



## JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2024 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor G. Johnston – Chair

Councillors:

Councillors: M. Adams, E. M. Aldworth, A. Angel, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, C. Cuss, E. Davies, N. Dix, G. Enright, M. Evans, C. Forehead, A. Gair, C. Gordon, D. Harse, T. Heron, A. Hussey, D. Ingram-Jones, L. Jeremiah, J. Jones, S. Kent, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Owen, L. Phipps, M. Powell, H. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds, , A. Whitcombe, L.G. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade, and K. Woodland.

Cabinet Members:

Cabinet Members in attendance: S. Morgan (Leader of Council), C. Andrews (Education and Communities), E. Forehead (Social Care), N. George (Corporate Services, Property and Highways), P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection), and J. Pritchard (Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change).

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), M. S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), G. Jenkins (Interim Corporate Director of Social Services), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), R. Thomas (Planning Services Manager), A. Dallimore (Regeneration Services Manager), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy and Monitoring Officer), J. Williams (Assistant Director Adult Services), L. Lucas (Head of Customer and Digital Services), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), J. Pearce (Business Improvement Officer), I. Richards (Business Improvement Officer), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), J. Green (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also in attendance: Co-opted Member K. Stacey (Parent Governor Representative).

### RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded and would be made available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). Members were advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Bishop, C. Bissex-Foster, S. Cook, D. Cushing, D.T. Davies, G. Ead C. Elsbury, K. Etheridge A. Farina-Childs, J. Fussell, M. James, A. Leonard, B. Miles, T. Parry, D. Preece, J. Rao J. Reed, J. Roberts, J. Scriven, S. Skivens, E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas and C. Wright, and Co-opted Members D. Bezzina (Parent Governor Representative), P. Ireland (NEU), K. Cole (NEU), and D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following report.

## **3. DRAFT ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT AND WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES PROGRESS REPORTS 2023/24.**

The Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services introduced the report which presented the Joint Scrutiny with the Councils' Self-Assessment Report and the Well-Being Objectives Progress Report for 2023/2024 (Appendices 1 and 2) for consideration and comment prior to their onward submission to Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

Members were advised that the reports were considered by the Governance and Audit Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024 as part of the statutory duty to have assurance that the Councils self-assessment is robust and effective.

A Member raised workforce planning and commented that the Council's recruitment method was very slow and not user-friendly. The Member believed that applicants with low digital skills should be allowed to submit a paper copy of their application form, especially if the role they were applying for did not require good IT skills. Members were advised that applicants could request a paper copy of the application form if they were unable to complete the form online and were also informed about the role of the Employment Team within Regeneration which provides advice and assistance on the job application process. Members were advised that CCBC operates a Safer Recruitment process whereby offers of employment are offered subject to several conditions and that essential checks on successful candidates could sometimes cause unavoidable delays.

A Member sought clarity on how the community well-being objective was concluded to be satisfactory. Members were referred to a range of evidence in the report and the importance of performance indicators in the self-assessment process were highlighted. It was also noted that difficult future funding decisions caused by the challenging economic situation would be unpopular within communities.

A Member referred to decarbonisation and noted that the partnership role of Community Councils had been overlooked in the report appendices which highlighted the installation of Photovoltaic (PV) panels on 63 Council buildings. The role of Gelligaer Community Council was highlighted by the Member. The Member also queried the role of the Caerphilly Cares Service in promoting volunteering and noted that this was a primary function of the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO). On the priority

indicators for Well-Being Objective 2 the Member also questioned the data showing a drop in the number of adults receiving domiciliary care in the year.

Members were assured that the details of funding from Community Councils, in relation to PV Panels, and the role of Gelligaer Community Council would be recognised in the revised report to Cabinet. Members were also advised that Caerphilly Cares worked closely with GAVO on the volunteering scheme highlighted and suggested that the Caerphilly Cares Manager would provide more information on this collaboration, outside of the meeting. Regarding the comment on the decrease in adults receiving domiciliary care, it was outlined to Members how this correlated with the introduction of functional assessments and the consequent reduction in care hours commissioned.

A Member sought clarification on the number of females employed by CCBC being more than double the amount of men employed and requested if males could be targeted in future recruitment initiatives to address the imbalance. Members were advised on the CCBC recruitment process which was open to everyone, and that protected recruitment based on gender was exceedingly rare. It was also stressed that the aim of the recruitment process was to appoint the best candidate for the vacant position.

A Member highlighted the 20% vacancy rate within CCBC trades staff and suggested that the application process might be putting people off applying for this type of role. Members were advised that applicants are measured in a standard way based on evidence provided which meet the essential requirements of the person specification for the role, and also highlighted that the person specification for a particular role was set by line managers.

A Member requested an update on the Cwm lfor solar farm project. Members were advised that the site had recently received planning consent from the Welsh Government as a Development of National Significance and that progress would now be made. The Member also welcomed hydrogen projects highlighted in the appendices and suggested that new sites for Hydro-Electric schemes should be identified. Members were informed on how new projects could be considered under the Council's Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan.

A Member commented on the increase in the number of homeless households temporarily in bed and breakfast accommodation and asked if there was an update on addressing the significant backlog of repairs and void properties in Caerphilly. Members were advised that this request would be referred to Housing so that an update could be brought to a future Committee meeting.

The Joint Scrutiny Committee reviewed the draft reports (Appendices 1 and 2), raised questions, and commented upon their content prior to consideration by Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

The meeting closed at 5.50 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

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CHAIR