AFR Cryptic (Saturday 16/12/2023) Solution

| | ¹ C | ² H | Α | ³ L | Ε | ⁴ T | | ⁵ B | U | ⁶ C | K | ⁷ L | Ε | ⁸ D |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|---|-----------------|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| | | Α | | Α | | R | | Α | | R | | Y | | Α |
| | ⁹ V | I | R | Т | U | Α | L | R | Ε | Α | L | ı | Т | Υ |
| ¹⁰ S | | L | | Е | | С | | Ν | | F | | Ν | | С |
| ¹¹ 0 | N | S | Т | R | I | K | Ε | | ¹² S | T | I | G | М | Α |
| N | | Т | | 0 | | Е | | ¹³ B | | Е | | | | R |
| ¹⁴ G | R | 0 | W | Ν | | ¹⁵ V | Е | L | 0 | D | R | ¹⁶ O | М | Ε |
| | | Ν | | | | Ε | | J | | | | Ν | | |
| ¹⁷ C | L | Е | Α | ¹⁸ R | Α | Ν | C | Е | | ¹⁹ S | 0 | В | Е | ²⁰ R |
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| ²¹ A | S | ²² S | ı | S | T | | ²³ N | 0 | T | Α | В | L | Е | S |
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| ²⁵ L | Ε | Α | ٧ | Ε | W | Ε | L | L | Α | L | 0 | N | Ε | |
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| ²⁶ S | W | Ε | Ε | T | Ε | N | | ²⁷ R | 0 | T | Т | Ε | N | |

| Across | Clue | Explanation |
|------------------------|--|--|
| 1 CHALET | Short fellow rented small house (6) | (CHA)p + LET |
| 5 BUCKLED | Stag once showed the way and collapsed (7) | BUCK + LED |
| 9 VIRTUAL REALITY | A rival utterly upset about one computer-simulated environment (7,7) | Anagram of A RIVAL UTTERLY outside I |
| 11 ON STRIKE | Facing out (2,6) | Double Definition |
| 12 STIGMA | Spot a sportscar - it's reversing (6) | (A + MG + ITS) reversed |
| 14 GROWN | Big sigh that's audible (5) | Sounds like GROAN |
| 15 VELODROME | Loved revamped Italian city's Olympic venue (9) | Anagram of LOVED + ROME |
| 17 CLEARANCE | Head of corporation organised a cleaner's authorisation (9) | (C)orporation + anagram of A CLEANER |
| 19 SOBER | Employees of sincere boss returned clear-headed? (5) | sinceRE BOSs reversed |
| 21 ASSIST | Stubborn one is last to accept benefit (6) | ASS + IS + accep(T) |
| 23 NOTABLES | Sign put out by a full restaurant, say, for celebrities (8) | NO TABLES |
| 25 LEAVE WELL ALONE | Don't change spring, a large one, after break (5,4,5) | (WELL + A + L + ONE) after LEAVE |
| 26 SWEETEN | Sugar bags sent back with little inside (7) | NETS reversed outside WEE |
| 27 ROTTEN | Corrupt attorney losing case somehow? (6) | Anagram of (a)TTORNE(y) |

| Down | Clue | Explanation |
|--------------------|---|---|
| 2 HAILSTONE | Very cold skydiver welcomes one finishing time (9) | HAILS + (ONE after T) |
| 3 LATER ON | One not supported by misguided relation in time (5,2) | Anagram of RELAT(i)ON |
| 4 TRACK EVENT | Racket developed before opening running competition (5,5) | Anagram of RACKET + VENT |
| 5 BARN | Restrict opening of nice farm building (4) | BAR + (N) |
| 6 CRAFTED | Skilfully-made bow of canoe glided over water (7) | (C)anoe + RAFTED |
| 7 LYING | Dishonesty only in Government's division (5) | onLY IN Government |
| 8 DAY CARE | Nanny, finally entering arcade, arranged supervision for children (3,4) | nann(Y) inside anagram of ARCADE |
| 10 SONG | Succession of notes on gramophone? (4) | noteS ON Gramophone |
| 13 BLUE- COLLAR | Working-class nightclub ultimately varied local rule (4-6) | nightclu(B) + anagram of LOCAL RULE |
| 16 ON BALANCE | Cooked lean bacon and all things considered (2,7) | Anagram of LEAN BACON |
| 17 CHABLIS | White wine, two types of cheese, and blended basil (7) | (CH)eese + anagram of BASIL |
| 18 RESPECT | Consideration, especially, established in record time (7) | ESP inside (REC + T) |
| 19 SHALLOT | Slug consuming every bit of salad vegetable (7) | SHOT outside ALL |
| 20 RISE | Extra money reissued unevenly (4) | (R)e(I)s(S)u(E)d |
| 22 SHADE | Relative darkness experienced in middle of desert (5) | HAD inside de(SE)rt |
| 24 FERN | Growth of bracken is restricted in low marshy land (4) | R inside FEN |
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