

CABINET

MONDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2024

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair) (In Person)

Councillors (In Person):

C.A. Davies

G. Davies

H.A.L. Evans

L.D. Evans

P.M. Hughes

A. Lenny

E.G. Thomas

A. Vaughan-Owen

Also in attendance as an observer (Remotely):

Councillor D.M. Cundy

Also Present (In Person):

W. Walters - Chief Executive

J. Morgan - Director of Community Services

C. Moore - Director of Corporate Services

G. Morgans - Director of Education & Children's Services

A. Williams - Director of Place & Infrastructure

L. Rees-Jones - Head of Administration and Law

C. Higginson - Media Manager

L. Jenkins - Cabinet Support Officer

J. Owen - Democratic Services Officer

R. Morris - Member Support Officer

S. Rees - Simultaneous Translator

Also Present (Remotely):

R. Griffiths - Head of Place & Sustainability

M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer

M. Runeckles - Member Support Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen and remotely : 10:00 am - 10:56 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J. Tremlett.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

| Councillor / Officer | Minute Number | Nature of Interest |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Councillor G. Davies | 11 – LA Governor Appointment | He is the Chair of the Governing Body at Ysgol Brynaman. |

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE 29TH JANUARY 2024

Reference was made to minute no. 7 of the minutes of the last meeting – Modernising Education Programme Strategy and it was pointed out that the resolution should read as follows:-

“UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the MEP Strategy for consultation.”

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that, subject to the inclusion of the above-mentioned amendment, the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 29th January, 2024 be signed as a correct record.

4. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BY MEMBERS

The Chair advised that no questions on notice had been submitted by members.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

6. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2024/25 TO 2026/27

Cabinet considered a report which brought together the latest proposals for the Revenue Budget 2024/25 with indicative figures for the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years. The report summarised the latest budgetary position, providing an update on the budget validation, spending pressures, the Welsh Government final settlement and the responses from the budget consultation.

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Resources stated that adopting the proposals detailed in the report would allow the Cabinet to present a fair and balanced budget to County Council, which responded to the views fed back from the consultation process. However, he felt it was incumbent upon him to point out the inherent risks within the strategy in addition to the uncertainties over future pay awards and inflation which we must accept as a normal part of our budget setting. The report identified a number of risks as a consequence of the unresolved funding of both teachers' and firefighters' pensions, the delivery risk of our investment into Children's Services and the delivery risk of the budget reductions across all areas of council services.

He confirmed that, if all the proposals outlined in the report are implemented, we can still provide a Budget Strategy which:-

- responds to the consultation;
- ensures, as far as possible, that service levels and standards are maintained;
- recognises that the people of Carmarthenshire are finding it hard in the current climate and so ensures that core services are protected; and

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- as far as possible, prepares the Authority for the uncertainties that may lie ahead.

Reference was made to the seriousness of the situation that the Authority is facing and to the fact that we are trying to do our very best for the residents of Carmarthenshire during a very challenging period. The Education Department is facing the biggest hit ever as it used to be protected in the past but we are unable to do that any longer and it is facing cuts like all other departments. Disappointment was again expressed that teachers' salaries have not been fully funded for the next two years which has had a major impact on the budget.

The Chair thanked officers and the Cabinet Member for Resources for their work on the budget over the past few months. He voiced his concern that it is a very challenging time with Local Authorities being put in the impossible position of trying to deliver frontline services whilst continuing to put up with cuts from central government. He felt that there comes a point when some fundamental questions have to be asked about the future of public services in this country. He added that there was a duty on us all over the next few months to make the case about the importance of local government and public services generally and the need for additional investment because what we have at the moment is just not sustainable. He pointed out that, in setting the budget, we have tried to protect front line services whilst trying to keep any Council Tax increase to a minimum and whilst 7.5% was higher than desired it was much better than some other Local Authorities who are facing double digit rises in council tax and some are facing bankruptcy.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- 6.1 that the Budget Strategy for 2024/25, which includes the amendments at paragraph 4.1.5, be approved;**
- 6.2 to approve the Band D Council Tax for 2024/25 of £1,602.80 (an increase of 7.5%);**
- 6.3 to approve the removal of specific savings proposals as identified in paragraph 3.2.7;**
- 6.4 to approve the use of £3m from the RSG reserve, being £2m to support temporary costs of commissioned residential children's placements and £1m to support the delegated schools budget, as outlined in paragraph 5.2.3;**
- 6.5 to approve the Medium Term Financial Plan which will form the basis of future years' planning;**
- 6.6 that authority be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, to make any amendments necessary as a consequence of the WG final settlement due on 27th February 2024.**

7. FIVE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME (COUNCIL FUND) 2024/25 TO 2028/29

The Cabinet considered a report which brought together the latest proposals for the five-year capital programme 2024/25 to 2028/29, taking account of the consultation exercise undertaken and the revenue implications arising from the programme.

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The proposed gross expenditure on the capital programme for 2024/25 is £86.930m with the projected funding being £50.374m from the County Council's own resources through the application of borrowing, reserves, direct revenue financing, capital receipts and general capital grant, with the balance of £36.556m coming from external sources.

The new capital programme is fully funded over the five years, however, it was proposed to under commit some of the available funding to give flexibility across the programme to cover any unexpected additional costs. The Authority's capital strategy, required by the prudential code for capital finance in Local Authorities, has been updated and sets out the long-term context in which capital expenditure and investment decisions are made. It gives due consideration to both risk and reward and impact on the achievement of priority outcomes. The capital strategy covers expenditure on both Council Fund and HRA capital and was included as Appendix C to the report.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- 7.1 that the five-year Capital Programme and funding as detailed in Appendix A to the report, with 2024/25 being a hard budget and 2025/26 to 2028/29 soft/indicative budgets be approved;**
- 7.2 that the programme be reviewed, as is usual, if anticipated external or County Council funding does not materialise;**
- 7.3 that the Capital Strategy, as detailed in Appendix C to the report, be approved;**
- 7.4 that authority be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, to make any amendments necessary as a consequence of the WG final settlement due on 27th February 2024.**

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY 2024-25

Cabinet was reminded that as part of the requirements of the revised CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Council had agreed to maintain a Treasury Management Policy detailing the policies and objectives of the Authority's treasury management activities and to also approve a Treasury Management Strategy annually before the start of the financial year to which it related.

In addition, under the Local Government Act 2003, the Council was required to approve the Treasury Management Indicators for the coming year. In accordance with the above requirements, the Cabinet considered the Council's Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for the 2024-25 financial year prior to its formal submission to Council for final adoption.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- 8.1 that the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for 2024-25 and the recommendations contained therein be approved;**

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

8.2 that the Treasury Management Indicators, Prudential Indicators, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, the Investment Strategy and recommendations therein be approved.

9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT 1ST APRIL 2023 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2023

Cabinet considered the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Report which provided an update on the treasury management activities from 1st April to 31st December 2023.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be approved.

10. FLOOD AND COASTAL EROSION RISK MANAGEMENT (FCERM) LOCAL STRATEGY

Cabinet was reminded that S10.7 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires all Local Authorities to publish their local flood risk management strategy and plan. The strategy, supported by a more tactical plan, will clarify where we are now in terms of flood and coastal erosion risk management, where we want to be in 2030 and how we will get there. This document was the local strategy and the plan will be produced in quarter 4.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Local Strategy be approved.

11. LA GOVERNOR APPOINTMENT

[NOTE: Councillor G. Davies had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

Cabinet was informed that there is an LA Governor vacancy on the Governing Body of Brynaman Primary School. Cllr. Glynog Davies (Chairperson of the Governing Body) and the Headteacher are nominating Miss Gabriella Robinson, who has already served a term of office as parent governor. They felt that the Governing Body would benefit from her expertise as an LA Governor.

Under normal circumstances, LA Governor appointments are made by Cllr. Glynog Davies in his role as Cabinet Member for Education, Young People & the Welsh Language. However, in view of the circumstances, it was being brought before Cabinet for consideration.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Miss Gabriella Robinson be appointed to the post of LA Governor at Brynamman Primary School.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

12. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR DECIDES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY PURSUANT TO SECTION 100B(4)(B) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972

The Chair advised that there were no items of urgent business.

CHAIR

DATE

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