

CABINET - TUESDAY, 12 MARCH 2024

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD HYBRID IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2 AND 3 - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON TUESDAY, 12 MARCH 2024 AT 14:30

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

JC Spanswick
HM Williams

N Farr
JPD Blundell

W R Goode

J Gebbie

Officers:

Carys Lord
Claire Marchant
Janine Nightingale
Kelly Watson
Julie Ellams
Mark Shephard
Lindsay Harvey
Michael Pitman
Anya Richards

Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change
Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Corporate Director - Communities
Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services
Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Chief Executive
Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services
Interim Group Manager Communications and Public Affairs

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Neelo Farr declared a personal interest in item 13, Home to School/College Transport Policy

301. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> The minutes of the 20/02/2024 were approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	12 March 2024

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302. Outcome of the Consultation on the Draft Participation and Engagement Strategy

Decision Made	<p>The Chief Officer – Finance, Housing and Change presented a report which informed Cabinet of the outcome of the draft Participation and Engagement Strategy consultation and approve the Strategy for publication.</p> <p>She explained that the aims set out in section 3 of the report were developed to ensure our residents and other key stakeholders were involved in key strategic decisions. The full consultation results were at Appendix A to the report.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Wellbeing asked with regards to the GovDelivery emailing system, do we have any statistics on how many of the communication emails were opened.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Wellbeing asked how did we provide the information to the public on the face to face engagement sessions, as it states in the report it was advertised on social media, but not everyone uses it.</p> <p>The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager explained that the information was advertised on social media for those who used it, but for those who did not, the information was fed through Town & Community Councils in order for them to advertise at local meetings, websites and physical advertising. Unfortunately the face to face engagement sessions were not greatly attended, however the conversations that were had were very meaningful.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> Cabinet noted the outcome of the consultation and approved the Engagement and Participation Strategy attached as Appendix B to the report for publication</p>
Date Decision Made	12 March 2024

303. Housing And Homelessness Position Statement

Decision Made	<p>The Chief Officer – Finance, Housing and Change presented a report which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated Cabinet as to the key pieces of work currently being taken forward to address pressures
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on housing and homelessness services;

- Sought approval from Cabinet for the acquisition of Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) style properties which are within the Council's approved capital estimates for the purpose of providing temporary accommodation, subject to all reasonable due diligence and legal advice;
- Sought approval from Cabinet to suspend the relevant parts of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) with regards to the requirement to tender for a contract and delegate authority to the Head of Partnerships and Housing to enter into Service Level Agreements with existing accommodation providers for a period of 'up to' 12 months in order to continue the provision of additional temporary accommodation as necessary to meet the Council's statutory duties.

The Chief Officer – Finance, Housing and Change provided background to the report as detailed in section 2 of the report. She advised that the temporary accommodation costs were stark, and these were highlighted in the table at section 2.7 of the report, which showed the increases year on year. She stated that on 19 December 2023 Cabinet approved a Housing Support Programme Strategy and Action Plan for 2022-2026. Section 3 outlined some key pieces of work which were being taken forward to meet the challenges faced in Bridgend.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning & Regeneration stated that we recognize that homelessness is a national crisis and its important to note the requirement of the Local Authorities to provide cheaper and better accommodation, which Bridgend has been no different in.

The Deputy Leader echoed these comments and stated that it was important to approve this report to ensure that the risk of people becoming homeless was mitigated. She asked what happened in 2018-19 as the costs were significantly low that year compared with other years. The Chief Officer – Finance, Housing and Change explained that during this year the number of people coming forward seeking help had actually dropped from the previous year, other services were often provided as well and so many people did not require temporary accommodation. The following years saw a significant increase and this was largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED: Cabinet:

- noted the contents of the report;
- approved the acquisition of Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) style properties which were

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	<p>within the Council's approved capital estimates for the purpose of providing temporary accommodation subject to all reasonable due diligence and legal advice;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• agreed to suspend the relevant parts of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) with regards to the requirement to tender for a contract and delegated authority to the Head of Partnerships and Housing to enter into Service Level Agreements with existing accommodation providers for a period of 'up to' 12 months in order to continue the provision of additional temporary accommodation as necessary to meet the Council's statutory duties;• delegated authority to the Head of Partnerships and Housing to approve the final terms of the Service Level Agreements on behalf of the Council and to arrange execution of the agreements on behalf of the Council in consultation with the Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory, HR and Corporate Policy;• noted that a further report will be presented to Cabinet to update on the position regarding temporary accommodation.• requested that a further report on the Social Housing Grant be submitted to Cabinet.
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304. Local Housing Market Assessment 2024

Decision Made	<p>The Chief Officer – Finance, Housing and Change presented a report which sought Cabinet approval of the statutory Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) 2024 for submission to Welsh Government.</p> <p>She explained that the LHMA had analyzed household projections alongside key socio-economic, demographic and property market data in order to calculate housing need estimates for Bridgend County Borough. This analysis was attached at Appendix 1.</p> <p>The Principal Strategic Planning Policy Officer provided further background to the Assessment and the data gathered. He explained that the information will be used in a tangible way to inform the Social Housing Grant prospectus and also housing mixes on planning applications. He stressed that this was a strategic guide to boost the affordable housing provision, but all proposals will need to take the local context in to account.</p>
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	<p>The Leader was pleased to see that we did not need to use external consultants and have relied on our own inhouse expertise which has also saved the Council money.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning & Regeneration welcomed the report and thanked Officers for the immense work that had been put into it. This is an important piece of work that shapes the decisions for the future housing market and ensuring that we are able to provide the housing where it's needed. He asked that this report goes to the Public Services Board and the Regional Partnership board to ensure that all of our partners get an early insight where there will be larger housing areas and communities and therefore they can plan ahead of what they need to provide.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• approved the LHMA 2024 (Appendix 1 to the report) for submission to Welsh Government.• requested an update on the progress of the submission, to a future meeting.
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305. Non-Domestic Rates: Discretionary Relief: Retail, Leisure And Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme 2024-25

Decision Made	<p>The Chief Officer – Finance, Housing and Change presented a report which sought approval from Cabinet to adopt the Welsh Government's Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme 2024-25.</p> <p>She explained that the total amount of relief available is £110,000 across all properties occupied by the same business. It is estimated that due to this limit there will be in the region of 888 eligible ratepayers across the borough that could potentially benefit from having to pay only 40% of their rates bill for the 2024-25 financial year under this Scheme. If this Council adopts the Scheme, application forms will be made available on Bridgend County Borough Council's website for all qualifying ratepayers to apply</p> <p>The Cabinet Member Finance, Resources & Legal welcomed the report and stated that it was an important scheme for businesses in Bridgend. He highlighted however that while BCBC collect the rates, it was Welsh Government that set the rates.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Education mentioned that there may be many businesses in Bridgend who are unaware that they are eligible for this scheme, nor how to apply to it. He asked how were we going to promote this.</p> <p>The Chief Officer – Finance, Housing and Change explained that the comms team have already been</p>
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	<p>notified of this and were ready to provide this information on the Councils website as well as social media should it be approved. The application link would also be provided from the 1st April 2024, in order for businesses to start the process early.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Education asked if it were possible for us to write out to businesses to let them know it was available.</p> <p>The Chief Officer – Finance, Housing and Change stated that once the application process went live, there will be an expected number of businesses applying for the scheme. After a short while if no correspondence has been received from the expected businesses, we would do some follow up work then.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet adopted the Non-Domestic Rates Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme for 2024- 25 as detailed within Appendix A of the report.</p>
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306. Proposed Use Of Land Transaction Transfer Protocol With Cardiff Capital Region for Land At Brynmenyn & Bryncethin

Decision Made	<p>The Corporate Director Communities presented a report which outlined the proposed use of an Options Agreement arrangement with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCR), under the Land Transaction Transfer Protocol. If agreed, this will enable CCR to have an option to purchase surplus local authority owned land at Brynmenyn and Bryncethin, subject to conditions and red book land valuation.</p> <p>She stated that in September 2023, the Cabinet made the difficult decision to withdraw from the Hybont Green Hydrogen Project with CCR, Welsh Government and Marubeni Europower Limited (MEL). This was due to the Council’s challenging Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and inability to meet the significant financial commitments required to complete due diligence, including financial, technical and legal also an inability to meet the timescale for the project.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Communities explained that this report, if approved, will enable CCR to have an option to purchase surplus local authority owned land, subject to conditions and an agreed red book valuation. She provided details on the land as per section 3 of the report.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member Climate Change and the Environment welcomed the report but highlighted the point</p>
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	<p>that this was relating to the land itself, and is separate from the previously discussed Hybont project. He stated that while this proposal was to transfer the land ownership, he believed it was important that it remained in the public ownership and interest. He highlighted point 4 of the recommendation that if the land did not get used for the project, it would return to the Council for the agreed value at which it was disposed.</p> <p>He asked if there were timescales on when this land would be returned to us should a project not go forward.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Communities explained that at this stage it was proposed that the CJC will report their full business case to their meeting in June and this will provide the information of the capital funding in place for the land option agreement, so this will allow ourselves to draw up this subject to the red book agreed valuation. The option can be drawn up however it will be determined on having a favorable planning application which is a separate statutory process.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Noted the contents of this report and the statutory requirements for planning consent and various licences and permits, that sat outside of the Land Transaction Transfer Protocol.2. Delegated authority to Corporate Director – Communities, in consultation with the Chief Officer - Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy and the Chief Officer, Finance, Housing & Change, to draft and enter into the Option Agreement with the CCR/CJC based on the principles set out in this report, and agreed the valuation of the land and conditions.3. Agreed that any capital receipt received by the Council, is afforded a ring-fenced protection until such time as it is clear that the project will proceed, to ensure that there are funds available should the land be returned to the Councils ownership.4. Agreed that a subsequent report will be brought back to Cabinet should the Option Agreement or project not proceed, in order the land can be returned to the Council for the agreed value at which it was disposed and that a decision on the future of the two parcels of land can be agreed.
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307. Welsh Public Library Standards

Decision Made	The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report which provided Cabinet with the Council's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) sixth framework for the periods
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	<p>2021-22 and 2022-23.</p> <p>She explained that Appendix 1 was the 2021-22 summary report received from Welsh Government although during this period libraries across Wales were rebuilding usage following the pandemic. BCBC did not receive this report until 2023. During this period, the service saw a 23% increase in active borrowers with growth evidenced across both children's and adult's issues.</p> <p>Appendix 2 is the 2022-23 report from Welsh Government in response to the library self-assessment return regarding Welsh Public Library Standards.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Wellbeing welcomed the report and said that it was pleasing to see that Bridgend were providing this library service to a very high standard.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader congratulated AWEN for gaining alternative funding. She added that Welsh Government had requested that any cuts that may need to be made by Local Authorities to library services that they were not disproportionate to other cuts which was an important point to understand. It was also important that we listened to the public consultation and take on the views of residents and what they want and don't want, to ensure our decisions were inclusive in this.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> Cabinet considered and noted the content of the report and Appendices 1 and 2, recognizing the positive work that Bridgend's library services had delivered to date in regard to the Welsh Public Library Standards.</p>
Date Decision Made	12 March 2024

308. Procedure for the Appointment and Removal of Local Authority Governors

Decision Made	<p>The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support presented a report which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• sought Cabinet approval for the procedure for the appointment and removal of local authority governors (at Appendix A); and• sought authorization for an amendment to the Scheme of Delegation of Functions
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	<p>The current procedure for the appointment and removal of local authority governors was approved by Cabinet in 2008. While the current procedure requires Cabinet to approve the appointment of local authority governors (based on the recommendation of officers), the proposed replacement procedure no longer requires such approval by Cabinet. This is because such appointments are operational and, therefore, the new procedure will allow for appointments to be made on the basis of evidenced levels of relevant knowledge, skills and experience.</p> <p>The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support stated that it was proposed that the following new function is delegated to the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support at Scheme B2 of the Scheme of Delegation of Functions. Further information was at section 3 of the report.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Education welcomed the report and stated that the change will improve the efficiency of the process of appointing Local Authority Governors. An appointment can currently take a few weeks while the report is drafted, it gets approved by the cabinet Member and then comes before Cabinet, so the change is welcomed and will help fill vacancies more quickly.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• approved the procedure for the appointment and removal of local authority governors as summarised in paragraphs 3.1-3.5 and detailed in Appendix A to the report• approved the amendment to the Scheme of Delegation of Functions as detailed in paragraph 3.6.• agreed that details of the applicants should be anonymised.
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309. Appointment Of Local Authority Governors

Decision Made	<p>The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support presented a report which sought approval from Cabinet for the appointment of local authority governors to the school governing bodies listed at paragraph 3.1.</p> <p>He advised that the applicants met the approved criteria for appointment as a local authority governor and there was no competition for the vacancies.</p>
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	<u>RESOLVED:</u> Cabinet approved the appointments detailed at paragraph 3.1of the report.
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310. Schools Admissions Policy 2025-2026

Decision Made	<p>The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support presented a report which sought Cabinet approval for the School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 at Appendix A.</p> <p>He explained that the Bridgend Admissions Forum agreed the draft School Admissions Policy for 2025-2026, as per the requirements under the Code, in October 2023. The aforementioned consultation (details set out in section 2 of the report on the 2025-2026 policy took place with all parties between 8 January 2024 and 2 February 2024. Details on the responses were set out in section 3 of the report.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader asked for information on why the Policy comes into action next year and not this year. The Corporate Director provided this information for the record.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> Cabinet approved the Schools Admissions Policy 2025-2026 at Appendix A to the report.</p>
Date Decision Made	12 March 2024

311. Home-To-School/College Transport Policy

Decision Made	<p>The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support presented a report which sought Cabinet approval to begin a public consultation on proposed changes to the local authority's Home-to-School/College Transport Policy.</p> <p>He explained that the final MTFS 2024-25 to 2027-28, presented to Council on 28 February 2024, included a saving of £792k for 2025-26 in respect of the current Home-to-School/College Transport Policy. Although there have been significant savings following the policy change approved by Cabinet in September 2015, changes in demographics and demand, especially post-pandemic, have meant that additional budget growth has been necessary to support the learner transport budget.</p>
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	<p>The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support outlined details of the previous consultations that had taken place over the last few years and the changes that were made following these. The proposed consultation would also take into account the legislative context as set out in section 3 of the report.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning & Regeneration asked in relation to the changes being proposed, has any impact assessment been carried out on people from lower income backgrounds and different socioeconomic backgrounds. An in-depth response was provided by the Corporate Director for Education and Family Support.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader made the point of ensuring that parents also take equal responsibility in ensuring that they can get their child to school and are using mobility assistance appropriately. There are a number of aids that available for pupils with mobility needs etc, however as parents it's important to ensure they do their part. Mobility assistants that are for their child need to be used for their child only.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> Cabinet approved a 12-week consultation on the following proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawal of legacy transport for all learners benefitting from an identified and available (safe) walking route to school, to fall in line with the statutory distances of two miles for primary school-age pupils and three miles for secondary school-age pupils.• Removal of legacy 'sibling' protection for pupils.• Removal of all transport for nursery pupils (excluding pupils attending their nearest suitable Welsh-medium or faith school).• Removal of all Post-16 transport excluding pupils attending the following schools:<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd;o Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School; ando The Bishop of Llandaff Church in Wales High School.• The offer to parents/carers of pupils with ALN the option of a 'personal transport budget' providing a mileage allowance of 45p per mile.
Date Decision Made	12 March 2024

312. Information Report for Noting

Decision Made	<p>The Chief Officer Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy presented a report to inform Cabinet of the Information Report for noting that has been published since its last scheduled meeting.</p> <p>Details of this were at section 3.1 of the report. To note, this report had already been through the scrutiny process and was provided to Cabinet today for noting.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> Cabinet acknowledged the publication of the report referred to in paragraph 3.1 of the report.</p>
Date Decision Made	12 March 2024

313. Cabinet, Council And Overview And Scrutiny Committees Forward Work Programmes

Decision Made	<p>The Chief Officer Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy presented which sought Cabinet approval for items to be included on the Cabinet Forward Work Programme for the period 1 March 2024 to 30 June 2024 and for Cabinet to note the Council and Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Forward Work Programmes for the same period.</p> <p>She explained that the proposed Forward Work Programmes for the above period are appended to the report, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet - Appendix 1• Council - Appendix 2• Overview and Scrutiny Committees - Appendix 3 <p>The Deputy Leader pointed out the length of many of the reports can be considerable and asked that due consideration was given to ensure that reports are made more concise for the benefit Members as well as the residents of Bridgend.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved the Cabinet Forward Work Programme for the period 1 March 2024 to 30 June 2024 at Appendix 1;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Noted the Council and Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Forward Work Programmes for the same period, as shown at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 of the report, respectively.
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314. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	12 March 2024

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click [this link](#)

The meeting closed at 17:44.