



## COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE – 27<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2022

**BRIEFING NOTE: MATTERS RAISED BY TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

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### 1. UPDATE ON STREET LIGHTING

This briefing note sets out the current position in relation to Street Lighting and the resultant carbon savings and comments on the position with Heddlu Gwent Police.

#### **Background**

To meet the challenges of Carbon reduction commitments and reducing budgets within Highways street-lighting, the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in 2018 endorsed a programme to implement LED installation and part night lighting between the hours of midnight and 5.30am, to all lighting, except at junctions and in major town centres. This followed on from a 2010 initiative where the street-lights on inter urban routes connecting towns and villages were previously altered to part-night lighting from midnight to 5.30am.

Caerphilly Council's resources, both operational and financial, are inevitably finite. This reinforced the need for a proportionate response to the longer-term impact of budget commitment in relation to maintenance strategies. The strategy supported by Members in 2018 for part-night lighting and the upgrade of all lanterns to LED, is forecast to save and/or provide cost avoidance in the region of £940k pa and produce a carbon reduction of 2836 tonnes once the programme has been completed. This programme, completed in February 2021, actual of the savings achieved will be available in 2022/23.

The Council has declared a climate emergency, so the reduction in carbon emissions is a commitment to the prevention of the long-term threat of climate change to which energy reduction plays a key role. Whilst other activities affect climate change more than lighting, it is still a very strong contribution from a single industry sector. Experts agree that we will not meet our goals for mitigating climate change without reducing the amount of Carbon being

emitted into the atmosphere. Something must be done to restore the resiliency of our planet to off-set the changes in our environment.

The highways infrastructure provides local access to all road users be that for education, leisure, business or wider authority and regional connectivity. It shapes the character of an area adding to the social, well-being and quality of life in a community.

The total number of street lights in the Authority is approximately 27,373. With each asset increasing over the past 5 years. This increase in asset size has coincided with a period of MTFP savings leading to a reduction in planned maintenance regimes.

Following the implementation of the LED and Part Night Lighting Policy approved in 2018, CCBC has 22,344 street lights (that are switched off at midnight for five and a half hours), 2684 illuminated signs and 711 flexible bollards. Signs continue to remain lit all hours of darkness, bollards are no longer illuminated

### **Complaints**

Following the implementation of the change to LED street lights and the reduction in street lighting operating hours policy, a total of 319 complaints from CCBC residents have been received and are itemised below:

- 147 directly against the policy.
- 86 that the LED lighting is over bright.
- 56 that the LED lighting does not provide enough illumination
- 22 that the times of operation are problematic and
- 5 following last years well publicised attack on Sarah Everhard.

It is evident that the number of complaints are low compared to the size of the authority and number of residents that live within the borough.

Scheduled meetings are in place between Highways Managers and Senior Officers from Heddlu Gwent Police to regularly review crime statistics for the hours of reduced street lighting operation. To date there is no associated link between the occurrence of crime and the reduction in street lighting operating hours policy.

Attached is a link to a BBC article that further substantiates that there is no link to increased crime due to part night lighting around the UK. [Less lighting has no impact on crime or collisions, says report - BBC News](#)

## 2. COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

The Cost-of-Living Support Scheme is detailed below an update on the issue raised by Community Councils in terms of the wording will be provided verbally at the meeting.

The [Welsh Government scheme details are available here.](#)

The pdf is also attached as an appendix to this briefing note. (Appendix 1)

Below are some key points of the scheme.

The Scheme is made up of 2 elements; a main scheme (related to certain council taxpayers) and a discretionary scheme. Each local authority in Wales decides its own discretionary scheme within Welsh Government (WG) guidelines; eligibility details will be publicised during May.

The main scheme provides for a £150 'Cost-of-Living' payment under two conditions:

### **A: Council Tax Reduction Scheme entitlement condition**

If the householder(s) was in receipt of support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on 15 February 2022, they are automatically assessed as being entitled to a payment of £150 regardless of the valuation band in which their property is placed (A to I).

### **B: Council Tax Band condition**

Households occupying properties in council tax Bands A to D are assessed as being entitled to a payment of £150 provided they satisfy all of the following criteria:

- liable for council tax on a property on 15 February 2022
- not in receipt of an exemption for that property on 15 February 2022
- living in that property as their main or primary residence on 15 February 2022
- responsible for paying the associated utility and other regularly incurred bills for that property on 15 February 2022.

Households living in properties valued as B and E but which receive a disability band reduction to B and D are eligible under the main scheme.

The £150 is **not** a rebate on the council tax bill, it is a payment to help with the rising cost of all utility bills.

There will be ONE payment per eligible household.

If you are not eligible under the main scheme you may be eligible to receive a payment under [the discretionary scheme](#).

Most council taxpayers who are exempt from paying the tax (for example, a household made up entirely of qualifying students, care leavers up to the age of 25, or people with a severe mental impairment) will fall into the discretionary phase of the scheme.

The **main** scheme commenced in April but, as around 70,000 households within Caerphilly CBC may be eligible, payments will take several months to complete. The scheme in Wales will run for around 6 months to 30.09.2022.

If you pay your council tax by direct debit, we are able to make the payment direct to your bank account, without the need for you to register your details with us. We issued most of these payments during the last week of April, with some issued during May.

If you have recently set up a direct debit instruction to pay your council tax bill, we will collect your first council tax direct debit payment before we issue you with the £150 'Cost-of-Living' payment. This is to ensure that the bank details we hold for you are correct and to minimise fraud and error.

For all other eligible council tax payers, the Welsh Government (WG) main scheme requires a registration process.

From the last week of May, over a period of around 8 weeks, we are sending 5,000 letters each week to households that we think may be eligible for support, inviting them to register their details using an online phone.

If you don't have internet access, please call us on 01443 863230 and we can fill in the online form for you if you provide your details to us over the phone.

**If you don't have a bank account that will accept this payment, you can ask a trusted relative or friend to supply their bank account details and some of their personal information on the registration form so we can issue the payment to them, and they can hand the money over to you when they receive it.**

### **Before you register for the Cost of Living Support Payment**

Before we can make a payment, you'll need to register some details with us by completing the online form below. Some of the information we are asking for will help us reduce fraud and error when making these payments.

Before you register, make sure you have the following:

- your council tax account number (this is on the letter we are sending you; it will also be on your council tax bill)
- your bank account name
- your bank sort code and account number
- your email address
- a contact telephone number
- your date of birth
- your current address and post code

If you are asking a trusted relative or friend to supply their details on the registration form so we can issue the payment to them and they can hand the money over to you when they receive it, before you register, make sure you have the following:

- your council tax account number (this is on the letter we are sending you; it will also be on your council tax bill)
- their name and address
- their bank account name
- their bank sort code and account number
- their date of birth
- your email address
- your contact telephone number
- your current address and post code

### **Your payment**

Once we have made a decision, we will email you to tell you if you've been successful. Due to the large number of registrations we expect to receive, payments will be made soon as possible before the scheme closes on 30.09.2022.

If your bank account is overdrawn you can make a request to your bank that the funds from the cost-of-living payment are used for particular bills you need to pay rather than being used to clear your overdraft. This is called your 'first right of appropriation'. A sample letter and advice on how to request this with your bank is available from the following link at [\*\*National Debtline\*\*](#).

### **Register your details for the Cost of Living Payment**

Note: you do not need to register if you pay your Council Tax by direct debit.

**Register Now**

**Deadline for registrations:** 5.00pm, Friday 30 September 2022

This link will direct you to Caerphilly Connect. Register now or log in to report, apply and pay for services. If you do not wish to create an account, click 'Continue without registering'. Please check your spam/junk mail folder for account activation and notification emails that we send you!

Please bear with us as we are expecting to issue many thousands of payments so we will be very busy trying to help many householders.

We urge residents to be mindful of emails, texts or telephone calls from suspicious sources offering information on the scheme, as this could be from someone who is trying to steal your personal information, such as your bank account details.

### **3. CHARGING FOR COMMUNITY EVENTS IN COUNCIL PARKS AND SPORTS PITCHES**

Outdoor facilities and their usage was reviewed in 2014, this included the charging. On the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015 Cabinet considered the draft Review of Outdoor Recreation and Leisure Facilities. The consultation on the Review and resulting Outdoor Sports Strategy included Town and Community Councils.

Charges for use of Sports Fields and Parks are in-line with the already approved outdoor facilities pricing structure agreed by Cabinet. Whether it's football, rugby or a fete, charges apply. Pitch fees are charged per length of a match 1.5hrs, so if an event is 7 hours the charge would be 4 x 1.5hrs, as a maximum. The fee also depends on who the organiser is targeting with their event i.e., children or families.

There is no charge for corporate organised events, or Memorial/Charity events providing that correspondence or a letter of endorsement with Charity registration details are received.

Should an event require a service from the Council that the Authority would have to finance, such as staff for manning pavilions or waste disposal, then the Council would look to recover the costs.

There have been instances when the green spaces/pitches have been damaged where the Council have had to finance reinstatement, this is what the bond, applied under the events terms and conditions of hire, is used for. If no damage is incurred the bond is 100% refundable, the size of the bond depends on the scale of the event and/or the potential damage.

The Events Terms and Conditions of Hire are attached to this briefing note. (Appendix 2)

### **4. CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS**

The Monitoring Officer will provide a further training session on the Code of Conduct to Community Councillors in September 2022, a date and time will be agreed and circulated. The training will be held in Penallta House and will be offered on a multi-locational basis the session will also be recorded and made available to all Community Councils.