



CABINET
MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND
VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON
WEDNESDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2025 AT 1PM

Councillor S. Morgan – Chair

Councillors:

J. Pritchard (Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change), C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities), N. George (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways), C. Morgan (Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces), E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance), S. Cook (Cabinet Member for Housing) and E. Forehead (Cabinet Member for Social Care).

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Chief Executive), D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), M. S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment) and G. Jenkins (Interim Corporate Director Social Services)

Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), L. Sykes (Deputy Head of Financial Services and Deputy S151 Officer), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), Dr P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), K. Adams (Team Leader Integrated Transport Unit), C. Campbell (Transport Engineering Manager), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy and Programme Director Place Shaping), E. Strathdee (Manager Admissions, Customer Services and Complaints), B. Winstanley (Head of Land and Property Services), P. Cooke (Transformation Manager, Decarbonisation), H. Richardson (Decarbonisation Project Officer).

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS.

The Leader reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View.](#)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

An apology for absence was received from P. Leonard (Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Clarification was sought in relation to Agenda Item No. 9 – Home to School Transport Policy as to whether Cabinet Members who were also School Governors needed to declare an interest. The Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer confirmed that due to the borough wide nature of the report there was no need to declare an interest at this stage.

Councillor S. Morgan sought clarification in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 – Welsh Government Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2025/2026 as he owned a small commercial property however due to its size was not subject to business rates. The Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer confirmed that as the property was not benefitting from the scheme there was no interest to declare.

3. MINUTES – THURSDAY 16TH JANUARY 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the special meeting held on the 16th January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

4. MINUTES – WEDNESDAY 22ND JANUARY 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

5. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE.

Cabinet was provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports until May 2025.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the Forward Work Programme be noted. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

6. WELSH GOVERNMENT RETAIL, LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY RATE RELIEF SCHEME 2025/26

Consideration was given to the report that provided details of the new Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme offered by Welsh Government for 2025/26 only and sought Cabinet approval to adopt the new scheme as set out in Welsh Government guidance.

Cabinet welcomed the scheme which would support local businesses.

Following consideration and discussion of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained therein be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2025-26' (the 2025/26 Scheme), in accordance with the WG guidance on the WG website and the provisions of section 47(1) (a) and section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 be endorsed.
2. The Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer use delegated powers to award the relief.
3. The proposal set out in paragraph 5.8 that in order to assist ratepayers and minimise administration costs for the Authority, it is proposed that the declaration process will involve each eligible business completing and submitting an online form via the Council's website, with the Council's Business Rates Team aiming to process all declaration forms received as quickly as possible and issue amended bills to eligible ratepayers in

accordance with the WG guidance be supported.

4. Officers of the Authority will make the business community aware of the 2025/26 Scheme through its usual channels, including its website and social media.

7. WHOLE AUTHORITY REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (PERIOD 9).

Consideration was given to the report which provided details of the 2024/25 projected revenue budget position based on information available as at the 31st December 2024.

Cabinet noted that the projected 2024/25 net year-end revenue budget position was an overspend of £0.757m, which was an improvement of £0.165m from the position reported in Period 7. The most significant changes were noted in Adult Services which improved by £0.886m largely due to new grant awards and increased income, and a forecast pressure in relation to costs from Storm Bert and Storm Darragh. It was further noted that pressures on Home to School Transport and Temporary Accommodation remained with both areas forecasting increased overspends, with adverse movements of £0.27m and £0.114m respectively since period 7.

Cabinet was advised that spend control and vacancy management measures put in place were having an impact with most service areas showing a positive movement however it was critical that this focus and commitment continued to ensure that a balanced outturn position was achieved.

Clarification was sought as to the measures taken to control overspends and Officers confirmed that as well as having spend control and vacancy management measures in place, financial controls had also been tightened, budget managers had received training with regular reports to Leadership, Scrutiny and Cabinet. It was also noted that overspending areas were made a priority under the Mobilising Team Caerphilly Programme and any areas with significant overspends would need to produce a recovery plan.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained therein be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report the content of the report be noted.

8. 2024/25 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (PERIOD 9)

Considered by the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the 18th February 2025.

Consideration was given to the report which sought to inform Cabinet of projected capital expenditure for the 2024/25 financial year and to advise of the forecast variance.

Cabinet noted that as a result of discussions with budget managers £44.306m of project budgets had been reprofiled into future years in line with delivery plans. Actual expenditure as at period 9 was noted as £60.446m and budget managers had provided updates on forecast spend for the remainder of the financial year. The forecast expenditure to the 31st March 2025 was noted as £120.898m, which was a variance of £30.366m to the revised budget at period 9.

In relation to the proposed budget allocation of £0.285m from capital contingency for the Centre for Vulnerable Learners, Cabinet were advised that during the construction phase of

the project a number of unanticipated and unforeseen works which were not part of the original procurement process had occurred which resulted in a contract variation and increased costs. It was noted that this required an additional ask from both CCBC and Welsh Government and to ensure the project's delivery Caerphilly's contribution would be an additional £0.285m.

Clarification was sought as to the impact of inflation on Capital Budgets and the Section 151 Officer confirmed that inflation had gone up to 3% and was currently at its highest point for 10 months and this upward trend would continue to put pressure on budgets.

In response to a question in relation to the management of underspends Cabinet was advised that £44.306m of budgets had been moved to future years to ensure that they were aligned with planned delivery programmes moving forward. It was noted that quarterly budget monitoring reports for the Capital Budget would be brought forward in the same way as the Revenue Budget Monitoring reports and meetings with Heads of Service would be held to prepare those reports and those discussions around the spend position would mean that we would arrive at an accurate forecast in terms of when spend would be incurred moving forward. It was also noted that the Mobilising Team Caerphilly programme provided another layer of scrutiny, and the establishment of the Place Shaping Board would add further oversight of the Capital Programme. Cabinet noted that it would receive the 2024/25 Capital Outturn report in July and that would identify where actual underspends have occurred and establish whether those underspends needed to be reprofiled into future years or could be released to fund other capital projects.

Numerous projects funded via the Capital Programme were detailed and while it was acknowledged as vital for spends to be closely monitored, it was felt equally important that the positive results of these investments should also be highlighted and celebrated.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained therein be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The content of the report be noted.
2. An allocation of £0.285m from capital contingency funding for the Centre for Vulnerable Learners be approved.

9. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

Considered by Joint Scrutiny Committee on the 23rd January 2025.

Consideration was given to the report which sought to update Members on the outcome of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly (MTC) consultation on the future provision of Home to School Transport for mainstream pupils, together with an updated Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA).

Cabinet noted that the Council's Home to School Transport annual costs had increased from £6,400,000 in 2015 to £12,014,621 in 2024 and were continuing to increase. It was further noted that Caerphilly was currently one of only three local authorities in Wales providing transport above the statutory minimum. Cabinet was advised that the public consultation had run for a period of six weeks and feedback on the consultation responses had been included within the report.

Clarification was sought as to how safe routes to schools were being assessed and Cabinet were advised that these were being undertaken using the Learner Travel Measures tool which was specifically designed to evaluate the safety of children's journeys back and forth to

school.

Clarification was then sought as to the experience of the consultants being considered for the review. Officers confirmed that the 2 preferred bidders, had been procured via the appropriate procurement framework and both had extensive experience, so they had every confidence in either providers ability to conduct the reviews.

In response to a query as to why costs had doubled, the Officer confirmed that as the number of ALN Learners had increased so had the need for individual/specialist transport provision. In addition to this increased need, fuel costs had also increased, driver shortages, wage increases, and increased inflationary costs had contributed to higher transport prices. Cabinet was also advised that this situation was not unique to Caerphilly but was mirrored across Wales.

Cabinet was assured that a consistent approach was taken when assessing transport needs, with assessments based on the same matrix and reviewed annually to ensure that the need was being appropriately met and was provided at best value.

Having given full regard to the comments and concerns raised at Joint Scrutiny Committee and the public consultation Cabinet considered the various options outlined within the report.

Following consideration of the report and having full regard to the public consultation and comments of Joint Scrutiny, it was moved and seconded that the Option 3 be the favoured way forward. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The content of the report along with the outcome of the public consultation and the updated Integrated Impact Assessment be considered.
2. The content of the report be noted and OPTION 3 be favoured: -

OPTION 3

To continue with the current provision for primary schools - i.e. to maintain the Council's discretionary distance (1.5 miles) criteria of providing transport for all Primary schools (English, Welsh and Faith).

Secondary school and college transport be provided in line with statutory distance criteria and this option (based on numbers as at December 2024) could mean a saving of c. £1.076m.

Prior to a final decision being considered on secondary provision, a safe route assessment be undertaken for all potentially affected secondary school routes. £192,500 of funding to be allocated from the MTFP Contingency Reserves for this purpose as outlined in section 8.4 of the report.

The safe route assessments to be presented to Joint Scrutiny and Cabinet late in the Summer Term to inform a final decision on secondary school transport.

10. DECARBONISATION ANNUAL REPORT NOVEMBER 2024

Considered by the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 11th February 2025.

Consideration was given to the report which provided Cabinet with an update on the work undertaken across the authority to deliver the aims of the Decarbonisation Strategy 2020/30 net zero carbon target. The report also included the new work areas of developing a 2050 territorial emissions strategy and climate adaptation.

Cabinet noted the key achievements in 2024 included the Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation accreditation with the Carbon Literacy Project, the inclusion of Decarbonisation in MTC Business Case documents, installation of heat pumps at Ty Penallta, adoption of the Asset Management Strategy 2025/2030, planning approval for Cwm Ifor Solar Farm and agreement to sell, planting a further 24,350 trees in the borough, Strategy Focus Group Events and Green Libraries Author Talks.

In relation to the action plan it was noted that of the 79 actions, 27 had been completed, 22 were making good progress, 17 were making reasonable progress, 11 were making poor progress and 2 actions had not yet started. Officers confirmed that actions that were making poor progress were being monitored, and Cabinet welcomed the progress made to date.

Clarification was sought as to how the public and Elected Members were engaging with the strategy. Officer confirmed that consultation events had been organised, and information was available through the Gwent Public Services Board and Caerphilly Council website. Project Officers attended tourist events, libraries, supermarkets etc. to reach as many people as possible, and these mechanisms applied equally to Elected Members.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained therein be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The progress made to date on the actions set out in the Decarbonisation Annual Report and two new reporting areas be noted.
2. The 7 recommendations set out below be considered and approved: -

Recommendation 1:

That the Reduce and Produce working groups be merged into one Operational Emissions working group to streamline delivery, avoid duplication and ensure a holistic approach to reducing operational emissions.

Recommendation 2:

That carbon emission metrics be updated to reflect the shift towards corporate responsibility. Service Area Baselines are to be replaced with Corporate Baselines aligned to areas of responsibility to facilitate the development of carbon budgets and specific route maps to zero for the various components of our operational emissions.

Recommendation 3:

That over 2025 a fully costed programme for decarbonising the corporate estate be developed considering capital and revenue requirements to achieve net zero.

Recommendation 4:

That a programme of Carbon Literacy be developed and delivered to elected members and officers with an initial focus on key officers aligned to Mobilising Team Caerphilly.

Recommendation 5:

That decarbonisation and net zero targets are further embedded into decision making as part of the MTC and Integrated Impact Assessment processes.

Recommendation 6:

That work continue towards the all-Wales territorial 2050 net zero target in developing a 2050 Action Plan in partnership with Gwent PSB Local Delivery Group members.

Recommendation 7:

That we scope out and identify resource requirements for further work on climate adaptation aligned to the updated Welsh Government Strategy for Adaptation.

The meeting closed at 13.46 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 19th March 2025.

Chair
