

No.

## **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a remote Extraordinary meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2021.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor M.R. Wilson (Chairman); Councillor Mrs. P. Drake (Vice-Chairman); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, G.A. Cox, R. Crowley, V.P. Driscoll, G. John, Dr. I.J. Johnson and Ms. S. Sivagnanam.

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett, P. King, N. Moore and E. Williams.

### 416 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Principal Democratic Services Officer referred to a number of housekeeping issues, including advising those present that the meeting would be recorded for uploading via the internet and archived for future viewing.

### 417 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor J.W. Thomas.

### 418 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

The following declarations were received:

Councillors Mrs. P. Drake, G. John and Dr. I.J. Johnson declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 (Proposed Fees and Charges 2021/22) in that they were Members of a Town Council and had been granted a dispensation by the Standards Committee to speak and vote on matters relating to the Reshaping of Services. Councillor Dr. Johnson declared an interest in the same item in that he was a Vice President of Barry Town United advising that should discussions arise with specific reference to the Club he would make representations, if required, and leave the meeting prior to the debate on the matter. Councillor John also declared for item 7 that he had a dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak only, on matters relating to Llantwit Major FC, Llantwit Major Junior Football Club and Llantwit Major Cavaliers and would leave the room for the debate if those organisations were specifically referred to.

Councillor Cox declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 being a Member of Cowbridge Town Council advising that if specific reference was made to allotments, he would leave the meeting.

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Councillor N. Moore declared an interest in Agenda Item 3 (Pay Policy 21/22) in that his daughter was employed by the Authority and he had a dispensation granted by the Standards Committee to speak and vote on the matter.

#### 419 PAY POLICY 2021/2022 (REF) –

Cabinet, on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021, had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration prior to it being submitted for approval to Full Council on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Prior to the consideration of the report all Chief officers left the meeting except for the Head of Human Resources, whom it was agreed would remain to provide clarification on any points in the report, if required, the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer supporting the meeting and the Democratic Officer providing technical support in the background.

At the Cabinet meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February a revised Appendix A to the report had been tabled which had also been forwarded to the Members of the Scrutiny Committee in time for consideration of the report at the meeting.

The report noted that the Council had a statutory requirement under the Localism Act 2011 to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for the new financial year 2021/22. The statement needed to be approved and published by 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2021. The document provided a framework for ensuring that employees were rewarded fairly and objectively, in accordance with the service needs of the Council and that there was openness and transparency in relation to the process.

Councillor Dr. Johnson sought clarity on the wording in paragraph 12.1 as follows as in his view it seemed unnecessary to refer to the Council not having a policy:

“12.1 The Council does not have a policy regarding the re-employment of staff that have been made redundant or granted early retirement or indeed are in receipt of a pension from the Local Government Pension Scheme. The Council advertises vacancies externally as appropriate and will seek to employ the best candidate based on an objective selection process.”

The Head of Human Resources in response advised that the statement reflected the need to refer to the Council’s position on the re-employment of staff and that this approach was consistent with the approach adopted by other Local Authorities. The Leader, with permission to speak, also stated that the reference had been included to advise of the Council’s position on the matter however, he agreed that he would be happy to reword the sentence prior to submission to Full Council.

The Leader in response to Councillor Dr. Johnson’s query regarding aspects of the policy that the recent Local Government and Elections Act would have an impact on, referred to the examples of the requirements that the title of the Head of Paid Service be known as the Chief Executive, changes to Election payments and to the role of the Returning Officer . On receipt of the implementation dates which were awaited an update report would then be presented to Members.

Following consideration of the report, the Scrutiny Committee subsequently

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RECOMMENDED – T H A T Cabinet be requested to consider amending the Revised Pay Policy, presented at the meeting, as outlined above, in order that a Pay Policy can be considered for approval by Full Council on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the Revised Pay Policy presented at the meeting and the discussions at the meeting.

420 REVISED INITIAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021/22 (REF) –

Cabinet, on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2021, had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for consultation and requested that any recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration as part of the final budget determination.

The Council was required under statute to fix the level of Council Tax for 2021/22 by 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2021 and in order to do so, would have to agree a balanced revenue budget by that date.

The initial budget proposals presented to Cabinet in November 2020 outlined the potential financial picture for the Council in 2021/22. At the time the report was drafted, the Council had not received the provisional settlement from Welsh Government (WG) for 2021/22 and therefore the budget was modelled on three scenarios – a cash flat settlement, -1% and +1%. The provisional settlement that had been received on 22<sup>nd</sup> December from WG, provided a headline increase of 4.9% over the current year and taking into account adjustments, this was an increase in funding of £7.119m (4.42%) from the previous year. As a result of this change, further work had been done to the figures that had previously been considered by Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committees at the end of 2020. The final settlement was not due to be received until 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2021.

In setting the proposed budget for 2021/22, funding had been provided towards cost pressures and an efficiency target of £500k had been proposed for 2021/22 which covered all service areas. It being at a slightly increased level from 2020/21 as it represented a refocusing of the Reshaping Services programme and was aligned to the Corporate Recovery Strategy. It was considered that the target set for 2021/22 was at a level that could be achieved by services.

It was proposed that the Band D Council Tax rate be set at £1,357.02 for 2021/22 which was an increase of 3.9% from the current year.

Councillor Dr. Johnson thanked the Section 151 Officer for bringing the report which reflected changes since the Committee's discussions prior to Christmas 2020. However, Councillor Dr. Johnson sought clarification in respect of the 4.9% and 4.4% WG settlement figures referred to in the report and the £10.2m cost pressures which he was aware had now reduced to £8.4m. The Section 151 Officer in response advised that the difference in the percentages related to the increase in the Council Tax base which had now been taken out. The cost pressures referred to in Appendix

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A related to the initial proposals of £10.2m, with an additional £1.2m already committed but the proposals that were now being put forward were for £8.4m, the reduction being due to insufficient funding to meet the full cost pressures identified.

In referring to ICT expenditure, Councillor Dr. Johnson asked why the figures were for revenue cost pressures and were not taken from reserves plus seeking clarification as to under what circumstances the Council would use its reserves when needed, bearing in mind the pandemic. Councillor Dr. Johnson also queried the Council's policy on second homes.

The Section 151 Officer stated that ICT costs were ongoing costs i.e. licences and support costs, which needed to be in the base budget. The Council Fund had been increased to £10m when the budget was set for 2020/21 as the Council had had increasing levels of overspends across all services and was therefore envisaging pulling down on reserves in the future. The Council would also be pulling down over £3m from reserves this year which had not been planned. The Finance Officer was however, still recommending that the reserves be £10m going forward as this was reasonable in the current climate. It was also highlighted that the Council's Council Tax collection rates were down on previous years. In response to the issue of second homes, it was noted that the Council's policy had changed for empty homes a few years ago and although it had been agreed to look at the issue of second homes, the Council had not been in a position to do this as yet in light of the implications of the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Chairman enquired as to how the Vale's collection rates compared with other Local Authorities and did the Council envisage school reserves to be an issue this year. The Committee was informed that the in-year collection rates were quite good in comparison with other Local Authorities however, with regard to School Reserves, it was too early to say what these were going to look like.

Following consideration of the report and there being no further questions, the Chairman took the opportunity to thank the Head of Service and her staff for preparing the budget and the Scrutiny Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T the report be noted**

#### Reasons for recommendations

Having regard to the contents of the report and the discussion at the meeting.

421 FINAL CAPITAL PROPOSALS 2021/22 TO 2025/26 (REF) –

Cabinet, on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2021, had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for review with any comments of the Scrutiny Committee to be referred back to Cabinet.

The report set out the Council's proposed Final Capital Programme for the period 2021/22 to 2025/26 at Appendix 1.

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The total value of capital schemes over the next five years was £249.90m. This included £69.19m for the Band B 21st Century Schools Programme and £126.88m for the Housing Improvement Programme.

Welsh Government had advised that the Public Highway's Refurbishment Grant would continue and the Capital Programme would be amended accordingly when a formal award letter was issued to the Council. Council Funding of £480k (£300k plus £180k of asset renewal) for investment in highways during 2021/22 had been included in the five year Capital Programme.

Councillor Dr. Johnson, in referring to grants received and the net and gross figures within the report, requested that further detail be provided to the Committee going forward in relation to what specific grants had been received. Councillor Dr. Johnson also enquired how flooding works were generally funded and what other bids e.g. Active Travel and transport issues around Dinas Powys were being made. The Head of Service agreed to provide the Member with the detail and funding differences for each of the schemes. Information relating to Active Travel had recently been sent to all Members via email, however as for flooding works, it was noted that some schemes were funded by Welsh Government with match funding by the Authority.

Councillor Mrs. Drake queried whether there was any funding available for the Wales Coastal Path and was advised that £49,000 was being made available in the budget for maintenance.

The Chairman sought the Section 151 Officer's view as to whether the money proposed for asset renewal was considered to be adequate. The Head of Service stated that the Council owned a large number of assets which required ongoing maintenance and upgrading. The Asset Management budget was always tight and spend against it would be monitored. Following a request by the Chairman for further information in respect of the Atlantic Trading Estate and Fleet parking the Head of Service agreed to provide the detail to Members via email.

Following consideration of the report, the Scrutiny Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the Capital Programme be noted, with the requests for information as outlined above, to be forwarded to Members when available.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content within the report and the discussions at the meeting.

#### 422 LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES – REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS IN THE COUNTY BOROUGH OF THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN: FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT (REF) –

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales ('the Commission') had a duty under s29 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 to review the electoral arrangements for each principal area at least once every ten years.

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Cabinet had, on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021, referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for consultation prior to it being presented to Full Council for consideration on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021. The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in presenting the report, stated that the Commission had commenced its Review of the Vale of Glamorgan Council ('the Council') on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2019, and the Council had provided comments on the Commission's proposals as part of Stage 1 of the Review by 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2019. At Stage 2 of the Review, the Commission had published its Draft Proposals Report and re-opened its suspended consultation (suspended due to the COVID 19 pandemic) on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2020 and closed on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2020.

The report before the Committee included a copy of the Commission's Final Recommendations Report published on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 (attached at Appendix A), outlined the Commission's final recommendations to Welsh Government, the timescale for comments to be submitted to Welsh Government and recommended that the Commission's report be noted with no further suggested comments.

Councillor Carroll commented on the importance of people responding to consultations referring to the Commission's original proposals that had advocated the abolition of Llandough Electoral ward with the proposal to combine the Cornerswell and Llandough Electoral wards and that following consultation the recommendation had subsequently been withdrawn.

Councillor Dr. Johnson drew attention to what he considered to be a possible typographical error in the Welsh translation for the name of St. Athan Community Council at paragraph 65 of the Appendix which he advised should read as Sain Tathan. The Monitoring Officer agreed to email the Commission in this regard and report back to Members.

The Chairman enquired as to whether the Council would be raising awareness of the Welsh Government's Order (in due course) and prior to the Local Government Elections in May 2022, and whether there would be funding available. In response the Monitoring Officer advised that awareness raising would be taking place and it was hoped that once the Order was made that some funding would be provided by Welsh Government but there had been no indication to date of this yet. Following a further query from the Chairman as to the need for a review of polling stations as a direct consequence of the proposed changes, the Monitoring Officer advised that a robust review of polling stations had been undertaken at the end of 2019. Polling stations were always kept under review and any changes because of the proposals would be considered if appropriate.

Following consideration of the report, the Scrutiny Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet

- (1) T H A T the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Commission's attention be drawn to the incorrect Welsh Translation of St. Athan at paragraph 65 of the Commission's report.

No.

(3) T H A T consideration be given to the raising of public awareness of the Welsh Government's Order (when available) and that a review of polling stations be undertaken, as deemed appropriate, following receipt of the Order.

#### Reason for recommendations

(1-3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

#### 423 VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL – PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2021/2022 (MD) –

The Scrutiny Committee was requested to consider the content of the report and appendices and to refer any comments to Cabinet for its consideration when deciding on the level of fees and charges for the Vale of Glamorgan for 2021-2022.

The proposed fees and charges contained in the report and associated appendices reflected an inflationary increase of 0.7% (October 2020 CPI) rounded to the nearest 10p. Some fees and charges had increased higher than inflation, some had remained the same or decreased to reflect the take up of services and the cost of delivery and the rationale for doing so was outlined in the body of the report.

The Head of Service referred to a typographical error at Appendix 4(b) to the report in respect of the Telecare VCAS monitoring fee which he stated should read as £1.24 and not £1.30 which had been corrected in the papers for Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

The Chairman enquired as to why football pitch charges were being increased when demand appeared to be decreasing in light of COVID 19 and requested that a future report be prepared to compare income levels and usage. The Chairman also enquired if income received in localities could be utilised to improve services in those localities, referring by way of an example to income received for filming in Victoria Road being used to improve the infrastructure.

During consideration of the report, Councillor Dr. Johnson requested clarification on the provision of café style highway licences and the take up in light of recent increases in applications. Councillor Dr. Johnson also agreed with the suggestion for a report to look at income levels and usage to consider the rationale for increased fees and charges.

The Head of Service agreed to provide a report in the coming year to consider how the Council could better reflect the income received and to provide contextual information for Members. With regard to football pitch usage, the data had not followed the pattern of previous years as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, but some work could be done around comparisons with previous years. With regard to café licences, these had previously been granted for three years but having regard to the current uncertainty had been reduced to one-year licences to be granted. With regard to the increase in costs, the Head of Service agreed to speak to the service area for the detail and report back to Members.

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The Deputy Leader stated that the Council had learnt a lot during the last 12 months as to how businesses wished to go forward and regular discussions had been and would continue to be held with traders regarding their needs.

The Leader commented that Cabinet would consider the comments made by Members at the meeting and review the proposed fee arrangements for café licences prior to a final decision being made.

Following consideration of the report, the Scrutiny Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED –**

(1) T H A T Cabinet be requested to review the fees and charges in light of the comments made at the meeting having regard to usage and the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic.

(2) T H A T a further report be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in the next financial year in respect of income levels, utilisation and the rationale for all fees and charges.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting and to enable the Committee's views to be considered by Cabinet when making a decision on fees and charges for services for 2021-22.

(2) In order that detailed consideration can be given in respect of the usage of, and the income levels and rationale for any increases.