

CABINET - TUESDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2021

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD REMOTELY ON TUESDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 14:30

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

CE Smith
NA Burnett

HM Williams

D Patel

RE Young

Officers:

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| Claire Marchant | Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing |
| Gill Lewis | Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change |
| Kelly Watson | Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services |
| Mark Shephard | Chief Executive |
| Deborah Exton | Interim Deputy Head of Finance |
| Mark Galvin | Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees |
| Lindsay Harvey | Corporate Director Education and Family Support |
| Nicola Echanis | Head of Education & Family Support |
| Michael Pitman | Democratic Services Officer - Committees |
| Justin Kingdon | Strategic Asset Management and Investment Manager |
| Gaynor Thomas | School Programme Manager |

611. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

612. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2021-22 TO 2024-25 AND DRAFT BUDGET CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Chairperson of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented a report, the purpose of which, was to present Cabinet with the comments, findings and recommendations of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy proposals.

She advised that for ease of reference the COSC had split the recommendations into separate appendices, set out as follows.

The Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) findings and recommendations in relation to the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-2025, were detailed at Appendix A and Appendix B to the report.

The comments and recommendations from the combined meeting of all Scrutiny Committees on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25, were at Appendix C of the report.

The COSC had accepted the recommendations and comments from both the BREP and the combined meeting of all Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the MTFS proposals and therefore, had agreed to submit them to Cabinet.

The Deputy Leader extended his thanks to the Members of Scrutiny Committees, including the COSC and BREP, for the hard work and due diligence they had committed through giving their contributions on the MTFS proposals for Cabinet to consider. He added that the comments and recommendations so made, would be closely considered and responded to by the Executive. This was echoed by the Cabinet Member –

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Wellbeing and Future Generations and the Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration, in turn.

The Chairperson of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee felt that it may also be worthwhile at this point in time, revisiting the role and remit of BREP, in order to see whether or not any improvements could be made to the manner in which it functioned, bearing in mind that the Panel had been introduced over 3 years ago now, ie shortly following the local government elections going into the new administration.

The Leader felt this would be beneficial, particularly in conjunction with the different ways the Council was now conducting its business, ie such as through holding meetings remotely etc. He referred to Recommendation 12 in the report's supporting information, namely that a working group be set-up to actively look at identifying relatively small one off investments on safe routes to schools, which could offset ongoing costs of some Home to School transport. The Leader advised that he welcomed this recommendation.

He too conveyed his thanks to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and BREP for their input into the Budget proposals for the coming year.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet agreed to consider the recommendations of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in response to the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25 and the Draft Budget Consultation Process and comments upon these in the MTFS report to be considered at Budget Council later this month.

613. ANTI-TAX EVASION POLICY

The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, presented a report, the purpose of which, was to present Cabinet with the new Anti -Tax Evasion Policy for approval.

The report outlined some background information, following which it confirmed that the Council was committed to establishing and maintaining effective arrangements to prevent and detect acts of bribery, corruption and tax evasion in relation to its Council services. It requires all Elected Members and employees to demonstrate the highest standards of honesty and integrity and this included compliance with the relevant legislation.

She explained that the Council already had Anti-Fraud and Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering policies in place to support effective arrangements to prevent and detect acts of bribery and corruption, which were monitored and reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee.

A policy had now been developed she added, specifically to address the prevention of tax evasion and this would provide a coherent and consistent approach for all employees and any person who performs services for and on behalf of Bridgend County Borough Council. The Anti-Tax Evasion Policy was attached at Appendix A to the report.

This policy statement was supplementary to the Council's wider Anti-Fraud and Bribery Strategy, which set out the key responsibilities with regard to fraud prevention and what to do if fraud or financial irregularity is suspected and the action that will be taken by management, as a result of this.

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She explained that the Forward Work Programme will contain items in the form of reports, which the Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committees and full Council are likely to consider.

Attached to the report were the Cabinet Forward Work Programme (Appendix 1), the Council Forward Work Programme (Appendix 2) and the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme (Appendix 3), for noting.

The Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations, advised that it was important for the public to see up and coming topical items that were earmarked for agendas of Cabinet, Council and Scrutiny, for reasons of transparency and to assist in allowing avenues of engagement with constituents of the County Borough. This was in order to share details of up and coming reports to be debated by Members/Officers on key service areas of the Council etc, they may have an interest in and to look to increase their interest in the local authority decision making processes of the Authority, some of which effect the County Borough as a whole.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- Approved the Cabinet Forward Work Programme for the period 1 March 2021 to 30 June 2021 at Appendix 1 to the report;
- Noted the Council and Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes for the same period as above, shown at Appendix 2 and 3 of the report, respectively.

615. AWARD OF FUNDING IN RELATION TO TRANSFORMING TOWNS: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND BIODIVERSITY GRANT: SUNNYSIDE WELLNESS VILLAGE 2020-2021

The Corporate Director – Communities presented a report, the purpose of which, was to seek approval from Cabinet to accept a revised funding offer from Welsh Government and enter into an agreement and associated legal charge with Linc Cymru (Linc) to support the delivery of the Transforming Towns – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity for the Green Infrastructure elements of the Sunnyside Wellness Village.

She explained that the Transforming Towns - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity grant, forms part of the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns (TT) programme. The TT programme is intended to build on the achievements of the 2014-2017 Vibrant and Viable Places programme, but takes a wider approach to regeneration by including ambitions of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the priorities identified in Local Well-being Plans and other local and regional plans, for enhancing economic regeneration and community well-being.

The TT programme was intended to run until March 2022, and would look to invest in projects which can deliver realistic economic and community outcomes. Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) will be looking to deliver these outcomes over the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 financial years. Applications for funding had to be made by local authorities on behalf of themselves or another public, private or third sector organisation.

The Corporate Director – Communities advised, that Linc Cymru approached BCBC to ask that an application be made to Welsh Government for Green Infrastructure funding to support the green infrastructure elements of the Sunnyside Wellness Village development.

and enter into a funding agreement for delivery of the above and to enter into a legal charge with Linc Cymru on the development.

616. ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS GRANT

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support presented a report, in order to seek approval from Cabinet, to enter into an agreement with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC), the County Council of the City and County of Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council regarding the Additional Learning Needs Transformation Grant 2020-2021.

He explained that the Additional Learning Needs Transformation Grant 2020-21 (ALN Grant) is a Welsh Government grant-funded scheme to support the delivery of the additional learning needs transformation programme, including the preparation for and management of the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET Act).

RCTCBC, acting as the lead local authority, had submitted an application to Welsh Government for the ALN Grant on behalf of Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), the County Council of the City and County of Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council and third party providers (who are further education sector and local health boards in the regions of the councils).

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support proceeded further, by advising that in December 2019, Cabinet approved entering into a similar agreement on similar terms for the Additional Learning Needs Transformation Grant 2019-2020.

The application for the ALN Grant was successful and an award of funding for up to £934,562 was made to RCTCBC (as lead local authority), which will be allocated to each council in accordance with the ALN Implementation Plan.

As the lead local authority, RCTCBC is required to accept the terms and conditions of the ALN Grant as set out in the offer letter from Welsh Government. In order to deliver the project and ensure compliance with the terms and conditions set out in the offer letter, RCTCBC requires the Council, along with the 3 other local authorities listed at paragraph 3.2 of the report, to enter into an agreement in relation to the ALN Grant. This agreement shall set out the roles and responsibilities of the councils and how the funding shall be allocated.

In terms of the report's financial implications, the total value of the grant for 2020-21 was £934,562. However, the amount available to local authorities is £809,562 as there is a retained element of £125,000 for the employment of the regional ALN Transformation Lead and associated costs and administration and finance support. The allocation of grant spend for Local Authorities is £248,487, of which BCBC expects to receive £60,885. The remainder of the grant is allocated to Schools, Further Education and Health, the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support concluded.

The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration welcomed the report's recommendations which would benefit all local authorities that comprised the Central South Consortium.

The Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help added that the grant funding would benefit our ALN children who needed greater levels of investment to receive parity of education with other young people.

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The Leader was pleased to note that WG had listened and continued to engage with the sector, though an investment was required for the short, medium and longer term to help with transition proposals and how these are managed. The extent of the costs he appreciated however, would not be fully realised until the project was not only fully up and running, but until it had evolved.

He felt that the provisions of the report also reflected a good example of partnership working, with the relevant neighbouring local authorities involved in the Agreement.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:-

- Approved the Council entering into the agreement with RCTCBC, the County Council of the City and County of Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council regarding the Additional Learning Needs Transformation Grant 2020-2021; and
- Delegated authority to the Corporate Director Education and Family Support to negotiate and agree the final terms of the agreement with the other Councils and enter into and arrange execution of that agreement, subject to such delegated authority being exercised in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Chief Officer - Legal, HR and Regulatory Services.

617. SCHOOL MODERNISATION - BRIDGEND NORTH EAST - OUTCOME OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY AT BRACKLA HILL

The Corporate Director – Education and family Support submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to:

- apprise Cabinet of the outcome of the feasibility study in respect of the proposed relocation and enlargement of Ysgol Gymraeg (YG) Bro Ogwr to the Brackla Hill site;
- seek approval to discount the Brackla Hill site from any future consideration in respect of the YG Bro Ogwr, Band B proposal; and
- seek approval to continue to explore alternative options for the replacement school.

He explained that the Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) was submitted to Welsh Government (WG) in July 2017. In October 2017 Cabinet was presented with a report detailing the outcome of the Band B review and gave approval to discontinue the original Band B schemes identified in the November 2010 Cabinet report, and approved the revised Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) and the projects listed in paragraph 3.1 of the report.

On 6 December 2017, the WG Department for Education gave 'approval in principle' for Bridgend's second wave of investment, which at that stage had an estimated programme envelope cost of £68.2m. Further costs were to be determined, and these would be associated with additional infrastructure capacity.

Following this, in January 2020, Cabinet was presented with the outcome of the extensive options appraisal relating to each of the approved projects.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support, added that Cabinet approval was received to progress an on-site feasibility at Brackla Hill in respect of the preferred education option for the Bridgend North East scheme ie 2.5-form entry (FE) YG Bro Ogwr on the Brackla Hill site.

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In progressing the feasibility study, the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support advised, that the project team commissioned all relevant surveys, which have been analysed by the individual disciplines. Each discipline has had input into the final 'Brackla Hill - Feasibility Report'.

The following sections of the report, contained a summary of the key aspects of the findings from such feasibility study (paragraphs 4.2 – 4.12, inclusive).

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support concluded, by stating that when considering all these factors, it was the recommendation of the project team, that the Brackla Hill site is not taken forward for development of the new school. Alternative site options should therefore be explored, he added.

The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration thanked Officers for the report. He also thanked the Brackla Labour Ward Member and representatives of the 'Save Our Fields' Brackla group for their constructive engagement into the Feasibility Study proposals and outcomes and their overall consideration and engagement with Cabinet on the siting of the proposed YG Bro Ogwr school. He also thanked Carwyn Jones AM for his contribution regarding the scoping of funding options for the school (welsh and English medium) on a suitable alternative site(s) near Brackla, where the schools would be re-developed. He felt there was a need for engagement with the Brackla Community Council, with a view to protecting the green space originally proposed for the siting of the school(s) from developers, possibly through a Community Asset Transfer agreement being pursued sometime in the future.

The Leader echoed the constructive engagement exercise that had taken place between the Authority and the Brackla 'Save Our Fields' group in respect of the Feasibility Study, which had proven to be invaluable. The Council had to look after both its green/open spaces, whilst at the same time, also developing capacity for welsh medium education opportunities within the north east area of Bridgend.

The Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help added that she was pleased to see the safe preservation of Brackla Hill as an area of green open space, particularly as there was limited such areas in the nearby town centre area of Bridgend.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- Noted the outcome of the on-site feasibility study in respect of the proposed relocation and enlargement of YG Bro Ogwr to the Brackla Hill site;
- Gave approval to discount the Brackla Hill site from any future consideration in respect of YG Bro Ogwr; and
- Gave approval to explore alternative options for the replacement school

618. URGENT ITEMS

None.

619. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as it

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contained exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 and/or Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Following the application of the public interest test it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above, to consider the following item in private, with the public excluded from the meeting, as it was considered that in all circumstances relating to the item, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

620. **SCHOOL MODERNISATION - BRIDGEND NORTH EAST**

The meeting closed at 16:15