



## COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN THE CHAMBER PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 24TH NOVEMBER 2022 AT 5.00PM

#### PRESENT:

Councillor E.M. Aldworth - Mayor  
Councillor M.A. Adams - Deputy Mayor

#### Councillors:

C. Andrews, A. Angel, C. Bishop, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, S. Cook, D. Cushing, C. Cuss, D.T. Davies MBE, G. Ead, C. Elsbury, G. Enright, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Forehead, E. Forehead, J. E. Fussell, A. Gair, N. George, C. Gordon, D. Harse, A. Hussey, M. James, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, J. Jones, S. Kent, P. Leonard, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Miles, C. Morgan, S. Morgan, B. Owen, T. Parry, L. Phipps, M. Powell, D.W.R. Preece, D. Price, H. Pritchard, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Rao, J. Reed, J. Roberts, J. Sadler, R. Saralis, J. Scriven, J. Simmonds, S. Skivens, J. Taylor, A. Whitcombe, L. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade, K. Woodland, C. Wright

#### Together with:

C. Harrhy (Chief Executive), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), J. Williams (Assistant Director Social Services), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), S. Pugh, (Communications Manager), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer), J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer), R. Barrett (Clerk)

#### Also present:

P. Diamond (Head of Regional Partnership Team, Gwent Regional Partnership Board)

### RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Executive reminded those present the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Broughton-Pettit, N. Dix, T. Heron, D. Ingram-Jones, A. Leonard, E. Stenner and C. Thomas, together with R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), D. Street (Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment).

## **2. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor referred to the engagements and events she had attended since the last meeting of Council and confirmed that both she and the Deputy Mayor had attended a number of Remembrance Armistice Day services across the county borough.

The Deputy Mayor also advised Council that he recently had the pleasure of attending an awards evening in Llantrisant hosted by the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, which paid tribute to the way in which the Fire Service works hard to protect everyone 365 days a year. The evening concluded with a presentation for Councillor Tudor Davies MBE to honour and thank him for his 23 years of unwavering and dedicated service to the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, with Councillor Davies MBE being presented with a photo album to commemorate the many occasions where he had represented the Fire Service during his years as Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority and in other support roles across the organisation.

## **3. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 28(3)**

The following petitions were received:-

- (1) Councillor Walter Williams presented a petition on behalf of local residents requesting that the roundabout at the cenotaph in Markham be removed and replaced with a traffic light system;
- (2) Councillor Nigel George presented a petition from residents of Mount Pleasant Road, Risca which requested that Caerphilly Council adopt and maintain the lane between Mount Pleasant Road and Hillside.

The Mayor accepted the petitions which would be actioned in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

## **4. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS**

### **Akai Ryu Karate Club**

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces was very pleased to introduce members of the Akai Ryu Karate Club based in Fleur-de-Lys, which was set up just 5 years ago by Sensei and club owner, Andrew Lewis, to help keep young people off the street and now offers classes every day to over 100 members from the age of 3 upwards.

A very small delegation of just 27 club members recently represented Wales at the World Championships in Poland, with the Cabinet Member delighted to announce that the club finished 3rd place overall in the competition, collecting an impressive tally of 19 gold medals, 14 silver medals and 14 bronze medals, which is a fantastic achievement for such a small delegation.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the hard work and dedication behind this achievement and was certain that all members of the karate club and their families would be extremely proud of such an impressive performance.

Sensei Andrew Lewis and members of the Akai Ryu Karate Club came forward and were congratulated by the Mayor and Council on their outstanding success.

## 5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the start or during the course of the meeting.

## 6. MINUTES - SPECIAL COUNCIL HELD ON 29TH SEPTEMBER 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of Special Council held on 29th September 2022 (minute nos. 1-3) be approved as a correct record.

## 7. MINUTES - COUNCIL HELD ON 4TH OCTOBER 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of Council held on 4th October 2022 (minute nos. 1-14) be approved as a correct record.

Councillor Judith Pritchard asked to be listed as J.A. Pritchard on future minutes in order to avoid any attendance queries between those Members with similar names, and confirmed that she had attended that meeting, with Councillor James Pritchard having given his apologies for the meeting.

## 8. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(2)

Question from Councillor L. Phipps to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan

Will the Leader give a statement on how the Chancellor's recent autumn statement will impact on the Council budget?

Response from the Leader of Council to Councillor L. Phipps

After 10 years of government-enforced austerity with budget cuts, wage freezes and a shift in the burden to those who can least afford it, the Chancellor's recent statement offered absolutely no respite whatsoever for public services. As is often the case with this government, they hide behind cash figures and ignore the real terms figures, which actually take into account raising costs, rising demand and inflation. The Chancellor said government spending will continue to increase in real terms. He then went on to caveat it by talking about, but at a slower rate and mentioning the public spending would need to be disciplined, and that this will be a challenging period. So are they going to fund realistic wages for public sector workers that reflect inflation in the cost of living crisis? No is the answer to that unfortunately. The Chancellor's statement does nothing to address low wages in essential public services.

So we had already planned for a £35m shortfall in next year's budget, which is about 10% of the net budget of the Council. And after the Chancellor's statement, we are still planning for a £35m shortfall in funding. Under the ten years of austerity, the biggest shortfall in funding we ever had to deal with was £14m, so £35m is completely unprecedented. It's hard to fully appreciate the scale of this amount, but as an example, if we shut all our leisure centres and libraries, stop collecting waste and carried out no maintenance on our highways, we would still not meet this shortfall. Now, I'm not suggesting for one moment that we are going to do this, but it does help to illustrate the scale of the challenge ahead.

Notwithstanding the Chancellor's statement, we know our communities are facing acute challenges and they need us now more than ever, so we will do everything we can to protect

our communities, our services and our staff. We will need to do far more with far less. We will need to do things differently and we are well on the way to implementing transformational plans which will protect our communities and I look forward to bringing these plans to the Council in the near future. These plans will include changes to the way services are delivered, and I know how resistant people can be to change. But if we are to continue delivering viable and sustainable services, change is inevitable given the aforementioned £35 million challenge laid at the door of this Council.

Supplementary question from Councillor L. Phipps to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan

Given what you've just said about how difficult things are going to be, are we going to use reserves to alleviate the worst impact of the budget deficits and keep running the services that all our residents depend on?

Response from the Leader of Council to Councillor L. Phipps

So whilst the financial pressures facing us are significant, we are in a stronger position than many councils due to our sound financial management in recent years. Despite the many calls from Plaid and Independent Members in this Chamber to spend our reserves many, many times over, we do have healthy reserves. Now reserves can only be spent once and if spent appropriately, they can leverage in many multiples. For instance, every time we spend £3m on building a new school, we get an extra £6m from Welsh Government, so a £9m school only costs this Council £3m. Our Regeneration Project Board have advised over recent years a spend of approximately £5m which leveraged in as much as £90m of external funding. So reserves used in a fiscally sound manner can bring huge benefits. However, reserves are also there for a rainy day and I think we can all agree that rainy day is upon us. So while the majority of reserves are ring-fenced for specific schemes, now is the time to release some of those reserves to deal with the funding crisis we face.

Many of our neighbouring councils are signalling their intent of making significant numbers of staff redundant, however, I want to reassure you that we are not going to take this blunt approach. The fact that we have reserves gives us a little more time to plan a far more sustainable approach. However, I will repeat, we can only use these reserves once and we only have limited time to plan and to mobilise. In order to protect services, the shape of the Council will need to change, it will be smaller, and it will be more focused. But due to our reserves, the change will be delivered in a managed manner using the Team Caerphilly operating model. This change needs to be progressed at pace. It will require purposeful leadership and a collective Team Caerphilly approach, but we can, with the effective use of our reserves, transform this Council to deal with the ever-dwindling budgets.

## **9. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(4)**

Question from Councillor D. Ingram-Jones to the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities, Councillor C. Andrews

As Councillor D. Ingram-Jones had given apologies for the meeting, Councillor J. Winslade presented the question on her behalf.

Will the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities explain what CCBC are doing to protect the most vulnerable in these difficult times?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities to Councillor D. Ingram-Jones

Frontline staff are receiving training to enable appropriate referral for cost-of-living advice and wider well-being support, and this will ensure every contact we have with residents counts.

In recognition of the many difficulties that residents are facing, the Council, in partnership with the community and voluntary sector, is developing a network of Welcoming Spaces, also known as warm hubs, across the county borough to provide local people with a warm and welcoming space to spend time meeting new people, trying new things and accessing services and advice.

As the Welcoming Spaces are confirmed, they have been added to an overall directory which will be available via the Council website on the cost-of-living landing page. This directory will also be circulated to internal and external partners and stakeholders to ensure details are made available to all that may wish to access these spaces. This will include the Community Connectors who will be able to support isolated and/or vulnerable customers to access these spaces within their communities. Where appropriate, teams across the Council that provide support relevant to these issues will be able to use Welcoming Spaces as an opportunity to engage with its attendees and provide advice or further support from these venues. We are also administering several additional grants to the Council hardship grant that directly address issues in communities that they are facing, such as loneliness, isolation and food poverty.

We are continuing to promote cost of living support via public events, with upcoming attendance at the Christmas Markets, DWP events and events organised by partners including Groundwork Trust, Schools, MPs and our MSs. We are finalising an additional Council hardship grant for those who are needing urgent financial support but are not eligible for or have exhausted existing grant schemes, and further details will be available when this is finalised.

Funds allocated via the Shared Prosperity Fund will enable continuation of the expansion of work to improve energy efficiency of properties that are rated "F" and "G". We have also established a Caerphilly Food Network in partnership with the Rural Development Plan Team, linking together food suppliers, producers and community food support groups to work collaboratively to address food insecurity.

The Caerphilly Cares Volunteer Service matches volunteers with individuals referred by social work teams from Older People, Learning Disabilities and the Physical Disabilities Sensory Impairment Teams. The volunteers offer support on a one-to-one basis in residential and day care settings through volunteer-led social clubs. Caerphilly Cares is currently working to restart the service following a hiatus due to Covid and including widening the scope of the service to include support for those outside formal services who are socially isolated and vulnerable.

The Corporate Employee Volunteering Scheme aims to assist community-based provision by releasing employees to support activities delivered by voluntary groups and organisations, as well as employees providing additional volunteer support for existing organisations.

We are also developing specific projects targeting those most in need, for example the Cooking Champions project that uses volunteers from the Catering department to deliver cooking classes in community settings. These classes provide participants with practical skills and equipment to cook on a budget, but also the opportunity to improve well-being and reduce social isolation. So, you can see that there are plenty of things going on at the moment.

## REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

### 10. WORKFORCE CAPACITY AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES

Consideration was given to the report which sought to provide Council with an update on some of the major issues and challenges currently impacting on workforce capacity and sought Council support for some initial proposals to provide additional resources into key areas. It was noted that the report included a number of recommendations from Cabinet, who received the report at their meeting on 19th October 2022, and had also been considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 27th September 2022.

Members were advised that the sheer breadth and depth of the transformation and regeneration work the Council is now involved in, above and beyond regular service delivery, presents significant challenges, particularly in view of the Chancellor's recent Autumn Statement 2022 which indicates substantial cuts to public service funding moving forward. Although the Council holds financial reserves which can be used to assist in meeting the anticipated budget shortfall of up to £35m for 2023/24, these monies can only be used once, and given the expected continued financial pressures in future years, it is clear that the Council will need to drive forward significant organisational and cultural change in order to protect services and staff.

The Council are already strengthening their workforce through the creation of a dedicated recruitment team, to ensure appropriate resources are in place to meet the significant challenges that lie ahead. Cabinet recently agreed the early introduction of the Foundation Living Wage and a temporary increase in mileage reimbursements to address current market volatility and fuel prices. All staff received an additional day of annual leave as part of the 2022/23 pay award and Cabinet will shortly be considering a range of other HR policies, including an additional 5 days of annual leave to further improve terms and conditions for Council staff.

However, it is recognised that the Council also need to strengthen the capacity of senior leadership in order to respond to and lead the Authority through the unprecedented complex challenges that are being faced. The report therefore proposed the creation of two new deputy posts, namely a Deputy Chief Executive and Deputy Section 151 Officer, which will ensure that the Council's statutory responsibilities are fulfilled at all times and will offer much-needed extra capacity to enable the Council to deliver organisational and cultural change to protect frontline services whilst operating with far less funding. The Deputy Chief Executive post will have a portfolio responsibility and will also lead on cross-cutting issues including the cost-of-living crisis, the Ukraine humanitarian crisis, the decarbonisation agenda and the Team Caerphilly Transformation programme. Funding for these posts will be redirected from three vacant Head of Services posts and the proposals in the report will not result in any additional resources being required as they will be fully funded through the virement of existing budgets.

Mrs Christina Harrhy (Chief Executive) set out the unprecedented pressures on the Council and its workforce capacity over an extended period as a result of heightened expectations and demands and expressed the need to ensure that there are sufficient resources in place in order to meet the challenges ahead and to meet the needs of the Council and its communities. The report sought to address three main challenges; (1) the need to overcome difficulties in recruiting external staff (2) the need to put in place additional statutory support and (3) the need to reduce sickness absence levels across the organisation.

In terms of recruitment and retention challenges across the Council, it was noted that these are not unique to Caerphilly Council, but it has been realised that staff now have different expectations since the pandemic in terms of work-life balance, and that prospective employees now have very different expectations of the recruitment and selection process. Therefore, a more modern and dynamic approach to recruitment is required in order to seamlessly identify and engage with prospective candidates and market Caerphilly as an exemplary employer. To meet this need, Cabinet have recently agreed the creation of a new internal recruitment team of seven staff which will embed this recent learning into operating practices and will operate from the People Services Division.

In terms of the two proposed additional statutory posts, the Chief Executive emphasised that these proposals would not require any additional funding to fulfil these crucial appointments. Members were reminded of the three statutory roles in place to ensure good governance and ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations, namely that of the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer. However, the Council does not have a designated Deputy Section 151 or a Deputy Chief Executive, and the absence of these key posts has been acutely felt over the past 12 months, with both the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer requiring absence for extended and separate periods and leaving the Council exposed to potential unnecessary risk. It was explained that the Deputy Chief Executive post, in addition to fulfilling the deputy role, would bring much-needed extra capacity to the senior management team and would also have an extensive portfolio and staff responsibility, in addition to overseeing the organisational and cultural change that is required in order for the Council to protect frontline services whilst delivering this with far less funding.

The Chief Executive highlighted the connection between extra senior management team capacity and the impact of staff service delivery on the frontline, and emphasised that given the acute needs of local communities, coupled with the financial challenges being faced, as well as the need to protect residents, services and staff, it is imperative that the Council is able to deliver the scale and pace of change that is needed, by removing unnecessary cost and bureaucracy and making it easier for frontline staff to deliver on behalf of the Council. It was explained that the funding for the Deputy Chief Executive and Deputy Section 151 Officer posts would be achieved by reallocating existing budgets from three vacant Head of Service posts to appoint to those two key statutory posts. Members were advised that the three vacant posts have been backfilled through restructuring changes, and that in some cases these posts have been identified as no longer being required due to changing circumstances. Council support was therefore sought for these two key statutory roles using £297k of the £376k available from the three vacant posts.

In terms of sickness absence levels, it was noted that these have worsened in the last 12 months, and although this position was not unique to Caerphilly it clearly presents additional pressures and needs to be reviewed in order to find the best approach. It was noted that personal stress, rather than work related stress, ranked as one of the leading causes of sickness absence. Cabinet have therefore agreed for external assistance to be sought from other public sector bodies to gain a deep, objective insight into the situation so that the Council can begin to introduce the necessary strategies to improve the position and bring further capacity back into the organisation.

The Chief Executive therefore emphasised the need for the Council to protect its communities, services and staff as a result of the current financial challenges by investing in leadership capacity to bring about this significant programme of organisational and cultural change.

Council discussed the report at length and clarification was sought on how the creation of the Deputy Chief Executive post would bring benefits to staff across the Council. The Chief Executive reiterated that the senior management team works hand in hand with staff across

the organisation and that there is a need for strong and purposeful direction in order to protect communities, services and staff as a result of the changing financial situation. Members were reminded that the existing Corporate Management Team is comparatively small and that it simply does not have the capacity at this time to drive organisational change and meet the extra responsibilities being experienced in relation to the climate change agenda, the implications of the war in Ukraine, the cost-of-living crisis and the Covid-19 enquiry. It was explained that the additional capacity, if approved by Council, would drive this change and make the job of frontline staff far easier by cutting out bureaucracy, improving processes and implementing digital technology to make existing roles far simpler. This would also equally apply to the Deputy Section 151 Officer post proposed in the report.

A Member asked if consideration had been given to appointing an additional Corporate Director in place of a Deputy Chief Executive. Mrs Harry explained that the lack of a Deputy Chief Executive means that if the Chief Executive were to be absent for any reason, there is no deputy in place who can fulfil the statutory responsibilities held by the Chief Executive. The Deputy Chief Executive post would have a defined responsibility and designation attached to the position, making it clear both internally and externally and to the Council's regulators who is next in line in terms of managing the organisation, should the Chief Executive be unavailable or require a deputy to step in at short notice. Additionally, the limited capacity across the Corporate Management Team and the lack of designated deputy officers for two of the statutory posts has been identified as a corporate risk, and therefore the proposals for additional staffing were presented as an opportunity to mitigate those risks.

Clarification was sought on how the size and structure of Caerphilly's senior management team compared to other local authorities in Wales. Mrs Harry urged caution when making comparisons, given the varying sizes across local authorities, but explained that although Caerphilly are the fifth biggest authority in Wales, the size of the senior leadership team does not reflect this ranking and some smaller authorities have larger senior management teams, in addition to all other councils having Deputy Chief Executives and Deputy Section 151 Officers. Members were also advised that Audit Wales have indicated that they would expect an organisation of this size and complexity to have a Deputy Section 151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive in place, in addition to the existing Deputy Monitoring Officer position.

Several queries were received regarding the funding of the proposed deputy posts, and some Members expressed reservations over the timing of the proposals and the need for the new posts in view of the budgetary implications arising from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, the cost-of-living crisis and the financial hardships being experienced by residents, and the public perception around the creation of these particular posts.

Mrs Harry explained that these posts would be met from the budget for the three vacant Head of Service, as the responsibilities for these posts had since been redistributed between a number of senior officers. Members were advised that the business cases put forward at the time are now outdated and that these particular posts are no longer required due to organisational changes over the past 12 months. As funding of £376k had previously been agreed for these three Head of Service posts, it was intended to repurpose £297k of this funding to reflect current leadership capacity requirements and to fund the proposed two new deputy posts, and therefore no further additional funding would be required for the proposals set out in the report.

In response to queries received around the vacant posts, Mrs Harry confirmed that the Head of Prosperity post had never been filled and the responsibilities attached to this post had since been absorbed by staff across the Regeneration Team. In terms of the vacant Head of Education Planning and Strategy post, it was confirmed that this postholder had now also taken on dual responsibility as Head of Transformation and was able to perform this dual function via the means of backfilling and support staff being strengthened within that



team, which had released the budget in terms of their former role. It was also confirmed later in the meeting that these reconfigurations had been cost-neutral and there have been no additional costs accrued as a result of the revised needs of these posts.

One Member suggested that the proposals in relation to the two deputy posts be put on hold for 12 months, in order to gauge the success of the new internal recruitment team. Mrs Harry emphasised to Members that the recruitment team is targeted towards filling the vacancies across frontline services and that there is a pressing and separate need to increase the capacity across the senior management team in order to drive leadership in line with the wishes of Members, together with organisational and cultural change, which simply cannot be achieved with current staffing capacity. It was emphasised that if Members were not minded to support these proposals in order to increase capacity, then the Council would need to re-examine its budget plan and look at alternatives which may include options such as cuts to services. Mrs Harry also acknowledged that whilst the public might not recognise the need for a Deputy Section 151 Officer or Deputy Chief Executive, the Council has a responsibility to ensure that the organisation is run appropriately and is legally sound, and that Members would need to consider how this corporate risk could be mitigated if they were not minded to support the proposals from this perspective.

One Member queried whether acting-up or honoraria arrangements could be considered as an alternative to a separate salaried post. Mrs Harry explained that honoraria payments are a short-term fix and that the permanent proposals put before Members would mitigate the risk and provide the additional capacity required across the Corporate Management Team in order to drive through the organisational and cultural change that is required. Another Member asked if the new deputy posts would require support staff and if a financial cost would be attached. It was reiterated to Members that additional funding would not be sought to support the deputy posts and that the report instead proposed the reconfiguration of existing resources in order to create these new posts.

A Member referred to the retention issues faced by Caerphilly arising from competitive salaries elsewhere and asked if salary benchmarking had been carried out against other local authorities as a means of addressing this issue. Officers confirmed that some parts of the Council are experiencing capacity issues due to sickness levels, which is currently being examined, together with difficulties recruiting staff as a result of a buoyant and competitive market. It was confirmed that the Council regularly carries out benchmarking activities, and for positions where there are recruitment and retention difficulties, the Council can offer a market supplement payment for which the benchmark is gained through a comparison with other local authorities or any other relevant employers. It was also noted that questions around wellbeing are included within the Council's staff surveys and that the Council also has a Well-being Strategy and Well-being Group which includes trade union members.

A Member sought further clarification on the justification for the two new deputy posts in view of the current cost of living crisis, rising inflation rates and financial hardship being faced by residents, and also expressed a need for residents to be able to view results as a return on the investment being made to strengthen the senior management team at this time. Members were reminded that a key function of the Corporate Management Team is to explore and maximise opportunities outside of the organisation in order to bring new infrastructure into communities and to make best use of the funding and investment opportunities available to the Council, for example through the Place Shaping Programme and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools. It was noted that the Corporate Management Team also responded to the rising support need in communities during the Covid-19 pandemic by developing the Caerphilly Cares model, which is continuing to support people through the cost-of-living crisis, and they also developed the Agile Working Policy to give Council staff the best possible work-life balance. Members were therefore advised that a forward-thinking and resilient Corporate Management Team is essential for the sustainability of the Council, especially when facing further unprecedented budget constraints, and the addition of the

Deputy Chief Executive post to the team would increase resilience and bring further benefits to local communities.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 39 for, 16 against and 4 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Cabinet decision to develop and recruit a new internal recruitment team in accordance with the funding arrangements set out in 8.1- 8.3 of the report be noted;
- (ii) the Cabinet decision to appoint a Cost-of-Living Co-ordinator as detailed at paragraph 5.51 of the report be noted;
- (iii) Cabinet's recommendation to create an additional post and designate as a Deputy Chief Executive spot salary of £139,044 (i.e., the mid-point between the Chief Executive spot salary and the maximum of the Director salary range) be agreed, with it being noted that this will need to be adjusted when the national Chief Executive pay award is agreed;
- (iv) Cabinet's recommendation to create an additional post and designate as Deputy Section 151 officer at Hay Grade B be agreed;
- (v) Cabinet's recommendation to allocate the budget to support the new posts as detailed in paragraphs 8.1 – 8.3 of the report, be agreed, with it being specifically noted that the proposals will not result in any additional financial resources being required as they will be fully funded through the virement of existing budgets.

## **11. PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES - ANNUAL LETTER 2021/22**

Consideration was given to the report, which advised Council of the publication of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter for 2021/2022.

Council were asked to consider and note the content of the Annual Letter for 2021/2022, a copy of which was appended to the report, and which is issued to each Local Authority in Wales and sets out a summary of all complaints received and investigated by the Ombudsman office during 2021/2022 relating to that Authority.

Specifically in relation to the complaints for Caerphilly, the Ombudsman received 60 complaints for 2021/2022 compared to 46 for 2020/2021, which were set out in Section 5.8 of the report. The Complaint Outcomes were set out in section C of the attached letter, with 7 referrals requiring early resolution/voluntary settlement, and the comparison figures with other authorities in Wales were set out in section D.

The letter also included a summary of the Code of Conduct complaints relating to Members of the Council and Town and Community Councils. In relation to Code of Conduct complaints for Caerphilly Council there was no evidence of a breach in respect of 1 matter, and 1 matter was referred to the Council's Standards Committee. There were 3 outcomes in relation to Town and Community Councils, specifically Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen Community Council, Blackwood Town Council and Rhymney Community Council, all of which found no evidence of a breach.

There were no questions received and Council noted the contents of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter for 2021/2022.

## **12. REGIONAL MARKET STABILITY REPORT 2022-2025**

Consideration was given to the report, which asked Council to agree and accept the Market Stability Report (MSR) for the local authority area, as required under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA), and asked Council to endorse the recommendation for the Local Authority to continue to engage with the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and support the development of the regional Area Plan, where actions will be identified setting out how priorities will be addressed

Members were advised that each Regional Partnership Board (RPB) in Wales is required under Section 9 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 to publish a regional overview of the stability of the commissioned services in that area. The MSR is a statutory document which each statutory partner is required by Welsh Government to produce on a three yearly cyclical basis. A regional overview report must also be published on the same timescale. The MSR sets out the extent to which the commissioned services are stable within the regional and local footprints to support people in need of care and support.

The MSR has been completed by the Gwent Regional Partnership Board in close consultation with statutory partners, including the 5 local authorities, the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB), third sector organisations and local citizens and service providers. A copy of the MSR was appended to the report.

There were no questions received on the contents of the report and it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 55 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) as required under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the Market Stability Report for the local authority area be accepted and agreed.
- (ii) the Authority continues to engage with the Regional Partnership Board to support the development of the Regional Area Plan which will set out actions that address how priorities will be met.

## **13. REGIONAL INTEGRATION FUND**

Consideration was given to the report, which asked Council to consider the financial liabilities and implications of the new Regional Integration Fund (RIF) and its tapered funding model, and asked Council to comment on the intended use of the RIF, its associated rules and financial liabilities. It was noted that the report had been considered by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 11th October 2022.

Members were advised that Part 9 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 required local authorities and Health Boards to establish Regional Partnership Boards. RPB's were established on Health Board footprints with consequently seven Boards being established. The RPB for this area is titled the Gwent Regional Partnership Board.

Previously the RPB has been supported by grants via the Integrated Care Fund (ICF), and recently ICF grants have been replaced by monies from the Regional Integration Fund (RIF). Welsh Government are clear on their intentions on the intended use of the RIF, together with the associated tapering arrangements around the grant funding over a 5-year period. This tapering requirement will result in financial pressures on the Local Authority as the tapering funding can only be replaced by taking funding from other budget areas or in budgetary growth. The report set out how the various iterations of grant funds have been used and explained in detail the tapering arrangements Welsh Government are looking to put in place.

Members' attention was directed to the comments of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee as set out in Sections 10.2 and 10.3 of the report.

Council were advised that in addition to the recommendations set out at Section 3.1 and 3.2 of the report, approval was also sought to add a further recommendation (recommendation 3.3), for the Leader of Council to write to the Health Minister in the Senedd to ask that the Minister revise the tapering arrangements for the RIF as it will put a massive financial burden on Council budgets going forward and will require the Council to replace the tapering funding from other budget areas or in budgetary growth.

There were no questions received on the contents of the report and it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report, together with additional recommendation 3.3 as set out at the meeting, be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 52 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the report, together with the rules and use of the RIF, be considered and noted;
- (ii) Members' comments on the tapering arrangement in place between 2023 and 2027 be noted;
- (iii) the Leader of Council writes to the Health Minister in the Senedd to ask that the Minister revise the tapering arrangements of RIF and how it is funded.

The meeting closed at 6.56 pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 they were signed by the Mayor.

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MAYOR