



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 25 June 2020 at 11.00 am.

County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor R Bevan
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor M Norris
Councillor J Rosser	Councillor R Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon	Councillor G Hopkins

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Others in attendance

Councillor P Jarman

125 Declaration of Interest

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

126 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2020 as an accurate record.

127 Cabinet Work Programme

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided Cabinet Members with a draft three month work programme for the extended 2019-20 Municipal Year, working on the basis that an Annual General Meeting of the Council is convened in September 2020. The Service Director noted that outlined within the work programme was the ongoing updates in respect of the Council's response to Covid-19 and explained that the report would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26th July 2020.

The Leader asked that two reports in respect of the flooding in RCT are added to the Work Programme for future consideration.

The Deputy Leader welcomed the programme, commenting that there would need to be flexibility to the programme given the current circumstances.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the Cabinet Work Programme for the 2019-20 Municipal Year and to receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis To approve the extended Work Programme for the period June - August 2019-2020 (with appropriate amendment where necessary) and receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis; and
2. To receive an interim report in respect of flooding in Rhondda Cynon Taf in addition to statutory reporting requirements into flooding, being considered at a later date.

128 Review of Learning Support Class Provision for Pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and Significant Additional Learning Needs

The Director, Education and Inclusion Services provided Members with the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposal to enhance mainstream Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf. It was explained that the Covid-19 pandemic had adversely impacted the Council's ability to consult upon the proposals and as such, a more flexible approach was proposed. The Director proposed that the funding is redirected to establish alternative provision in four different schools to meet the needs of the most vulnerable learners in the local communities.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion Services was happy to support the proposal given the current situation, commenting that it would support vulnerable learners in mainstream settings. The Cabinet Member was pleased to note that the proposal would provide provision in each of the areas in RCT, whilst giving all schools the opportunity to submit proposals. The Cabinet Member continued by stating that she'd like to see joint proposals submitted by schools, which would further extend the reach of the funding for the benefit of vulnerable learners.

When asked how schools would be supported to submit proposals, the Director advised that a robust process was in place which would be further built upon. It was explained that schools would need to submit a detailed business case with a match funding element, which would be reviewed to ensure it meets the criteria.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the information contained within the report;
2. To lapse the original LSC consultation process due to current Covid 19 restrictions and the impact upon statutory educational provision for the foreseeable future;
3. To proceed with a proposal to provide funding for a two-year period for three English medium secondary schools to establish provision for learners with SEBD in Bryn Celynnog School, Ferndale Community School and Mountain Ash School; and
4. To progress with an amended proposal to provide funding for a two-year

period to establish Welsh medium secondary school provision for learners with complex needs, including SEBD, in Ysgol Gartholwg.

129 Proposed Extension and Variation to RCT CBC's Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders

The Director, Legal Services spoke of the two Public Spaces Protection Orders related to dog controls within Rhondda Cynon Taf, which were due to expire on the 30th September 2020. The Director sought Cabinet approval, in principal to extend and vary those orders and to authorise officers to publicise the proposed orders and to consult as required by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The Director explained that despite the introduction of the Orders in 2017, there still remained a minority of dog owners who do not clean up after their dogs or keep them under control; and that it was therefore considered vital the orders, which would ordinarily expire on 30th September 2020, are renewed for a further period in order to maintain the significant benefits the orders have had in relation to dog fouling.

The Director advised that the proposal did not include any major variations, save for expanding the order to cover several Community Council sites, following representation made by those Community Councils.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Heritage was happy to support the extension and spoke of the reduction in dog fouling following the Cabinet decision in 2017, which had been noted in a recent External Audit report.

The Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Wellbeing and Cultural Services also voiced his support for the proposals, commenting that dog fouling was a common issue raised by residents and that there remained a minority of people who flout the rules.

The Deputy Leader stated that this was the opportunity to consult with the Community Councils and address any anomalies within the Orders; and that there was a need for lease owners of sport pitches to provide appropriate signage for the public.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve in principle, the proposal to extend and vary the two Public Spaces Protection Orders for dog control within Rhondda Cynon Taf, for a further period of three years from 1st October 2020, in the form set out at Appendix B1 and B2 of the report;
2. To authorise officers to publicise the proposed orders and to carry out a consultation exercise as required by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014; and
3. To receive a further report detailing the responses to the consultation and any recommendations for amendments to the proposed orders.

130 Council Infrastructure Projects - Supporting the Local Economy During Coronavirus

The Director, Prosperity and Development updated the Cabinet on the action taken to continue to safely deliver key infrastructure and construction projects

during the current COVID-19 pandemic to support businesses and help support the local economy.

The Director advised that during the Covid-19 pandemic, Services across the Council had continued to focus on the development and delivery of key investment projects. The Director drew Members' attention to Appendix 1 of the report, where a comprehensive list of the projects was outlined, including highways regeneration and Education projects, essential buildings work and the extensive social housing programme, which was developed in conjunction with RSL partners. It was explained that the value of the projects was worth more than £200m and that they had sustained more than 200 jobs in addition to securing hundreds more over the life of the projects and through the supply chain.

The Director concluded that in addition to the current projects outlined within the report before Members, a further report containing key projects would be subject to Cabinet consideration in the future.

The Leader thanked the Director for the report and spoke of the Council's extensive Capital Programme, which would support the local economy in moving forward from the pandemic. The Leader spoke of conversations around the UK Government announcing a stimulus package in the coming months and commented that building upon the RCT Capital Programme would be key.

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Housing took the opportunity to thank officers and businesses for working together to deliver the projects. The Cabinet Member welcomed the report, commenting that the cross authority approach to maintaining employment was critical during the current time.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To consider the information provided and notes the action taken to date to continue the safe delivery of priority £200m infrastructure and regeneration projects, supporting over 200 jobs, over the period of the COVID 19 pandemic; and
2. That a further report is presented to the following Cabinet setting out the actions the Council proposes to take, in partnership with Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital Region and private sector partners, to mitigate the economic impact of COVID 19 on the local and regional economy.

131 Safer Places - Social Distancing in Town Centres and Public Places during Coronavirus

The Director, Prosperity and Development presented the report, which sought to update the Cabinet on the action taken to assist our community to maintain safe social distancing when visiting our town centres and parks during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

The Director stated that at the start of the lockdown there was a significant drop in the number of people visiting the main town centres but over recent weeks there had been a gradual increase.

The Director drew Members' attention to section 5 of the report, whereby the progress and the Council's 'signs and lines' approach to maintaining safe social distancing within the public spaces was outlined.

(Note: At this point in proceedings, County Borough Councillor P. Jarman entered

the virtual meeting.)

The Leader spoke of the recent change made to the 2 metre social distancing rule in England and acknowledged that any similar changes made by Welsh Government would need to be communicated to Local Authorities in a timely manner to ensure that signage is updated appropriately. In respect of the financial implications of the signage to the Council, the Leader advised that the Council would be claiming through Welsh Government support to Local Authorities.

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Housing thanked the officers for their work in ensuring the town centres are safe for the public to enter businesses as they begin to reopen. The Cabinet Member felt that the approach taken had been practical and acknowledged that the town centres would need to be monitored as the situation continued to change. The Cabinet Member questioned whether there had been any feedback given from local retailers following their recent reopening and was advised that the first day upon reopening was busy but had begun to calm down. The Director advised that a more detailed feedback report would be presented to Cabinet at a later date.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information provided and notes the action taken to date in response to the COVID 19 pandemic; and
2. That the Group Director for Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services monitors the situation on a regular basis to ensure our town centres and public spaces are suitably safe, and in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s), introduces additional measures and/or enforces measures where necessary in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

132 Safer Buildings - Social Distancing & Other Safety Measures in Council Offices, Schools and Other Public Buildings as the Lockdown is Lifted

The Director, Corporate Estates updated the Cabinet on the action taken to ensure the Council's buildings, including schools, can be opened safely to Members, staff pupils and the general public maintaining safe social distancing and other appropriate safety measures during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Cabinet Members were advised that comprehensive guidance and posters had been prepared to support the opening of schools and public buildings in accordance with the regulations, which had been circulated to staff via email and was available via the Source.

The Director stated that all Council buildings had been surveyed to identify the maximum numbers for future occupancy and appropriate Covid-19 packs had been delivered to sites, which include signage, hazard tape, bins, sanitiser and screen protectors. The Director went on to explain that temperature checking equipment was also being trialled for Council buildings, including schools and it would be an additional measure to help reduce the spread of the virus.

The Director concluded and advised that RCT was well placed to safely reopen its buildings as the lockdown is lifted, but acknowledged that individual schools and services would inevitably have to adapt the guidelines to best meet their particular needs, taking into account the physical layout of the respective building.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services wished to place on record his thanks

to Corporate Estates and the teachers for the significant amount of work in adapting to what has become the new normal. The Cabinet Member added that it would be vital to review the progress of agile working and build it firmly into future plans.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information provided and notes the action taken to date in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
2. That the Director of Corporate Estates monitors the situation on a regular basis to ensure as schools, services and offices reopen to staff, pupils and the general public, our schools and Council buildings are suitably safe, and in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s), introduces additional measures and/or enforces measures where necessary in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

133 The Financial Implications of Covid-19

The Director, Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with the report, which set out the initial assessment of the financial implications for the Council arising from Covid-19.

The Director stated that the WLGA had undertaken a survey, which estimated the implications of the virus from a financial perspective across the 22 Local Authorities in Wales from April-June 2020. The survey estimated the cost across Wales to be £185M and £13.6M for RCT.

The Director drew Members' attention to section 5.4 of the report, which listed a number of emerging costs which were monitored by the Council. The Director explained that forecasting the financial implications beyond the short term would be dependent upon numerous assumptions which are subject to change on a regular basis but that it was important that the Council continue to attempt to mitigate the financial implications. The Director added that Welsh Government had put in place a number of funding streams to mitigate the financial pressures placed on Local Authorities and had begun to reimburse some of the additional costs incurred.

The Leader thanked the Director for the report and advised that discussions regarding funding from Welsh Government were ongoing and that the LGA was lobbying the UK Government for additional funding. The Leader added that a mid-year budget review would be sensible to ensure there is some resilience, should the Council not be fully funded and stressed the importance of each service area identifying savings in the coming months.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services echoed the Leader's comments, adding that the Quarter 4 Performance and Resources report would be presented to Cabinet in July.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the financial implications arising from Covid-19 on the Council;
2. To receive a Mid-Year Budget Review in September alongside an updated and interim Medium Term Financial Plan; and
3. To note the arrangements for the preparation and audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2019/20.

This meeting closed at 11.45 am

**Cllr A Morgan
Chairman.**