



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE

Minutes of the HYBRID meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee held on Monday, 27 March 2023 at 5.00 pm

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

County Borough Councillors – The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-

J Edwards
G Hughes
S Morgans
Mr M Veale (Co-opted Member)

The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee Councillors were present online:-

K Morgan	J Bonetto	J Brencher
W Owen	M Ashford	S Evans
G Williams	K Webb	Sheryl Evans
C Middle		

Officers in attendance:-

Mr S Gale – Director Prosperity and Development
Mr A Wilkins – Director Legal Services
Mr C Hanagan – Service Director Democratic Services and Communication
Mrs S Daniel – Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Mr P Griffiths – Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services

County Borough Councillors also in attendance:-

M Webber
C Leyshon
S Powderhill
A Crimmings
M Powell
D Wood
C Lises

60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

61 MINUTES

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 27th February 2023.

62 CONSULTATION LINKS

The Principal Scrutiny Officer advised of the open consultations that members are able to feed into. Members were reminded that if they had any queries they could contact the Scrutiny Team via the Scrutiny mailbox

63 CALL-IN: POTENTIAL TO CREATE ADDITIONAL EVENT SPACE AT YNYSANGHARAD WAR MEMORIAL PARK

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented the report which outlined the procedure for the meeting, as set out in rule 17 of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules. The Service Director advised that a call-in request was received from County Borough Councillors M Powell, C Lises and D Wood within the prescribed timescales on 20 March 2023 which complied with the relevant criteria and considered valid by the proper officer.

The call-in requested that the decision of the Director of Prosperity and Development relating to the Report of the Potential to Create Additional Event Space at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park from the Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Cabinet Sub-Committee meeting on the [15 March 2023](#) be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The three signatories who signed the call-in form were invited to address Committee outlining the reasons, supported by the Service Director, as proper officer, given by them in requesting the call-in and why they consider the decision should be referred back to the decision maker to reconsider the decision. The Chair indicated that the relevant Officer and Cabinet Member will be called upon, who has been formerly consulted on the matter, to address the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Members were advised that the Chair will then invite members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider the valid reasons set out in the report together with the comments of the relevant Officer and Cabinet Member as to whether the matter should be referred back to the Ynysangharad War Memorial Cabinet Sub-Committee. The relevant Officer and Cabinet Member will then be invited to respond to the questions raised by members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

It was confirmed that one of the nominated signatories would have the right to make their final address to the Committee immediately before a roll call vote is taken on whether or not to refer the matter back to the relevant decision maker for reconsideration. It will be for the Director of Legal Services to clarify and summarise the effect of the Committee's decision.

Councillor M Powell

Councillor Powell raised that he felt further questioning of the officers on the proposal should have taken place at the time in which this was considered at the Ynysangharad War Memorial Cabinet Sub-Committee,

in particular around the proposals of a bus stop turning area with access in to the top end of the park, which would transport visitors to the events at the park. He added that many residents in his ward had contacted him to say that this area is not an under-used area of the park with many residents using this area to walk through. Whilst he appreciated the proposals were subject to a funding application, he felt that further in depth questioning of the Director of Prosperity and Development should have been undertaken.

Councillor C Lises

Councillor Lises raised concerns over the future use of the War Memorial Park for parking and the movement of vehicles. She sought clarity of the potential use of the space and what events will be expected in the temporary event space.

Councillor D Wood

Councillor Wood agreed with the points raised by Councillor Powell and Councillor Lises and advised that many residents have stated that it is a very much loved and used area of the park, and commented that it is not under-used as described. She sought clarity as to whether there would be a loss of trees and asked if a Biodiversity survey and Environmental Impact survey had been undertaken as there are lots of species in that area. The Councillor also queried the specific use of the event space as the potential allocated spot has lots of noise from nearby traffic so commented that it may not be suitable for certain events.

The Chair thanked the Members for their submissions and invited the Director of Prosperity and Development, Mr Simon Gale to respond to the comments.

The Director of Prosperity and Development wished to clarify that the proposals were not in depth as this was not a formal grant application for funding at this stage and just an expression of interest to establish whether the Council are eligible for funding from the Brilliant Basics fund and if this is a proposal that would be considered eligible.

He referred to Councillor Powell's comments on a bus turning area and advised that nothing in the proposal suggests there would be buses or additional vehicles. He reassured the Member that any vehicles necessary for future events would attend in the same way they have done previously for events in the park and the proposals only serve to make the space more usable and unlock future potential leisure uses as a green space.

The Director commented that in its use as a pitch and putt course, the area is cut on a regular basis and gave reassurance that biodiversity checks will always be undertaken prior to any works commencing and

these have not yet been looked at in depth as this was just an expression of interest at this stage.

He reassured Members that no fences will be taken down as part of the proposal and the suggestion of levelling off the area will allow for more options and make the space more usable.

The Chairperson of the Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Cabinet-Sub Committee wished to reassure Members that there are no plans for turning points, bus stops or extra vehicular movements. She added that the necessary environmental assessments will be undertaken before any proposals go ahead and the removal of trees, should the proposal go ahead, will be three in total. She provided reassurance that as a trustee she was satisfied with the outline proposal that would serve to bring further enhancement to the park and will give residents the opportunity to utilise the space for future events.

Members sought clarity on if the current grassed area will be retained as it is currently and if the public access will remain? The Director of Prosperity and Development advised that the proposal is to level the grass area so this would remain. He referenced an outline proposal to include a footpath in the area to make it more accessible but further feasibility studies would be undertaken if this plan were to progress. He provided reassurance that the public would not be restricted in accessing the area and the proposals seek to make the area a more usable space for the public to use to walk through or to have a picnic with family.

A Member asked if the expression of interest for the funding has already been submitted in accordance with the 16th March deadline

The Service Director replied that the proposal in the presentation that was considered by Ynysangharad War Memorial Cabinet Sub-Committee was just an overview to advise and consult with the Committee as trustees. He added the trustees have a specific Terms of Reference (TOR), in effect, acting as guardians. They were being advised, in line with their TOR, of the proposals and they will continue to be consulted if proposals develop. Any decision to take forward the proposal, will sit with the Full Cabinet Committee.

The Chairperson thanked Members for their questions and observations and invited Councillor Powell to sum up the argument in favour of referring the decision back to the decision maker i.e. the Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Cabinet-Sub Committee.

Councillor Powell stated that he still has concerns on the proposal and is not satisfied with the proposed location as, despite comments from officers that implied it is an under used area of the park, he disagreed and stated that it is a well- used area with families walking dogs and children playing and thought this proposal, should it go ahead, would be to the detriment of the park

Following consideration of the issues and in accordance with the Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules, it was **RESOLVED** that the matter not be referred back to the Ynysangharad War Memorial Cabinet Sub-Committee for reconsideration and the decision taken on the 15th March 2023 take effect as from the close of the meeting. The decision was summarised by the Director, Legal Services.

COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES REPORT

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communication introduced the Quarter 3 Council Performance Report (to 31st December 2022) and noted that the report sets out the financial and operational performance of the Council as at Quarter 3 2022/23.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services then provided Members with an overview of the report and invited Member questions.

Members sought clarity on the Transportation overspend within Frontline Services which was projected to be in excess of £3m for the 2022/23 financial year. The Service Director fed back that the projected overspend was due to significant inflationary cost pressures for home to school transport contractor costs, for example, higher costs for pay, fuel and repair and maintenance. The Service Director added that one-off resources have been identified to fund the increased costs in 2022/23 and arrangements are in place to work with contractors to review and challenge expenditure and the on-going impact of inflation.

Members asked for an update on investment priorities in respect of road schemes and future plans in this area.

The Service Director advised that full Council has approved an updated Capital Programme for the period 2023/24 to 2025/26, that references the need for consideration of Welsh Government's Roads Review. The Service Director added that the Council will continue to work closely with Welsh Government to identify opportunities to support schemes and ensuring that the impact on the climate is taken account of.

Members sought clarity on how the Council is working to prevent long term staff sickness absences as it was noted that this figure was currently at 5.5%. Members also asked if there was any impact on staff working from home in terms of staff feeling supported or isolated.

The Service Director fed back that a programme of work is in place to support staff well-being and their return to the workplace when absent from work. The Service Director advised that a Sickness Management Team is in place that provides targeted support to service areas where sickness levels are high; timely information on attendance levels is provided to all managers as part of maximising attendance, with review

arrangements in place across services; and a training programme has been rolled out to managers covering the Council's sickness absence policy. The Service Director added that the Council's Occupational Health Team provides a range of services to help promote good health and well-being of staff together with services that support specific health conditions. The Service Director went on to cover staff working from home, noting that risk assessments are undertaken to ensure employees home environments used for work purposes are fit for purpose. The Service Director indicated that where appropriate and in line with business needs, staff work on a hybrid basis between home and the office to support team working, personal well-being and work priorities. The Service Director also fed back that a number of office locations are near town centres, this helping to support town centre regeneration.

A Member referred to the high turnover of staff, particularly in Community and Children's Services, and asked for further detail on this and if exit interviews were undertaken with staff before they leave.

The Service Director fed back that the main contributory factor to the increased turnover level for Community & Children's Services during quarter 3 was the reduction in the level of service required for the Test, Trace, and Protect Service, in line with Welsh Government guidance / policy, and the resulting reduced staffing numbers within this area of service. The Service Director also fed back that exit interviews are undertaken by services and would seek further information on the themes that have been captured as part of these arrangements, and an update reported to a future Committee meeting.

A Member sought reassurance that the Council is providing sufficient support for Additional Learning Needs, as a revenue budget underspend is projected for this area. The Service Director confirmed that the reason for the projected underspend was due to the Service maximising external grant funding opportunities during the year, ensuring that service delivery levels are maintained.

A Member recommended prioritising the promotion of the Hop, Shop and Save initiative where residents can benefit from reduced or free bus travel throughout the Borough to support our town centres and local businesses.

The Co-Opted Member stated that he would like to see the Risk Register be more dynamic and more detail included within risk updates, and noted an example in terms of the 85% pupil attendance figure for comprehensive schools was a worry and asked how this figure was being addressed.

The Service Director noted the feedback and provided reassurance that the Council's Strategic Risk Register is reviewed, updated and challenged on a regular basis, and would consider opportunities to reference more detail within risk updates, in consultation with risk lead officers. The Service Director went on to indicate that improving school attendance

levels is challenging, with this being a key priority for schools, the Council and the Central South Consortium who are working in partnership to build on and strengthen existing arrangements and provide necessary support.

RESOLVED: Members noted the contents of the report and agreed to receive further information in respect of staff sickness

65 URGENT BUSINESS

None

66 CHAIRS REVIEW AND CLOSE

The Chair thanked officers and members for their attendance and contributions at the meeting

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

Cllr J Edwards

18.17