

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY COUNCILS LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD AT TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 4TH JUNE 1997 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor K. Forehead - Chairman
Community Councillor T.J. Perry - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

J. Bevan, Mrs. A. Blackman, A.I. Evans, P. Fitzgerald, P. Ford, Mrs. C. Forehead, Mrs. E.M. Gore, L. Lewis, C.P. Mann, M.H. Newman, H.J.B. Rogers, Mrs. M.J. Thomas

Councillor S. Lewis by invitation

Representing Community/Town Councils:-

Aber Valley	-	J. Taylor
Argoed	-	Mr. J. Dilworth (Clerk)
Bargoed	-	
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen	-	Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, Mr. W.G. Woodroffe (Clerk)
Blackwood	-	L. Gardiner
Caerphilly	-	Mrs. M. Hallam, Mr. M. Evans (Clerk)
Darran Valley	-	Mrs. M. Bradley, C. Roberts
Gelligaer	-	T.J.B. Jarrett, Mrs. A. Davies (Clerk)
Llanbradach	-	G. Brown, Mr. D. Watkins (Clerk)
Maesycwmmmer	-	Mrs. J. Rao, Miss J. Rao
Nelson	-	
New Tredegar	-	Mrs. J. Jones
Penyrheol, Trecenydd & Energlyn	-	D.P. Potter, Mr. R. Williams (Clerk)
Rhymney	-	T.J. Perry
Rudry	-	Dr. N.V. Williams, Mr. J.L. Matthews (Clerk)
Van	-	J.E. Newnham, Mr. J. O'Brien (Clerk)

Together with:

Head of Policy and Central Services, Head of Corporate Finance, Senior Committee Services Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H.A. Andrews, G. Jones and R. Woodyatt, Community Councillors Mrs. D. Price and A.J. Morgan and Mrs. P. Cooper, Mrs. S. Price, Mrs. H. Harris and Messrs J. Humphreys, A. Hoskins and I. Palmer (Clerks of Darran Valley, Maesycwmmmer, Bargoed, Aber Valley, Nelson and Blackwood Community/Town Councils respectively).

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX FUNDING

Prior to inviting the representatives of the CAB's and members of the press to join the meeting Councillor Court advised the Sub-Committee that due to financial constraints and severe cuts in all budgets, the Council was not able to maintain the previous level of grant assistance afforded. A grant of £72,000 (£18,000 for each of the four bureaux) had been awarded which produced a shortfall of £18,000 in the sum required.

Mention was also made to the fact that an informal meeting had been held with the representatives of Citizens Advice Bureau and that the Citizens Advice Bureau Sub-Committee had considered a report prepared by Mr. Ian Thomas, Development Officer of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux outlining the consequences of allocating the grant by formula. The report concluded that as a result of the reduction in grant and in examining options to allocate the grant between bureaux it is likely that two or possibly three will have to close.

As a result of the reduction in grant the Citizens Advice Bureaux had been advised to seek alternative forms of funding from other organisations including Community/Town Councils hence the convening of the meeting with appropriate representatives to explain the difficulties being experienced by the bureaux. It was noted that some Community Councils already make a contribution to individual bureau.

At 7.40, representatives of the Citizens Advice Bureaux and the press were invited to join the meeting.

Mr. Tudor Davies Chairman of the Co-ordinating Committee representing the four bureaux and Chairman of Bargoed Citizens Advice Bureau and Mr. Ian Thomas, Development Officer of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux outlined the existing financial situation and options for dividing the grant between each bureau were discussed. They confirmed that unless additional funding could be found, the bureaux at Bargoed and Caerphilly would have to close in the near future. In an attempt to maintain the existing level of service, they were now seeking alternative forms of funding from other organisations.

It was confirmed that Bargoed had already closed its Rhymney and Pontlottyn satellite surgeries and cut its staff hours from 25-12½ hours per week and that its staff and those at Caerphilly had already received precautionary redundancy notices. It was noted that the problems relating to redundancy payments were to be further discussed with the County Borough.

The question of establishing a unitary Citizens Advice Bureau was raised and Mr. Thomas indicated that this aspect had been examined by the Co-ordinating Committee and details of the practicalities and financing of unified service option were discussed. It had concluded that in view of transitional costs it would not be feasible to promote a unified service at present but that it would be re-examined in the future.

In closing Mr. Thomas indicated that whilst they were grateful for the contributions already received from the Community/Town Councils, they were seeking a commitment of funding for a period of five years from various organisations in order to plan for and provide a viable service into the future.

The Community/Town Council representatives indicated they would refer the request to their respective Councils and it was noted that it was for the individual Councils to determine if they wished to make such a commitment.