



VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON THURSDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth (Vice-Chair) - Presiding

Councillors:

A. Collis, S. Cook, R.W. Gough, D. Harse, Mrs B.A. Jones, R. Whiting, L.G. Whittle

Together with Representatives from:

Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly Care & Repair Cymru (Ms T. Davies)
The Youth Centre, Cefn Hengoed (Mrs J. Pritchard)
Cruse In Gwent (Mrs C. Williams)
GAVO (Mr S. Tiley)
Homestart Cymru – Aneurin Bevan (Mrs M. Snowden)
Menter Iaith Sir Caerffili (Mrs L. Jones)
Oakdale Community Centre (Mr R. Evans)
The United Reformed Church (Mr J. Wade)
Vanguard Caerphilly (Mrs M. Wade)

Also present:

A. Palmer (CCBC/GAVO), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), V. Doyle (Policy Officer),
R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer)

Also in attendance:

Mr D. Payne and Mr M. Jeffs (Blood Bikes Wales), Ms S. Foley (Regional Community
Cohesion Officer - West Gwent Authorities)

1. WELCOME

Having received apologies from the Chair Ms Michelle Jones (The Parent Network), Councillor Liz Aldworth (Vice Chair) presided as Chair for the meeting.

Councillor Aldworth gave a warm welcome to all those in attendance. She explained that Ms Jones was unable to attend the meeting as she was currently volunteering at an art exhibition being held in the OXO gallery in London, with one of Ms Jones' artworks also selected for inclusion at the event. The exhibition "A Letter In Mind" is being held in aid of the National Brain Appeal, and all proceeds from the sale of the paintings being displayed will support research into brain disease.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, K. Etheridge, J.E. Fussell, A.G. Higgs, Mrs T. Parry, A. Whitcombe and W. Williams, together with representatives from Abertridwr Community Church, Bargoed YMCA, Barod (Formerly Drugaid), Boot Road Allotments, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Citizens Advice, Carer's Trust South East Wales, Charter Housing (Part of the Pobl Group), Groundwork Wales, Right from the Start, SCOPE, SSAFA Gwent, and The Parent Network.

It was noted that apologies had been received from Mr M. Featherstone (GAVO) and Mrs P. Jones (Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly Care & Repair Cymru), and that Mr S. Tiley and Ms T. Davies were attending in their respective places.

Apologies were also received from Compact Partners Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Gwent Police, the Office of the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Caerphilly Business Forum, the Town & Community Councils Representative, and Natural Resources Wales, together with P. Cooke (CCBC Senior Policy Officer).

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES – 20TH JUNE 2019

In relation to matters of accuracy, it was noted that minor amendments were required to the names of several organisations/individuals listed in the minutes. It was confirmed that Officers would update their records following the meeting.

In referring to Minute No. 7 (Items of Interest concerning the Voluntary Sector from Compact Partners), a Member highlighted the first paragraph regarding the community regeneration grant awarded to The Youth Centre, Cefn Hengoed. She asked for the minute to be updated to reflect that, in addition to match funding by the Community Council, the grant had also received match funding from the National Lottery's People and Places funding programme.

Subject to the inclusion of the above corrections, the minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2019 were approved as a correct record.

Arising from the minutes, and in relation to Minute No. 7, a Member asked for it to be noted that a recent charity gala concert organised through the Vanguard Centre had raised a further £1158 for the Alzheimer's Society.

Reference was also made to the refocusing of the Community Regeneration Fund into a new Caerphilly Enterprise Fund, which had been discussed at length by the Committee on 14th March 2019. A Member asked if Allan Dallimore (CCBC Regeneration Services Manager) would be able to attend a future meeting to give more detail on the support available to voluntary sector organisations arising from the loss of this funding. It was confirmed that this matter would be placed on a future agenda for discussion.

The Committee continued to voice concerns over the loss of the CRF and the loss of the associated support provided by the Community Regeneration Panel to the voluntary sector. The Corporate Policy Manager explained that the new Caerphilly Enterprise Fund will concentrate more actively on creating employment opportunities within the county borough. Members were advised that a list of alternative funding sources available to the voluntary sector can be accessed through Caerphilly Council's website. They were also reminded that the establishment of the Caerphilly Enterprise Fund (which amalgamated a number of existing grant programmes) had been approved by Cabinet following a wide ranging consultation exercise with the voluntary sector, community groups and the business sector.

4. BLOOD BIKES WALES - PRESENTATION

This item was brought forward on the agenda.

The Committee were introduced to Mr David Payne and Mr Mike Jeffs from the Blood Bikes Wales volunteer service, who were attending the meeting to raise awareness of their cause. Members were pleased at having been given the opportunity to participate in a photo call in the main reception immediately before the meeting with one of the liveried motorbikes belonging to the organisation.

With the aid of a slideshow presentation, Mr Payne gave a detailed overview of the work of the service. Blood Bikes Wales is a volunteer-based group who provide the NHS with a free out-of-hours courier service on weekends and bank holidays for vital provisions such as blood supplies, plasma, documents and other items. This saves the NHS substantial sums and the savings can then be reinvested into frontline patient care. The service also provides an "in-hours mid-week" frozen Donor Breast Milk delivery service to neo-natal units across Wales, and is funded entirely by public donation and business sponsorship.

It was explained that the service is a registered charity which was established in February 2011 and holds monthly central committee meetings, as well as monthly member meetings at 8 locations across Wales. The service is made up of a wide range of volunteers from all career types, who generally have an interest in motorcycles, and the service welcomes anyone with the right attributes. There are a number of varied roles across Blood Bikes Wales, including Blood Bike Rider, Coordinator, Fundraiser, Committee Member, and Publicity and PR, who all play an essential part in the running of the service.

Mr Payne gave an overview of the adaptations made to the bikes for transporting medical items, and explained that all Blood Bike Riders are required to have advanced riding qualifications, undergo a three-yearly check and receive GMP (General Manufacturing Process) training before handling biological goods, which can include blood for transfusion, platelets or other blood products, blood, urine or other tissue samples for analysis by pathology and microbiology laboratories, X-Rays, scans and CD-ROMs, patient notes, medication and other medical/surgical equipment. It was explained that the service has a number of benefits compared to using taxis or other vehicles, including ease of travel during traffic congestion, the freeing up of the emergency services, and with a considerable amount of money saved by the NHS. It was noted that in 2011-2012, Hywel Dda Health Board (Pembrokeshire & Ceredigion) spent £250,000 on taxis alone to courier medical items.

The Committee were provided with examples of the journeys undertaken by the service and the extensive mileage covered by its volunteers. A typical weekend route includes 9 round trips between Prince Charles Hospital in Merthyr and Royal Glamorgan Hospital in Llantrisant, which is a total of 216 miles per weekend. This is before taking into account

additional home to work mileage for the rider and journeys on Bank Holiday Mondays, and for this particular run alone, total mileage is approximately 19,500 miles per year (equating to £2700 of fuel). Breast milk deliveries to special baby care units can be a 180 mile round trip, and the service also runs deliveries between Birmingham Women's Hospital and Singleton Hospital in Swansea (a 290 mile round trip). Mr Payne also gave examples of medical relays used by the service to minimise delivery times and relieve the travel burden on individual riders.

Mr Payne outlined the extensive running and maintenance costs amassed by the service and highlighted examples of the types of bike equipment that can be purchased through donations and sponsorship. It was noted that Blood Bikes Wales are members of the Nationwide Association of Blood Bikes (NABB) who are the overarching body for Blood Bike groups across the UK, and are able to speak on their behalf, broker special rates and deals, promote and assist new groups, and assist in organising and promoting large national events (such as the NEC Bike Show). Across the UK, there are 31 Blood Bike groups with 3371 members who produced 93,480 runs in 2018.

The Committee noted the current position of Blood Bikes Wales, including 430 members, 23 bikes, and around 150 of its riders having IAM, RoSPA or ERS qualifications. Over 250,000 miles were covered by the service during 2017/18. The service now covers the whole of Wales and services the majority of health boards across Wales. Blood Bikes Wales were recently featured on the BBC's One Show which saw a surge in recruitment as a result. The service has also received celebrity support through the likes of the "Hairy Bikers" and recently welcomed Simon Weston CBE as its newest patron.

In closing, the Committee were shown examples of recent engagement events to promote the service, which now includes 5 female riders amongst its crew, and Mr Payne then invited questions from the Committee.

Members thanked Mr Payne for the presentation and for bringing the valuable work of Blood Bikes Wales to their attention. They were particularly impressed with the level of organisation, specialist skills and knowledge demonstrated by the service. A Member suggested that it might be beneficial for Blood Bikes Wales to seek donations/sponsorship from local town and community councils, and that one avenue could be for the organisation to give a similar presentation to the Community Council Liaison Sub Committee in the first instance.

The Committee thanked the representatives from Blood Bikes Wales for taking the time to attend the meeting and for delivering such an informative and enjoyable presentation. In turn, Mr Payne and Mr Jeffs thanked Members for their attention and then left the meeting.

5. GRANTS TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Mr R. Evans (Oakdale Community Centre) presented a verbal update on funding distributed through the Council's Grants to the Voluntary Sector (GTVS) Committee. A copy of a report he had prepared on this matter was tabled at the meeting, which analysed the source of the funding available, who can apply for it, and to where it is distributed. The report also contained several conclusions from GAVO (representing a range of voluntary organisations in the area) and made a number of recommendations to the Committee.

Mr Evans explained that the report had been prepared in response to concerns around underspends across the Welsh Church Fund grant funding, and that with the assistance of GAVO, and via information compiled through committee reports and FOI requests, he had

gathered detail on the amount of funding awarded via the GTVS Committee. Appended to Mr Evans' report was a table detailing funding recipients, the amount of funding awarded to each recipient, and the year it was awarded. At the bottom of the table were tallies showing the total sums awarded for each year, the number of organisations receiving this funding, and details of funding carry over balances from previous years.

The covering report provided an analysis of this data and highlighted subsequent concerns from GAVO regarding the decline in the number of organisations applying for grants and a decline in amounts awarded (which have been fixed at current levels for a number of years), together with concerns regarding an increase in the amount of annual underspend. It was explained that each of these factors means that local voluntary organisations are being deprived of valuable funding resources which would enable them to better serve their members and communities.

In order to address these issues, the report highlighted several recommendations from GAVO, namely improving publicity for the scheme, simplifying the application process, reducing the 27 recipient categories to 8 suggested categories as listed in the report, reviewing the award levels to each category to take account of inflation, introducing an 'automatic' grant scheme or change the scheme to a two-yearly one, and transferring grants for individuals to the Council's Sport Caerphilly section.

The Committee discussed the findings of the report and it was explained that the concerns around the Welsh Church Fund underspends had now been addressed by way of the Cabinet decision in March 2019 to update the application criteria. It was explained that GTVS grants tend to be for the running costs of organisations and that firm criteria is set in this regard, although the grants are due for a review of the criteria and funding. It was acknowledged that some issues identified in the report (such as Discretionary Rate Relief) would benefit from review and the Committee were urged to send any questions to Vicky Doyle (CCBC Policy Officer). Discussion also took place around the essential nature of Discretionary Rate Relief in relation to grant funding.

Following discussion on the matter, Members agreed with the conclusions and recommendations from GAVO as set out in Mr Evans' report, and supported the preparation of a report to highlight these matters. The Committee requested that the report be brought to the next meeting of the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Committee and Officers confirmed that it would be placed on the agenda as a item for discussion.

Mr Evans was thanked for his update and for the work that had gone into the preparation of his report.

6. CAERPHILLY THIRD SECTOR PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT 2018-2023

Steve Tiley (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, GAVO) delivered a verbal update on the sixth Partnership Agreement for the Caerphilly county borough, which provides an effective framework for joint working between statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector in the Caerphilly county borough. The document (Caerphilly Third Sector Partnership Agreement 2018-2023) takes into account the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and the development of the Caerphilly county borough Well-being Plan "The Caerphilly We Want 2018-2023" alongside the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014. The document had previously been considered in draft format and endorsed by the Committee on 19th September 2018 following its submission to the Caerphilly Public Services Board.

The new Partnership Agreement has now been published and copies of the booklet were tabled at the meeting for Members' information. The document includes specifics of the Partnership Agreement, including Compact Partner contact details, the framework for managing the Partnership Agreement, reporting mechanisms, new developments for this agreement period, details of shared values, principles and commitments, and the Public Services Board Accountability and Reporting Framework 2018-23.

Mr Tiley thanked Members for their contributions towards to the preparation of the document, and the Committee were invited to view the document and highlight any queries on its content.

The Committee were pleased with the level of detail contained within the document and the way in which the information was presented, and noted the contents of the new Caerphilly Third Sector Partnership Agreement for 2018-2023.

7. BREXIT

The Committee were introduced to Sonya Foley, who is a Regional Community Cohesion Officer hosted by Torfaen Council and works across the three West Gwent Authorities of Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen.

Ms Foley gave an overview of her role, which is funded through the EU Transition Fund, and includes the mitigating of community tensions, raising awareness of EU settlement schemes and signposting those in need to the relevant agencies. The Cohesion Team also carries out work to promote tolerance and diversity, particularly around Hate Crime Awareness Week, and places an emphasis on community and partnership working. Ms Foley explained that the promotion of diversity is not merely focused around race but also places an emphasis on other individual aspects such as disability and gender.

It was noted by the Committee that the work carried out by the West Gwent Cohesion Team has become increasingly important in view of Brexit and its subsequent impact on EU citizens. Ms Foley tabled an information leaflet on the EU Settlement Scheme, which detailed key information regarding the process and the support that is available to applicants.

Officers also explained that the EU Transition Fund was established to help businesses, public services and other partner organisations in Wales plan for and prepare for the impacts of Brexit. Local authorities are linking in together and with the WLGA to progress the work that needs to be carried out, and this information is also being relayed through GAVO to the voluntary sector. It was noted that a Brexit Support Officer has now been appointed within CCBC's Policy Unit to take forward the Council's preparation for Brexit.

The Committee thanked Ms Foley for taking the time to attend the meeting and noted the contents of the Brexit update.

8. ITEMS OF INTEREST CONCERNING THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR FROM COMPACT PARTNERS

Mr S. Tiley (GAVO) invited Members to a Volunteering Action Area workshop session being held at Newbridge Vision Centre on 4th October 2019, which will develop the action plan and discuss short term actions for the Public Services Board. Mr Tiley also outlined details of the GAVO AGM on 7th November 2019 at Llancaiach Fawr which would receive

presentations from Team Managers for Community Development, Volunteering, Health and Social Care, as well as the GAVO Annual Report and Accounts and a presentation from guest speaker Dr Sarah Aitken from ABUHB. Finally, Members were reminded of the Annual GAVO Volunteering Awards ceremony being held on Thursday 10th October 2019 at Blackwood Miners Institute in partnership with CCBC, and were invited to attend.

Mrs M. Wade (Vanguard Caerphilly) informed the Committee of several forthcoming concerts being held at the Vanguard Centre, as well as an Arts, Crafts and Literary Exhibition, which is an open exhibition to encourage local talent.

Mrs M. Snowden (Homestart Cymru – Aneurin Bevan) advised the Committee that all local Homestart branches had now merged into Homestart Cymru.

Mr R. Evans (Oakdale Community Centre) informed the Committee that Oakdale Community Centre recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. A celebratory event was held at the Centre which was well attended, including representatives from GAVO and local councillors. Mr Evans also expressed the importance of retaining community centres in light of the authority's forthcoming budget review.

Ms A. Palmer (CCBC/GAVO) and Mr S. Tiley (GAVO) updated the Committee on developments across the South East Wales regional arm of Ystadau Cymru (formerly the National Assets Working Group) which includes PSB partners. It was explained that to support the work of the Caerphilly Assets Group, GAVO would be conducting a community mapping exercise to identify third sector assets across each area of the county borough, which will include a community buildings survey being sent to all councillors and community organisations.

Ms Palmer also provided an update on funding matters and drew Members' attention to the Comic Relief Community Fund for Wales, which includes small grants awards ranging from £1000 to £10,000 for projects that meet the scheme criteria and is available to organisations with a socially focused purpose and an income of less than £250,000. Full details of the funding are on GAVO's website.

The Committee were advised that the Heritage Lottery Fund has undergone a revamp and the name has been changed to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The organisation will be holding a comprehensive information session at Deri Community Centre in Bargoed on 25th October 2019 to provide details of the new fund available, the simplified application process, and new outcomes and strategic direction.

Members were also advised that GAVO's 'One Beat' event will be held on 28th November 2019 at Newbridge Vision Centre, and further information will be sent out to the voluntary sector in due course.

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 12.00 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2019, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR