



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the Hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 28 February 2023 at 11.30 am.

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

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

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

Non-Committee Members in attendance

Councillor K Johnson

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
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, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr R Waters, Director – Frontline Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr N Elliott, Interim Director of Social Services
Ms A Richards, Temporary Service Director - 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Ms C Williams, Service Manager - Disabled Children
Mr G Roberts, Integrated Transport Manager

Apologies for absence

Councillor M Norris

107 Declaration of Interest

The Deputy Leader declared the following personal interest in respect of Item 10 of the agenda – Capital Programme: "I am a Member of the Governing Body of Heol y Celyn Primary School which is referenced in the report."

108 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2023.

109 Residential Care Homes for Older People

The Interim Director of Social Services presented the report, which provided the Cabinet with the opportunity to consider the outcome of the consultation on the preferred options on the future provision of accommodation for older people in each of the Council's nine residential care homes.

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication then provided the Cabinet with the feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee, which considered the report at its meeting held on 27th February 2023. A formal letter (*attached*) had been circulated to the Cabinet prior to the meeting but the Service Director took the opportunity to summarise its key points:

- Many members acknowledged the strong public opposition to the Garth Olwg proposal;
- A Majority of members have recognised the case for change;
- Many members have identified the need to see proposals to invest in all facilities come forward as soon as possible;
- A comment was made by one member in respect of the focus of the report upon capacity rather than addressing a better geographical spread, and local access to such facilities;
- A member asked for reassurance that the Council is 'confident' when reducing capacity, there is 'resilience' in the community to support people to live independently longer; and
- A majority of the Committee commented upon the need for greater capacity for dementia as part of the proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care took the opportunity to thank officers for the comprehensive report, which set out for the Council's continued modernisation programme of investment in care homes, despite the current financial position. The Cabinet Member was in support of the proposals that sought to provide dignity and respect in old age with modern, state of the art care homes, including provision for more complex needs and learning disabilities in adulthood. In respect of the extensive public consultation undertaken, the Cabinet Member noted that it was largely positive with residents welcoming the investment. The Cabinet Member spoke of the concerns raised regarding the Garth Olwg proposal and took the opportunity commend Councillor G Stacey for raising a number of issues raised on behalf of residents and staff in retaining the care home at Garth Olwg, whilst welcoming a new facility for adults with learning disabilities.

The Leader emphasised that although the care provided by staff was excellent, several of current homes did not meet the new modern-day standards. The Leader advised that the remodelling of the rooms to include ensembles etc was considered but that it would prove to be challenging with residents needing to be moved more than once, which was strongly condemned by the Older People's Commissioner.

The Deputy Leader thanked the Director for the report and spoke positive of the

change to Ferndale recommendation to increase capacity, following consideration of the consultation responses. The Deputy Leader fully appreciated the anxiety any change creates, but felt it was important to acknowledge that it would not be right by the service or future users, to continue with the status quo, and commented that it was essential through investment, to adapt to the needs and demands of future generations.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure spoke positive of the report and the significant investment to meet the needs of the local communities. The Cabinet Member noted that the consultation was well-received but acknowledged the concerns of residents in respect of the Garth Olwg proposal, which had also been noted by the Scrutiny Committee. However, the Cabinet Member emphasised that the investment would provide alternative accommodation with care to support people with learning disabilities in adulthood.

In respect of the concerns raised from residents in terms of the Garth Olwg proposals, the Leader noted that within 5 miles of Garth Olwg, there were two other Council care homes, private care homes and two extra care facilities. The Leader noted that Garth Olwg was operating at a 50% rate, which wasn't likely to increase and advised that there were vacant beds in the neighbouring facilities. The Leader emphasised that there was a need for capacity and resilience in the system and explained that the proposals would provide a substantial level of surplus capacity, despite the small reductions. The Leader spoke of the Council's current extra-care facilities and Cabinet's visit to the Talbot Green facility, where the feedback was positive.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To consider:

- the responses to the consultation on the modernisation of the Council's nine residential care homes for older people;
- the information provided in this report;
- the Equality Impact Assessment (including Socio-Economic Duty) and Welsh Language Impact Assessment; and
- the recommendations and comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, following its meeting held on the 27th February 2023, where the Committee undertook pre-scrutiny of the preferred options on the future provision of the Council's accommodation for older people following the consultation [NOTE: A letter of the Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication was circulated to Cabinet Members prior to the Cabinet meeting and was verbally reported by the Service Director at the meeting].

2. To retain the current service provision at the five Council residential care homes listed below:

- Clydach Court, Trealaw
- Pentre House, Pentre
- Tegfan, Trecynon
- Cae Glas, Hawthorn
- Parc Newydd, Talbot Green

3. To proceed with the preferred option to permanently decommission Ystrad Fechan residential care home and continue to explore with Linc

Cymru and the Health Board the development of land near the existing care home to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 40 extra care apartments and 20 residential dementia care beds, along with other health and social care accommodation options depending on available development space and need, as set out in Section 7 of the report. Following a previous Cabinet decision Ystrad Fechan residential care home is currently temporarily closed and has no residents living there.

4. To a further report being presented to Cabinet setting out the investment proposals to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 40 extra care apartments and 20 residential dementia care beds in Treorchy.
5. To proceed with the preferred option to develop land near the existing Ferndale House residential care home to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 25 extra care apartments and 15 residential dementia care beds and decommission Ferndale House residential care home when the new proposed alternative accommodation with care for older people provision is developed, as set out in Section 7 of the report. NOTE: This is an amendment to the preferred option consulted upon which was to provide new accommodation with care with 20 extra care apartments and 10 residential dementia care beds and would increase the care provision in the Rhondda Fach.
6. To a further report being presented to Cabinet setting out the investment proposal to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 25 extra care apartments and 15 residential dementia care beds in Ferndale.
7. To proceed with the preferred option to work with Linc Cymru to explore options to develop land near the existing Troedyrhiw residential care home to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 25 extra care apartments and 15 residential dementia care beds and decommission the Troedyrhiw care home when the new proposed alternative accommodation with care for older people provision is developed, as set out in Section 7 of the report.
8. To a further report being presented to Cabinet setting out the investment proposal to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 25 extra care apartments and 15 residential dementia care beds in Mountain Ash.
9. To proceed with the preferred option to redevelop Garth Olwg residential care home to provide alternative accommodation with care to support people with learning disabilities in adulthood and decommission Garth Olwg care home for older people when suitable alternative placements are found for existing residents in a home of their choice which meets their assessed needs, as set out in Section 7 of the report.
10. That the decommissioning of Garth Olwg residential care home be concluded by the end of May 2023 and will follow the good practice principles detailed below in paragraph 7.7 of the report and ensure comprehensive support is provided to residents, their families, and staff.

11. To a further report being presented to Cabinet setting out the investment proposal to provide alternative accommodation with care to support people with learning disabilities in adulthood on the Garth Olwg residential care home site.
12. That the Interim Director of Social Services and Director of Human Resources produce a workforce development plan to address the workforce issues raised by staff during the consultation in order to attract, retain and support the development of a stable, talented, and committed workforce to support the delivery of Council's residential care service. The workforce development plan would be shared with the recognised Trade Unions for views prior to any implementation.

110 Children's Services Residential Transformation Strategy

The Service Director of Children's Services provided the Cabinet with information about children's services plans for developing residential care services in line with the Council's duties, and in the context of the Welsh Government Policy ambition to remove profit from the provision of care for looked after young people; and sought Cabinet's agreement to approve and adopt the proposed Looked After Children: Residential Care Transformation Strategy 2022-2027.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care took the opportunity to thank officers for the detailed report, which he felt set out a pathway to delivering change and direction to children's residential services. The Cabinet Member was fully supportive of a not-for-profit market and stressed that the overriding aim was to provide care to looked after children and young people, close to home in high quality settings where they can thrive by stable, resilient, and skilful staff. The Cabinet Member recognised that it was an ambitious task with significant barriers to overcome to comply with regulations by 1st April 2027 and as Chair of Corporate Parenting Board, the Cabinet Member stated that Board Members were acutely aware of the increase in demand for placements, lack of availability and sufficiency and that for many years there had been children placed out of county.

The Cabinet Member questioned whether the decision had impacted on residential placement availability for children over the last year and whether it had increased the number of OWR placements supported by Children's Services over the period in Rhondda Cynon Taf and other Local Authorities. The Service Director confirmed that the reason the Council had to develop OWR placements was due to the lack of suitable registered alternative and explained that the proposed strategy was the strongest plan to move away from those arrangements.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure commented that the Council did not want to be placing children in unregistered accommodation, but like many other Local Authorities, there was no other alternative due to a lack of suitable accommodation availability. The Cabinet Member sought assurance that the unregistered placements provide a safe environment with care and support that is tailored to the specific needs of the individual children while registered accommodation is pursued. The Service Director explained that all options are considered prior to an OWR placement, which included supporting the young people at their existing homes to prevent escalation; and developing therapeutic provision and placement support. Additionally, it was explained that RCT's own

resources were considered before an OWR placement but where there was no alternative option, the young people's safety and wellbeing was paramount. The Service Director assured Members that managerial oversight is provided as it would in an RCT children's home.

The Deputy Leader thanked the Scrutiny Committee for its contribution and stated that in order to support young people in local communities it was key that Local Members are provided with concise and factual information to prevent speculation and negate any concerns of the community.

In light of the Deputy Leader's comment, the Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care proposed an additional recommendation that Elected Member briefing sessions were to be taken forward to provide Councillors with the opportunity to find out more in terms of the ambition of the Strategy, the duties to looked after young people and to support Elected Members in responding to any queries from constituents

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information contained within the report;
2. To note the comments and observations of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee, following pre-scrutiny of the proposed Strategy on the 28th November 2022;
3. To adopt the Looked After Children: Residential Care Transformation Strategy 2022-2027; and
4. That Member briefing sessions are taken forward to provide Councillors with the opportunity to find out more about the ambition of the Strategy, the duties to looked after young people and to support Elected Members in responding to any queries from constituents.

111 Cabinet Work Programme

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with an update on the Cabinet Work Programme on the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by Cabinet over the remainder of the 2022-23 Municipal Year.

The Service Director informed Members that there had been several changes made to the Work Programme following its publication, which would be reflected on the Council's website. The Service Director also advised that there would be an additional Cabinet meeting in April to ensure all necessary business is considered during the remainder of the Municipal Year.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the Cabinet Work Programme for the 2022-23 Municipal Year (with appropriate amendment where necessary) and receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis.

112 Free Bus Travel throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf for March 2023

The Director of Frontline Services presented the report, which sought Cabinet approval to provide free bus travel for the period of 1st – 31st March 2023 for all journeys that start and terminate within the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) county boundary. The Director explained that the Council had been successful in bidding for money through the UK's Shared Prosperity Fund to introduce initiatives that will help reduce the cost of living for residents, through measures

that improve energy efficiency and combat fuel poverty and climate change. As such, £500k had been awarded for the 2022/23 financial year, with further awards of £1.1M for 2023/24 and £1.2M for 2024/25.

The Director clarified that, if approved, free bus travel would apply to all operators currently operating a scheduled service, for journeys within the County Borough. If a journey ends outside of RCT, that part would remain payable.

The Leader advised that the average fare for bus journeys across RCT was £2.30 and explained that the initial model considered by officers was a £2 flat rate across the whole year, totalling over £2M, which was unaffordable. The Leader continued and explained that, had they opted for the £2 flat rate model for a month, much of the funding would have been returned to the Government.

The Leader spoke of another Local Authority, which had trialled a period of free bus travel and informed Members that bus travel had increased by around 30% and although there was no long-term evidence of a substantial uplift, the key was to increase the number of passengers going forward. The Leader stated that an increase in bus travel would not only support the Council with its climate commitments but would save residents in RCT approximately £500K on travel for the month.

The Leader informed Members that following the month of March, a review would be undertaken of the pilot to gain an understanding of how best to use the additional funding of £1.2M in the new financial year.

With the agreement of the Leader, County Borough Councillor K Johnson addressed the Cabinet on this item.

The Leader thanked the Member for his contribution and explained that in terms of Bus Emergency Scheme, the Welsh Government had set out a three-month extension that could be extended further. The Leader added that subject to the budget announcement on 14th March 2023, Local Government would be pressing UK Government for continued funding for the bus emergency scheme and acknowledged that with price increases in fuel etc, there had been an impact on bus travel.

The Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure voiced their support of the proposal. The Deputy Leader spoke on behalf of residents who were reliant on public transport and feeling the repercussions of the cost-of-living crisis; and stated that free bus travel throughout RCT for March would be of great financial benefit.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report and approve the proposal to introduce free bus travel for the period of 1st – 31st March 2023 for all journeys that start and terminate within the county boundary; and
2. That Officers review the outcomes of the free bus scheme, and seek to develop further free bus travel initiatives during the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years e.g., during December 2023; subject to funding.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to defer consideration of this item to a future meeting.

114 Non-Domestic Rate (NDR) Relief Schemes & Revaluation Update

The Head of the Revenue and Benefits Service presented the report, which provided the Cabinet with:

- a) Details of the Welsh Government Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief (RLH) Scheme for 2023/24;
- b) Details of a proposed local business rate reduction scheme; and
- c) Details of the NDR Revaluation which comes into effect from 1st April 2023.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services was pleased to note that Welsh Government had recognised the financial challenges facing businesses in Wales and welcomed the increase in level of relief to 75% across Retail, Leisure, and Hospitality sectors. The Cabinet Member was also pleased to note that the Council's local scheme would also be increased from £300 to £500 per qualifying business premises and noted that over 600 businesses would benefit in the coming year. The Cabinet Member concluded and noted that the Transitional Relief Scheme, coupled with the freezing of the multiplier at 53.5p would protect businesses from the impact of the Non-Domestic Rate Revaluation exercise.

The Leader added that increasing the local relief scheme from £300 to £500 was a commitment of the administration to provide over and above the Welsh Government's schemes.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the details of the WG RLH Scheme and formally adopt the scheme for the year 2023/24;
2. The proposed local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for 2023/24; and
3. To note the details of the NDR revaluation exercise.

Note: Following consideration of this item, the Leader left the meeting, and the Deputy Leader took the Chair.

115 The Council's 2023-2024 Revenue Budget

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with the draft budget strategy for consideration which they would wish to recommend to Council.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the officers for addressing the budget approach in a sustainable way, particularly in terms of the use of transitional funding. The Deputy Leader acknowledged the continued pressure in respect of social care and proposed that the Cabinet amend the proposed strategy to take forward a Council Tax increase of 3.90%. The Deputy Leader was of the view that the marginal increase would still see RCT Council Tax lower than many other Local Authorities and would look to offset some of the pressures placed in the area.

The Deputy Leader noted that the report highlighted savings from procurement, technology, back office, and efficiency savings; and that compulsory job losses had been prevented. The Deputy commented that the opportunities to make

savings away from the frontline were becoming increasingly limited.

In light of the Deputy Leader's comments, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services moved the recommendations outlined within the report and proposed the additional recommendation, to amend the proposed Council Tax increase for 2023/24 to 3.90%, and to determine that this level forms part of the Cabinet Budget Strategy to be presented to Council on 8th March 2023.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To review and amend the Budget Strategy which they wish to recommend to Council on the 8th March 2023;
2. To amend the proposed Council Tax increase for 2023/24 to 3.90% to support social care pressures, and to determine that this level forms part of the Cabinet Budget Strategy to be presented to Council on 8th March 2023; and
3. To recommend to Council 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.

116 Capital Programme

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Digital Services provided Cabinet with a proposed three-year capital programme for 2023/24 to 2025/26 that if acceptable, will be presented to Council for approval.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services took the opportunity to thank the Director for the report and was pleased to note that, despite the challenging financial circumstances, the Capital Programme continued to achieve one of the largest level of capital investment by a Local Authority in Wales. The Cabinet Member stated that the investments support the delivery of visible differences to communities and improve communities across RCT as a result.

The Deputy Leader echoed the Cabinet Member's comments and was pleased to note the ambitious programme of investment, despite the current financial climate.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To review and propose the attached three-year capital programme to Council on 8th March 2023 which includes:
 - A proposed allocation of new resources as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report;
 - Proposed investment priorities as detailed in paragraph 6.2 of the report;
 - The Council's core capital programme; and
 - 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 as a consequence of any change to the Council's capital resource levels announced in the Final Local Government Settlement.

This meeting closed at 12:45pm

**Councillor A Morgan (Chair)
Councillor M Webber (Deputy Chair)**