



COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON 11TH MARCH 2020 AT 6.00PM

PRESENT:

Community Councillor J. Rao - Chair
Councillor J. Ridgewell – Vice Chair

Councillors:

C. Andrews, L. Jeremiah, J. Ridgewell (Vice Chair), C. Thomas, R. Whiting, B. Zaplatynski
Cabinet Member for Social Care and Wellbeing - Councillor C. Cuss

Community/Town Council Representatives

Aber Valley	- D. Berry and M. Stretch
Argoed	-
Bargoed	- H. Llewellyn, Mrs. H. Williams (Clerk)
Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	-
Blackwood	-
Caerphilly	-
Darran Valley	-
Draethen, Waterloo and Rudry	- V. Steel (Clerk)
Gelligaer	- J.A. Pritchard
Llanbradach	- Mrs. A. Reed
Maesycwmmmer	- Ms. J. Rao (Chair)
Nelson	- Mrs. G. Davies, Mr. T. White (Clerk)
New Tredegar	-
Penyrheol, Trecenydd and Energlyn	-
Rhymney	-
Risca East	-
Risca Town	- S.A. Davies, B. Campbell (Clerk)
Van	-

Together with:-

C. HARRY (Chief Executive), S. HARRIS (Interim Head of Business Development and Section 151 Officer), K. PETERS (Policy Manager) and E. SULLIVAN (Senior Committee Services Officer)

1. TO APPOINT A CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

It was moved and second that Community Councillor J. Rao be appointed Chair for the ensuing year and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Community Councillor J. Rao be appointed Chair.

2. TO APPOINT A VICE CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

It was moved and seconded that Councillor J. Ridgewell be appointed Vice Chair for the ensuing year and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Councillor J. Ridgewell be appointed Vice Chair.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Angel, A. Farina-Childs, A. Gair, A.G. Higgs, P. Leonard, T. Parry, M. James, V. James, M.E. Sargent and A. Whitcombe.

Community Councillors J. Moore, C. Morgan, A. McDonnell, D. Davies, J. Hibbert, P. Roberts, R. Chapman, K. Standworth, B. Gingell, B. Allen, D.T. Williams, J. Blackburn, J. Leek and T. Graham.

and Clerks S. Hughes (Aber Valley), G. James (Argoed), M. Jones (Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen), J. Hold (Blackwood), P. Davy (Caerphilly), A. Pallister (Darran Valley), C. Mortimer (Gelligaer and Llanbradach & Pwllpant), R. Kedwood (Maesycwmmmer), H. Treherne (Penyrheol, Trecenydd & Energlyn), G. Williams (Rhymney), G. James (Risca East) and M. Jones (Van).

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the start or during the course of the meeting.

5. MINUTES

Subject to it being noted that Mr. B. Campbell (Risca Town Council) had been present at the meeting but was not recorded in the minutes and that Community Councillor K. Stanworth was noted as being present but had given apologies the minutes were received and noted as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

As the matters arising were in relation to the first agenda item it was agreed that these be taken when this item was discussed.

TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to the following items raised by the Town and Community Council Liaison Committee: -

6. UPDATE ON THE CCBC BUDGET FOR 2020/21

The Chief Executive, Mrs Christina Harry and the Section 151 Officer, Mr Steve Harris presented the update to the Liaison Committee.

The Section 151 Officer referred to the Cabinet report that had been circulated to all Town and Community Councils, which detailed the final budget proposals formally agreed by Council at its meeting on the 20th February 2020.

It was noted that the provisional settlement announcement on the 16th December 2019 had resulted in a more favourable position for local authorities than projected and this had allowed for flexibility in determining final budget proposals. Due to this the anticipated savings requirement for 2020/21 was reduced from £15.658m to £8.485m which in turn meant that there could be a reduction to the proposed increase in Council Tax from a 6.95% increase to a 4.7% increase.

Furthermore, cost pressures facing schools could now be fully funded and the social services growth requirement of £800k could be met without calling on reserves. These reserves would be used instead for capital and environment projects as part of the Place Shaping Agenda. General Fund surpluses would be set aside for infrastructure investments the detail of which would be subject to further reports coming forward. The Officer confirmed that this was a much more positive picture, however there was still no indication from UK Government on what the financial picture will look like over the next 3-year period and the authority was still facing £11m of year on year cost pressures. It was noted that over the next few months there would be further reports to present updated MTFP scenarios, and these would be shared with Town and Community Councils.

Clarification was sought in relation to the council tax collection rates and the Place Shaping Agenda, it was hoped that Town and Community Councils would be able to put forward projects for consideration. The Officer confirmed that the council tax collection rate was around 97.5% and the Place Shaping Agenda would include projects such as the Band B proposals for schools, the building of affordable homes, the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy, as well as digital improvements which would help the Council work more efficiently and effectively.

The Chief Executive advised that in terms of infrastructure provision the earmarked £30m would not go far, however it would enable the Council to unlock other levels of further funding. Town and Community Councils would be vital to the shaping programme as no one had a better understanding of a community's need than those living within it. As part of Team Caerphilly, Mrs Harry emphasised the importance of developing this relationship in order to maximise public impact. Community Councils will have the ability to utilise precept powers in a more coordinated way in order to make the public pound go further and the Chief Executive confirmed that she was keen to explore how this relationship can develop and to this end would be establishing coordinated working groups. These groups would work collectively to deliver for the community and would be imperative to this new and exciting way of working. Mrs Harry expressed how much she was looking forward to building on these conversations and working together in a concentrated and harmonious way.

In terms of budget savings clarification was sought in relation to Appendix 2 of the Officer's report which detailed the original savings and an explanation was sought as to which cuts had not been taken and in particular the proposal to close the Trehir Household Waste Recycling Centre.

The Section 151 Officer confirmed that the table in Appendix 2 of the report contained additional columns to that originally circulated, these detailed the retained savings, the withdrawn savings as well as those that had been deferred whilst awaiting Service Reviews. With regard to Trehir the proposal had been withdrawn at this stage subject to review.

Clarification was then sought in relation to the proposal to withdraw CCTV Cameras, which had been of particular concern for Nelson Community Council. It was confirmed that this saving had been withdrawn.

Reference was made to the Coronavirus and whether the reduction in building cleansing budget would impact and queried whether this could be increased.

The Chief Executive recognised the concerns raised and confirmed that in response to the UK Government escalation the Council had triggered its emergency planning procedures all necessary steps would be taken to safeguard public and staff and will be corresponding regularly with staff, Councillors and Community Councils. Reference was made to the guidance from Public Health Wales and the Liaison Committee were advised to refer any queries that they receive to this advice as the Council would not be deviating from it. Critical services would be identified and resources redirected in order to maintain them during the challenging times ahead. The importance of each and every person's responsibility for their personal hygiene was emphasised including advice on regular and thorough hand washing.

Concerns were voiced in relation to the standard of hygiene on public transportation and clarification was sought as to whether there was any guidance for drivers and bus companies. The Chief Executive confirmed that they should be working to exactly the same standards of hygiene.

The Chair confirmed that Town and Community Councils would discuss working group representation at their next joint meeting and thanked the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer for their attendance and for the information presented. All those present congratulated Mrs Harray on her successful appointment as the new permanent Chief Executive for Caerphilly County Borough Council.

7. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER – DRAFT POLICY AND PROCESS

Kath Peters, Policy Manager introduced the report which had been previously presented to the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on the 11th February 2020 and now sought the views of the Community Council Liaison Committee prior to referral to Cabinet for decision.

The Policy Manager gave apologies on behalf of Mr Tim Broadhurst, Estates Manager, who was unable to attend this evenings' meeting due to a conflicting commitment, however if the Liaison Committee wished arrangements could be made for Mr Broadhurst to attend the next meeting.

The Liaison Committee noted the views of the Scrutiny Committee and their recommendation to remove the sentence 'Those assets which have the potential to generate significant capital receipts are not likely to be considered as suitable for transfer' as set out in the 'Guiding Principles used by the Local Authority' section of the draft policy.

The Officer advised that Community Asset Transfer (CAT) relates to the transfer of assets previously provided via public sector funds to the management and control of community organisations. CAT can be used where the assets may have a community benefit as an alternative to disposal. The disposal of assets will usually be on a commercial basis to achieve best value, however there may be circumstances where the Council may decide that the asset would be better managed by a community organisation. Community organisations may be able to use the asset in a more sustainable way, reflecting the needs of the community, making use of volunteer expertise and time and accessing funding streams not open to the Council. It was noted that the Council has transferred assets in the past. The policy before Liaison Group is intended to be an umbrella policy laying out the high level aims and approaches and is based on the latest set of Estadau Cymru guidance. It was noted that CAT would be different for each asset under consideration and applications would need to be supported by a robust business case. The Officer highlighted the link at section 5.5 of the report which provided Welsh Government case studies on successful Community Asset Transfer, but also noted that there are examples where CAT has been unsuccessful in other Council areas, therefore it was important to put in place a process that ensured success as far

as possible.

Members expressed their concern that asset transfers would only be considered for the least desirable assets, those which the Council wanted to dispose of or could no longer afford to run. Assurances were provided that this was not a route to surplus asset disposal but a mechanism that would enable a community to retain something that has a community value, whether that was to continue an existing service provision or provide a new service to the community.

Members also expressed concern that Town and Community Councils had, with reluctance, taken on assets like public toilets, rather than lose them and saw this as a way for the Council to make further budget cuts that would provide additional and unwanted pressures to Town and Community Councils forced to take on services rather than lose them. The Officer advised that the policy would provide a common understanding with regard to community asset transfers, which could be easily understood, transparent and robust and confirmed that this document was based on Welsh Government guidance and addressed the need for Caerphilly County Borough Council to have a policy in place. The policy was not related to any budgetary considerations and sought only to provide options that would allow community asset transfers to take place by supporting community organisations and providing a guide to decision making.

A Member referred to an example in relation to a Sport Pavilion which was currently going through the asset transfer process which was fully supported and highly anticipated by a community organisation within his ward. Clarification was also sought in relation to sports fields and the Officer confirmed that this policy would operate alongside the previously agreed process for playing fields where there are specific and bespoke considerations.

Having fully considered the report, the comments of the Scrutiny Committee it was moved and seconded that the comments of the Community County Liaison Committee be presented to Cabinet as part of the consultation process and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the recommendation from the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee that subject to the removal of the sentence "*Those assets which have the potential to generate significant capital receipts are not likely to be considered as suitable for transfer*" as set out in the 'Guiding Principles used by the Local Authority' section of the draft policy; the 'Community Asset Transfer – Policy and Process', be adopted

Further that the comments of the Community Council Liaison Sub Committee be noted and subject to the aforementioned proposed amendment endorse the draft Community Asset Transfer Policy and Process.

9. UPDATE FROM THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CAERPHILLY PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

Community Councillor Judith Pritchard as representative to the Caerphilly Public Services Board provided an update on the last Board meeting.

Community Councillor Pritchard confirmed that she had attended the meeting with Community Councillor Jo Rao who attended as a member of the public. She noted that some of the PSB Members represent organisations that operate on a pan-Gwent basis (NHS and Gwent Police) and there seems to be an inherent tension between their Gwent-wide perspective and the more local responsibility for delivering the Caerphilly Well-being Plan 2018-2023 called "The Caerphilly We Want".

This plan was based on extensive consultation with the public throughout Caerphilly County Borough and resulted in the establishment of Action Areas involving various working groups to which representatives of voluntary organisations and interested parties were invited to participate.

One of these groups was to deal with Asset Management, which she felt would have been of particular interest to Town and Community Councillors, since we are clearly being expected to assist in the provision of buildings and amenities such as public toilets and community centres. However, this Group does not appear to have met and at the PSB meeting on Oct 7th it was decided that the matter of Asset Management would be dealt with on a Pan-Gwent level.

Minutes of Meeting held on Oct 7th, 2019

Community Councillor Pritchard raised the Asset Management issue under the minutes and requested that a Local Group be reinstated. The Chair of the meeting, who represents the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, stated that there would be a six-monthly progress report to the March meeting when the issue could be revisited. The Liaison Committee were advised that C. Cllr Pritchard intended pursuing this matter as she felt it to be important.

Also under the minutes she had raised the issue of the participation of interested parties, in particular voluntary organisations, in the various groups set up to deliver the Well-being Plan. Some of the people who had put their names forward were disappointed not to have been invited to any of the meetings and was assured that her comments would be picked up by the Leads of each group.

Wales Audit Office – Effectiveness of PSBs Report

This report stated that “Public Services Boards are unlikely to realise their potential unless they are given the freedom to work more flexibly and think and act differently”. The Caerphilly PSB was commended for being more transparent than many others, all papers are available on the PSB website one week in advance of meetings, all meetings are now open to the public and the public is encouraged to ask questions of the PSB. However the Wales Audit Office did discuss exactly the same issue of the participation of interested parties in the working groups that Community Councillor Pritchard had raised previously. They said that some action areas and Lead Officers had been very good at capitalising on offers of help from voluntary organisations and community groups, However it would be a worthwhile exercise to ensure that all those members of the community that wanted to be involved have been given the opportunity to do so. The Board then agreed the recommendation that this should be carried out.

The Chair thanked Community Councillor Pritchard for her update and her representation on the Board, the Vice Chair expressed his keen interest in the points raised and asked if C. Cllr Pritchard would be happy to share a copy of the update with the County Borough Members of the Committee. Community Councillor Pritchard agreed to do this via Mr Bob Campbell and the Liaison Officer who would then circulate.

10. JOINT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLEDGE AND STATEMENT

The Liaison Committee were referred to a handout, circulated prior to the meeting, which provided some suggested wording that Community Councils might want to utilise should they wish to adopt a joint climate emergency statement and pledge.

The Liaison Officer confirmed that the Council had through a notice of motion declared a Climate Emergency in Caerphilly County Borough on the 4th June 2019 and so as a County, Caerphilly had already made commitments in terms of becoming a net zero carbon local authority, as well as working and procuring goods and services in a more sustainable way. Members were asked to consider whether they would like Paul Cooke from the Council's

Policy Unit, to attend a future meeting. He would be able to provide further information in relation to carbon reduction initiatives or projects that Community Councils may wish to consider as part of any pledge that they make going forward.

Although Mr Cooke would have more knowledge in this regard the Liaison Officer made some simple suggestions that Community Councils might wish to consider, for example changing any planting being looked at within their wards for the spring and summer, from annual plants to perennial or hardy meadow plants, when organising fetes or summer events asking vendors to consider the types of consumables they use, taking up recyclable packaging where possible and disposing of any waste or refuse in a sustainable way. Small changes that could have a large impact in terms of improving the environment. Members were referred back to a previous meeting's presentation on the use of CIL monies to introduce electric vehicle charging points and an email recently circulated to all clerks outlining works to be conducted by the authority and given UK Government legislation in relation to the replacement of petrol engines with electric vehicles this might be an excellent opportunity to consider if invest in sustainable infrastructure would be something to consider going forward.

The Liaison Committee agreed that they would taking the suggested wording away for further discussion at their next joint meeting and provide feedback to a future meeting.

11. CHARTER FOR COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCILS

The Liaison Officer acknowledged the concerns raised over recent months in relation to the effectiveness of the Charter particularly with regard to the requirements on consultation.

Mrs Sullivan confirmed that she felt that the issue lay in part with the restructuring of service areas and the retirement and redeployment of staff which may have caused the Charter and its provisions to 'fall off the radar.' Members were advised that a profile raising exercise had commenced, with the Charter being circulated to all Heads of Service with the consultation requirements highlighted. The Liaison Committee were then referred to the Engagement and Consultation strategy recently approved by Cabinet. The Officer hoped that the Charter in conjunction with this document, should see more meaningful and robust consultation take place with Town and Community Councils going forward.

Concerns were expressed that Town and Community Councils had not been mentioned within the report and were only listed within the document itself in the 'Who Do We Engage and Consult With?' section, this was felt to be extremely disappointing.

The Liaison Officer acknowledged the concerns raised but added that in her opinion there had not been a deliberate intention to diminish in anyway the importance of Town and Community Council by the use of the term other stakeholders within the report, Health Boards, Natural Resources Wales, Fire and Police Authorities are all considered other stakeholders/partner organisations. Mrs Sullivan viewed this much more positively as it provides Officers with a framework to work to and taken in conjunction with the Charter requirements should ensure a robust and meaningful consultation and engagement process for our Town and Community Councils over the next few years.

In relation to the position within the list, Town and Community Councils are listed with Elected Representatives and Assembly Members and Members of Parliament. The Officer believed that the primary emphasis intended here, was the need to engage with residents from every part of the county borough, particularly those that have historically been difficult to reach and felt it worth keeping in mind that not all residents of the borough are fortunate enough to live in Community Council areas. Assurance were given that the Charter would continue to be championed and highlighted with Heads of Services and Officers in terms of consultation, and the Officer was of the opinion that the Charter taken in tandem with the new strategy would achieve the positive outcome being sought by the Community Councils.

Members although disappointed in the content of the report as it related to Community Councils, expressed their optimism for the future of engagement particularly as a result of the briefing given by the Chief Executive and her proposals around Working Groups.

The meeting closed at 19:10pm