonstrated a sustained year on year investment across the Council's assets and infrastructure.

The Leader spoke of the almost £2.5M projected overspend, which was largely down to the £2.7M overspend within social services. The Leader advised that this was an area of huge pressure in almost all Local Authorities and explained that the statutory demands must be met, despite financial pressures.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

Revenue

1. To note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 31st December 2023 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary);
2. To 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. To note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 31st December 2023 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary);
4. To note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 31st December 2023 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary); and

Corporate Plan Priorities

5. To note the Quarter 3 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.

123 Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects Supplementary Capital Programme 2024-2025

The Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services set out the detailed capital programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects.

The Leader thanked the Director and noted the expansive capital programme of investment detailed within the report. The Leader was pleased to advise that in addition, notification had been received from Welsh Government of approximately £8M highway funding for larger projects including active travel and road safety; along with approximately £3.5-4M for flood risk management. The Leader was confident that there would be further successful grants through the year, which would be added to the extensive programme.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care spoke of the destruction of Storm Dennis within RCT four years ago, which required an unprecedented amount of

work to report the Council's vital infrastructure. The Cabinet Member was of the view that the list of works detailed at Table 5 of the report, was testament to the investment required.

The Leader added that it had been four years since the country went into a National lockdown as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and commended officers for continuing to work on the Storm Dennis infrastructure improvements and repairs through such a difficult period. The Leader commented that due to significant levels of investment and substantial flood risk management funding, the Council would be better placed to face a situation such as Storm Dennis, should it happen again.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note and approve the Supplementary Capital Programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects as detailed within the report; and
2. To note that the current allocations are part of a 3-year capital programme that delegates authority to the Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services, to extend activity to deliver additional projects during the financial year, where capacity exists for accelerated delivery in accordance with the purpose of the wider programme, or to suspend programmes/projects and reallocate funding to optimise delivery.

124 Education and Inclusion Services Planned Capital Programme 2024-2025

The Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation provided the Cabinet with details of the capital works for approval for 2024/25 as part of the Council's three-year Capital Programme.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language welcomed the £6.3M commitment as part of the Capital Programme and emphasised that this had been a strategic decision of the Cabinet to support the schools. The Cabinet Member noted that the report referred to 'minor works' but emphasised that the difference the works make to the schools were not minor, but instead contribute to the very best learning environment for young people within the County Borough. The Cabinet Member also spoke of the positive relationship established between the Local Authority and the school leaders, which was appreciated by schools.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the Education Capital Programme priority schemes for 2024/25 as outlined in Appendices 1-9 of the report and approve scheme commencement.

125 Annual Equality Report 2022-2023

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager provided information on the Council's Annual Equality Report for the year 2022-2023.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the team for the considerable

amount of work involved in producing the Annual Equality Report and was pleased to note that the Council had met the General Equality Duty. The Deputy Leader recognised that equality covers a huge area and has an impact on all the work of the Council.

The Deputy Leader also extended her gratitude to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its comments and feedback, which was attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To consider the comments and feedback, following pre-scrutiny by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee, attached at Appendix 2 to the report; and
2. To the content and publication of the Annual Equality Report.

126 Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager provided the Cabinet with information on the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the team for the considerable amount of work involved in producing the Strategic Equality Plan and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its comments and feedback, which was attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

The Deputy Leader noted that the Plan included all protected characteristics and details in terms of how performance is measured. The Deputy Leader added that the Local Authority had made good progress but that there was room for improvement.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To consider the comments and feedback, following pre-scrutiny by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee; and
2. To the content and publication of the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP).

127 Working towards an Age-Friendly Rhondda Cynon Taf

The Head of Arts, Culture and Library Services provided the Cabinet with information in relation to the Council's continued commitment to being an Age-Friendly Community and its proposed application to become a member of the World Health Organisations Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care thanked the officer for the report and commented that it evidenced the Council's continued commitment to becoming an age-friendly community. The Cabinet Member spoke of the vision of the Council, which was to ensure RCT is a great place to grow older and that older residents feel heard, valued and informed.

As the Older People's Champion, the Cabinet Member was pleased to support the Council submitting an application to become a member of the World Health Organisations Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

The Deputy Leader echoed the Cabinet Member's comments and was pleased to support the recommendations contained within the report.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information within the report and approve the submission of an application to become a member of the World Health Organisations Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

128 The Council's Local Housing Market Assessment 2023 - 2028

The Head of Housing Strategy and Investment presented to Cabinet the findings of the Local Housing Market Assessment 2023 – 2028 and sought approval before submitting to Welsh Government and then to publicise the document.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity praised the piece of work, which was based on the outcomes of local data being fed into the Welsh Government modelling programme. The Cabinet Member emphasised the importance of the strategic document, which, in turn, feeds into the Council's Housing Strategy and the new Local Development Plan preferred strategy, which was currently being consulted upon.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. That Members approve the Local Housing Market Assessment 2023 – 2028 as a key source of evidence to support the delivery of housing policies in the Council's Corporate Plan, Local Development Plan and Housing Delivery Plan;
2. That Members approve the Local Housing Market Assessment 2023 – 2028 as a tool to negotiate affordable housing provision on planning applications and to identify how housing need translates to different sizes and types of affordable housing (e.g. social rent and low cost home ownership); and
3. That Members approve the Local Housing Market Assessment 2022 – 2037 for use to inform funding bids (including Social Housing Grant) and to influence residential development in the County Borough.

129 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".

130 Write Off of Irrecoverable Debts

Following the consideration of the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director for Finance, Digital and Frontline Services containing exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the

authority holding that information), the Cabinet was **RESOLVED:**

1. To write-off the accounts to the appropriate Bad Debt Provision contained within the Council's accounts (if further information on any debt becomes available, payment will be pursued).

This meeting closed at 12.00 pm

**Councillor A Morgan
Chair.**

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