



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the Hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 21 March 2022 at 10.00 am.

County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor R Bevan
Councillor J Bonetto	Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor R Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon	Councillor M Norris

Others in attendance

Councillor P Jarman

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services

122 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

Cllr R Bevan declared a personal interest in item 3 as his daughter works in Social Services

Cllr A Morgan declared a personal interest in item 10 having agreed a collaborative approach with the WLGA on the matter

123 MINUTES

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 28 February 2022 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

124 DRAFT PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2021/24

The Head of Procurement presented a report to Cabinet on the updated

Procurement Strategy 2021/24 for review, comment and endorsement. Members were informed that the Strategy has been completed and takes into account the new and emerging areas that the procurement process has been tasked with helping to deliver.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services commented that the Strategy builds on all the good work in incorporating the social aspects into the strategy. The Strategy also adds in the aspiration of achieving the Net Zero aim.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to endorse the Strategy

125 HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23

The Service Director Highways and Engineering presented the report to members following the approval of the Council's Three-Year Capital Programme 2022/23 - 2024/25 on 9th March 2022 at Council, the report set out the detailed capital programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects. The report detailed a number of proposals which will continue the enhanced levels of investment under the RCTInvest initiative, delivering sustained improvements to the resilience and durability of our highways and transportation infrastructure, promoting sustainable transport opportunities and network efficiency

The Leader commented on the funding that had been secured through Welsh Government and other bids were also pending for Highways and Transportation and was pleased that significant improvements would be made over the next 12 months.

The Deputy Leader thanked officers for the significant amount of work going into the projects. Flood alleviation schemes throughout the Borough, significant investment

At this juncture in the meeting County Borough Councillor P Jarman spoke on the item to which her comments were answered by the officers.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. To note and approve the Supplementary Capital Programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects as detailed within the report.
2. To note that the current allocations are part of a 3-year capital programme and delegate authority to the Director of Frontline Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Director of Finance and Digital 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.

126 ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2020/2021

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager presented the report to Members to provide information on the Council's Annual Equality Report, for the year 2020/21 that had been developed to fulfil the Council's legal duties and obligations to report

on its progress in delivering the General and Specific Equality Duties. Members were advised that the report contained progress made in year 2020/21 in meeting the equality objectives contained in Council's Strategic Equality Plan. Members were also advised that Members of the Overview & Scrutiny were provided with the opportunity to undertake pre scrutiny on the Annual Equality Report in advance of Cabinet's consideration.

The Deputy Leader thanked the officer for the report and also thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their valuable input and comments which would be taken forward.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. To note the comments and observations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2. To endorse the recommendations outlined within the Annual Equality Report 2020/21 as attached to the report, subject to any further comment by Cabinet Members.

127 BITC RACE AT WORK CHARTER

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager presented the report for the Council to sign the Business in the Community, Race at Work Charter and follow the recommended guidelines for compliance to reduce racial disparities in employment for Black and Minority Ethnic staff. Signing amplifies the organisation's commitment to equality of opportunity in the workplace and demonstrates our commitment to race equality and wider organisational inclusivity

The Deputy Leader thanked officers for the report and stated the importance for the Authority to be community leaders and sign the race at work charter

At this juncture of the meeting County Borough Councillor P Jarman spoke in support of the item

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager confirmed that the Authority would shortly be subscribing to the Membership of the BITC

It was **RESOLVED** to sign the Race at Work Charter and follows the recommended guidelines for compliance to reduce racial disparities in employment for Black and Minority Ethnic staff.

128 EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES PLANNED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23

The Director Education and Inclusion presented the report to Members to provide them with details of the capital works for approval for 2022/23 as part of the Council's three-year Capital Programme

Cabinet were informed that an ongoing programme of work is required in school premises to deal with essential conditions and health and safety issues across the school estate, to ensure school buildings are 'safe, watertight and warm'. The Officer continued that these works will support schools with effective

maintenance that will continue to reduce the risks associated with buildings and building services and help to prevent the need for significant capital expenditure and disruption to children's education which can follow with building failure.

The Cabinet Member Education and Inclusion Services thanked officers for the contents of the report and was pleased to read that all schools listed will benefit and bring them into the 21st Century.

The Leader commented that the proposed improvement works also demonstrated a good geographical spread across the whole of the County Borough. He thanked the Corporate Estates Team for their input into the works

At this juncture of the meeting and with the permission of the Leader Cllr P Jarman spoke on the item to which the Leader responded with her queries.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Education Capital Programme priority schemes for 2022/23 as outlined in Appendices 1-10 and approve scheme commencement.

129

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO ENHANCE WELSH MEDIUM LEARNING SUPPORT CLASS PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

The Head of Inclusion presented the report to advise Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposal to enhance Welsh medium Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

The Consultation Report, prepared in respect of this proposal, is attached at Appendix 1 for your attention. It contains information in respect of meetings held to discuss the proposal, with copies of the notes taken at these meetings; it contains Estyn's full response to the proposal and the appropriate clarification to the response; it also contains a summary of the online survey responses received during the consultation period and where required the appropriate clarification to any issues raised.

It must be noted that there has been a positive response to this particular consultation process with 31 written responses being received via the online survey which was available on the RCT website for the duration of the consultation period and 1 formal letter. Due to COVID restrictions, meetings with the community could not be held. However, a virtual meeting was held with the staff and governors and a face-to-face consultation was undertaken with the School Council.

Out of the 32 responses received, 28 were in agreement with the proposal, 2 respondents were not in agreement and 2 were unsure. The responses were overwhelmingly positive and in favour of the proposal to establish a Welsh medium Learning Support Class at Ysgol Garth Olwg to support pupils with significant additional learning needs.

The consultation process in respect of this proposal has been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, which was introduced on 1st November 2018, replacing the previous Code introduced in October 2013. These arrangements stipulate that a Consultation Report must be prepared prior to the publication of any Statutory

Notices which will progress the proposal. It further states that Statutory Notices must be published within 26 weeks of the end of the consultation period, which is 22nd August 2022 in this instance

The Statutory Notice for this proposal will refer to:

- The opening of a Learning Support Class for pupils with significant additional learning needs at Ysgol Garth Olwg with effect from 1st September 2022

If agreed, and subject to the matter not being called in for consideration by Scrutiny, the Statutory Notice will be published on 4th April 2022 and will allow for a minimum 28 day period for objections, ending on 11th May 2022.

The Cabinet Member Education and Inclusion commented that it is good to see a positive result from the consultation and that the proposal will increase learning opportunities for our Children and Young People

The Deputy Leader added that the Authority engages with many stakeholders on the proposals and the majority were very supportive and in favour and it is right that we have a Welsh Medium Additional Learning Needs facility available for learners.

1. To note the information contained within the Consultation Report, which includes a summary of correspondence received during the consultation exercise, including the full response from Estyn, feedback received from the online survey, and notes of the meetings held.
2. To progress the proposal to enhance Welsh medium Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) by issuing the appropriate statutory notice to open a Key Stage 3/4 LSC for pupils with significant Additional Learning Needs (ALN) at Ysgol Garth Olwg accommodating 14 pupils.

130 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CREATE A NEW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL IN GLYNCOCH

The Director Education and Inclusion presented the report which detailed proposals to Amalgamate Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing primary schools and opening a new, bigger community primary school to replace them.

The Cabinet Member Education and Inclusion commented that she is pleased to see a positive response to enhance the learning experience for pupils in RCTCBC area

The Deputy Leader added that it is wonderful new school for young learners but was disappointed at the low consultation responses but understands that Covid restrictions had been detrimental to the consultation process.

1. To note the information contained within the Consultation Report, which includes a summary of correspondence received during the consultation exercise, including the full response from Estyn, feedback received from

the online survey, and notes of the meetings held.

2. To progress the proposals to the next stage of the consultation process by issuing an appropriate Statutory Notice which will trigger the start of the Objection Period.

131 NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADOPTION AND FOSTERING SERVICES

The Group Director Community and Children's Services presented the report to members to update on the proposals for developing the governance and enabling for the National Adoption Service for Wales as it assumes responsibility for Foster Wales

Formally endorses the revised governance, formally assumes responsibility for foster wales, positive move sets collaborate arrangements on a formal basis.

1.2 To achieve agreement to signing the Joint Committee Agreement for the proposed Joint Committee

1. That the Authority signs the Joint Committee Agreement for the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales; and
2. Subject to 1, to authorise the Group Director, Community and Children's Services (in consultation with the Director of Legal Services) to agree any minor amendments to the Joint Committee Agreement which may arise as a result of the approval process being conducted across the 22 local authorities.

132 RCT LIBRARY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022/25

The Service Director Community Services presented the report to Members provide Members with an opportunity to review the Draft Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf's Library Service and its associated Action Plan.

The Draft Strategy outlines the services currently available and identifies the key priorities proposed for the next 3 years and the outcomes and impact achieving these will have. The Draft Action Plan outlines the actions that will be implemented to ensure that the desired outcomes and impacts are achieved.

Members heard the key priorities proposed for the next three years are:

- Keeping the service relevant in a rapidly changing environment.
- Improving the library experience for all customers.
- Take the opportunities and lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic to inform and shape future provision.

The Cabinet Member Community Services thanked the officer for the report, and acknowledged that it has been difficult time for the service over past two years but despite this, the service has performed extremely well and ranked extremely high through difficult to digitise, fantastic new hubs developed in communities.

The Deputy Leader also paid compliment to staff during the pandemic for going over and above in reaching out to residents to ensure they still had a connection and communication throughout pandemic with the service area providing an enhanced provision for E-learning and ICT Skills.

The Leader also gave thanks to Library staff and spoke positively of the strategy.

At this juncture in the meeting and with agreement from the Leader Councillor P Jarman spoke on the item

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Library Service's proposed Strategy and Action Plan 2022/25.

133 DIGITAL STRATEGY

The Service Director Digital and ICT presented the report to Members which set out the Council's updated Digital Strategy for the period 2022 to 2026.

Members heard that the proposed Digital Strategy 2022-2026 seeks to build upon the progress made since 2017 and sets out the Council's vision of being a truly "Digitally Driven Council," that provides excellent services, which are efficient, effective and designed with the person and modern customer expectations at their heart and delivered by a digitally empowered workforce.

The Strategy reflects the ever-increasing role and reliance on digital in people's everyday lives and seeks to harness the transformative impact it has. It also recognises that whilst demand continues to rise for online services, there are some who will continue to need our help to access digital services and those who need to be supported through more traditional channels.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services commented that the past 3 years has demonstrated how important the Digital Strategy is. The report builds on the strengths of the previous strategy and supports a better work/life balance for staff and was pleased Finance and Performance Committee are also supportive of the proposals.

The Leader also spoke positively on the Strategy and praised that it was for an all wales level as Welsh Government had our templates and shared these with other authorities. He stated that the investment into the service area helped to support staff to work from home and Highways to work with handheld devices.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Council's updated Digital Strategy (set out at Appendix A to the report).

134 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services presented the report provides Members 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

Members were informed that the Quarter 3 revenue budget position is projecting a £0.353M overspend, this being an improved picture compared to quarters 1 and 2 and reflects the continuation of key pressures primarily within Adult and Children's Services.

The Service Director continued that the Capital investment as at 31st December 2021 is £55.338M, with a number of schemes being re-profiled during the quarter to reflect changes in costs and new external grant funding approvals received, with the programme of capital investment supporting visible improvements in assets across the County Borough. With regard to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and Prosperity, positive progress overall has been made during Quarter 3 alongside services continuing their recovery from the pandemic and building on the work undertaken during the first half of the year.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services commented that the £350k overspend has been further reduced. The £33m of hardship funding has been provided of to cover funding during pandemic, this will be extra pressure on the council to cover from existing budgets; he added that the report is important to show how despite the pandemic we have continued to invest heavily in corporate plan priorities.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to

1. Note the on-going impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on service delivery and, in parallel, the re-introduction of services as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted
2. Revenue

Note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 31st December 2021 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary) and note the incorporation of Welsh Government Covid-19 funding into this position to support on-going service delivery.

3. Capital

Note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 31st December 2021 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).

4. Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 31st December 2021 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary)

5. Corporate Plan Priorities

Note the Quarter 3 progress updates for the Council's Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary).

6. 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).

135 EDINBURGH DECLARATION

The Director Public Health, Protection And Community Services presented the report to advise Cabinet of the Edinburgh Declaration and the role of Local

Authorities within the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, ensuring transformative change for nature over the coming decade and to seek Cabinet agreement for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to be a signatory of the Edinburgh Declaration.

The Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being & Cultural Services endorsed the report and recommendations, and commented that this aligns with the Authority's carbon reduction plan. He added it demonstrated that it is clear we are ambitious but there is more to do, however we are on track and the report aligns with our targets

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council becomes a signatory to the Edinburgh Declaration.

136 UPDATE REPORT ON THE PROPOSED SOLAR FARM AND RELATED ISSUES

The Director Corporate Estates presented the report to Members to provide a further update to Members with regards to the work underway in the development of a 'Land Based Solar Farm', to be located on Council owned land that allows a South facing aspect. He advised members that the facility will, when constructed, be an asset owned by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

Members were advised that whilst the name and location of the site has been anonymised at this stage for commercial reasons. Negotiations are in the crucial stages of the process to agree a Power Purchase Agreement / Offtake Contract with a potential partner. The Council has also signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement regarding this sensitive matter.

The Cabinet Member Stronger Communities, Well-being & Cultural Services was happy to endorse the report as it is essential the Council engages in innovative new technology and looking for opportunities to de-carbonise. He thanked officers for all their hard work being undertaken behind the scenes.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services commented that the project is ambitious project with significant investment required and supports the public sector and local businesses. He was therefore happy to support the project.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the contents of the report as part of the ongoing work in response to RCTCBC's climate change ambitions and agree to the further progress of the project proposals, in line with the contents of the report.
2. To receive further report(s) to provide updates on progress as/when deemed appropriate.

137 URGENT ITEMS

This meeting closed at 11.15 am

**Cllr A Morgan
Chairman.**