



COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN
ON WEDNESDAY, 18TH JANUARY 2006 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Gardiner - Chairman
Community Councillor C. Roberts - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, J. Bevan, Mrs. A. Collins, N.S. Dix, L. Gardiner, G.G. Hibbert,
M.H. Newman, Mrs. J.A. Pritchard, C.P. Mann, A.S. Williams

Together with:

G. Bowes (Invasive Plant Species Officer), P. Griffiths (Principal Planner) M. Williams (Head of Public Services), P.A. Hotchkiss (Registration and Licensing Officer), T. Peppin (Head of Policy and Central Services), J. Bennett (Community Regeneration Officer), A. Palmer (Community Planning Co-ordinator - GAVO), H.C. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

Representing Community/Town Councils:

Aber Valley	- Mrs E. P. Prendergast, Mr. J.S. Humphreys (Clerk)
Argoed	-
Bargoed	- I. Hughes
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen	- Mr. D. Allinson (Clerk)
Blackwood	-
Caerphilly	- Mr. M. Evans (Clerk)
Darran Valley	- C.R. Roberts, Mr G. Williams (Clerk)
Gelligaer	- D. Roberts, Mrs. A. Davies (Clerk)
Llanbradach	- J. Hanson, Mr. W.M. Thompson (Clerk)
Maesycwmmmer	- Mrs. J.H. Rao, Mr. D. Cooper (Clerk)
Nelson	- Mr. A. Hoskins (Clerk)
New Tredegar	-
Penyrheol, Trecenydd & Energlyn	- Mrs. A. Nash, Mr. R.B. Williams (Clerk)
Rhymney	- J.P. Williams (Clerk)
Rudry	- Mrs. B. Jones
Van	- Mrs. E. Macey, J. O'Brien (Clerk)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors, B.A. Barker, D. Bolter, K. Etheridge, Mrs. D. Price and G.R. Price, Community Councillors J.E. Roberts, Mrs. C. Osborne,

Mrs. M.J. Hallam, Mrs. A. Blackman, Mrs. G. Howell, Mrs. E. Macy, Mrs. G. Bevan and D. Woodman and Mr J. Dilworth (Clerk of Bargoed Town and Rudy Community Councils).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from Councillor A.S. Williams and C.P. Mann in relation to agenda item 4 (a) relating to the former St. Ives Premises, Duffryn Business Park, Ystrad Mynach. Details are minuted with the respective item.

2. MINUTES - 19TH OCTOBER 2005

Subject to it being noted that Councillor C.P. Mann had been present and that it had not been recorded and that Councillor M.H. Newman had tendered his apologies for absence which had not been recorded, the minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2005 (a copy had been sent to each member) were received and noted.

MATTERS ARISING

3. Decorative Christmas Lighting 2005 (minute no. 11)

It was noted that arrangements would be made to ensure that a breakdown of the budget is circulated to all Town and Community Councils Clerks.

4. PRESENTATION FROM MR. GETHIN BOWES - INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES OFFICER

The Sub - Committee received a presentation from Mr. Gethin Bowes, the Invasive Plant Species Officer, who in the first instance detailed those categorised as invasive species (Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed and a number of aquatic weeds such as parrots feather, Australian swamp stonecrop and floating pennywort). He referred also to the injurious weeds such as the common ragwort and creeping thistle, which at present, are not part of his remit.

Specific reference was then made to Japanese knotweed and Mr. Bowes referred to its expansive system of rhizomes, which can extend in excess of seven metres laterally and to a depth greater than 2 metres. In view of its ability to spread via the rhizome (as little as one gramme is sufficient to allow a plant to grow) it is now a common site on roadside, riverbanks and a wide variety of habitats.

Mr. Bowes confirmed that it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act to 'introduce, plant or cause to grow wild' any plant listed within schedule 9 of part 2 of the Act (giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed). With regards to the latter, he confirmed that the plant is very difficult to control and can be spread easily if inappropriate methods of eradication are adopted. Mowing or flailing is not advised due to the plants ability to regrow from very small stem sections and cutting with sharp hooks or slashers is recommended as this limits stem fragmentation. All Japanese knotweed waste, be it the plant itself or materials containing its rhizome, is classed as controlled/special waste and therefore must be disposed of in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Environmental Protection Act Duty of Care Regulations 1991 by a licensed waste carrier.

Reference was then made to the chemical and non-chemical controls which are available. Non-chemical being achieved by large scale excavation whereby the plant and its rhizomes are removed (and buried on site to a depth of at least 5 metres), chemical being to the use of herbicide. Homeowners with knotweed in their gardens are advised to purchase glyphosate

based herbicide which will provide control. He pointed out however that it is essential that regular treatments are undertaken and that the area is monitored for new growth for at least three/four growing seasons to ensure it does not re-establish itself (although it was noted that it can lay dormant for up to thirty years waiting for suitable growing conditions).

Mr. Bowes referred to the invasive plant species survey which is currently being undertaken and detailed the process involved in the environmental risk assessment exercise - visiting the site, logging the species present, suggesting an appropriate method of control and plotting details via an art view package to provide cross sections of the area and map the extent of the infestation at specific locations. It is intended to prioritise sites for action and Mr. Bowes indicated that control is achievable but it will be a long-term process with repeat treatments being required for a number of years

He indicated that to date a total area of 77, 975m² has been surveyed and at an estimated treatment cost of £3.50 per m² this amounts to £272, 912.50 for that area alone. As this is approximately one tenth of the area to be surveyed, the financial implications need to be assessed in order that a rolling programme of eradication can be determined.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Bowes for his informative presentation and for responding to specific questions raised by those present. In noting that he is in the process of undertaking a series of examinations Members wished him every success in achieving the qualifications he is seeking.

TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS LIAISON COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to the following items raised by the community/town councils.

5. ST. IVES PREMISES, DUFFRYN BUSINESS PARK, YSTRAD MYNACH

Councillor A. S. Williams declared an interest (as his son is the author of the original report) and Councillor C.P. Mann declared an interest (as living in close proximity to the site). Both left the Chamber when the item was being discussed.

Concerns were expressed at proposals to establish recycling facilities at the former St Ives site and to issues that have been raised in relation to the proposed process, which is alleged to be relatively untried, the possibility of dust and odours, the affect on local businesses and potential job losses, noise nuisance and the amount of additional traffic which will be generated. A query was also raised in relation to the suitability of the site for this process.

In responding, Mr Williams (Head of Public Services) reported that Biffa has produced an information booklet and distributed it to around 5,000 households in and around the immediate area to inform them about the new site and explain how it works. There are also public exhibitions in the form of two open days when plans will be on display at the premises (9am - 6pm on Friday 27th and Saturday 28th January 2006). Those present were invited to attend the exhibition. He also indicated that the county borough will be setting up a liaison group at which the local community will be able to be represented. Questionnaires will be available at the open days which will seek details of those who may be interested. There is also a free-phone information line and web site for members of the public and further information will be provided via the monthly newspaper. Articles will also be issued in the press to try to ensure that everyone is kept up to date with the latest developments.

With regard to issues raised by local business located on and adjacent to the Duffryn Business Park, Mr. Williams confirmed that arrangements are in hand to meet the individuals concerned to discuss their specific issues and how they may be addressed.

Mr. M. Williams pointed out that the proposed facility would help the council to meet

Government targets to recycle and compost 40% of the county boroughs waste by 2010. He confirmed that with the in vessel composting system all handling of waste will be carried out inside the building, which will incorporate the treatment processes required for separating and processing household waste and recyclables. Environmental controls installed at the factory will include a full odour control system, which will control the air flowing in and out of the building. Air that does leave the building will first pass through a series of filters, which will treat the air and remove any unpleasant odours and dust. He confirmed that this process is commonly used elsewhere in the UK and in Europe.

It was noted that the facility will treat household waste, collected via the refuse collection service and extract further materials for recycling and recovery. Paper, cardboard, cans, glass, plastic bottles and textiles collected via the councils kerbside recycling service will also be brought to the facility and unloaded indoors. These materials, along with recyclable waste from bring banks and civic amenity sites, will be processed before being transported off-site to material reprocessors. The facility will also be able to compost garden waste collected via the existing green waste collection service.

With regards to the selection of the premises, he pointed out that the St. Ives site already has planning consent for industrial use which means it is suitable for this facility. It also has a building that can be adapted to house the necessary machinery and technology and its location, adjacent to the A469 makes it an ideal location.

Reference was then made to concerns in relation to the increase in traffic and it was pointed out that the existing refuse and recycling wagons already travel part of the route to reach the Trehir site.

It was noted that an application is to be prepared for submission to the Environment Agency for an Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Permit. This permit will govern how the site is to be constructed and managed, the waste types it will be allowed to accept and the environmental controls it must have in place for the protection of the environment. These environmental controls will include a full odour control system, pollution measures and detail those which must be in place to prevent noise from affecting neighbours. Determination of the application will involve the Environment Agency in consultation with statutory consultees (e.g: Local Health Board) and the public. The Agency can also inspect the site at any time to ensure it complies with the rigorous controls that will be in place. The preparation of the submission will run in parallel with the public consultation process with the final application taking account of any relevant issues that the process raises.

6. INVOLVEMENT OF TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS IN THE LICENSING PROCESS - LICENSING ACT 2003

Mr. P.A. Hotchkiss (Registration and Licensing Officer) attended the meeting to clarify the process of consultation as detailed within the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 (such as retail sale of alcohol, supply of alcohol in a club, provisions of regulated entertainment and the provision of late night refreshments).

He reiterated that the Act does not recognise community/town councils as 'responsible authorities' and, as such, there is no requirement that they be consulted on any applications received. He pointed out that several organisations had made representation to seek to amend this part of the act but that no changes had subsequently been made.

Reference was made to the existing practice whereby community/town councils had been notified of public entertainment licences via a weekly list and given the opportunity to respond within a specified period and a request was made that applications received under the Act be notified in the same way.

Mr Hotchkiss pointed out that this would not be possible to accede to this request as the county borough would not be acting in accordance with the rules and procedures specified within the act and such a practice could be challenged in a court of law.

However, he pointed out that community/town councils do have a role to perform and as such could be identified as an 'interested party' as defined in the Act and could therefore comment, object or ask for a review of any licence subsequently granted.

Under the Act, the applicant is required to serve notice of the application on statutory bodies and to advise 'interested parties' via a notice in a local paper that is distributed within the local community and to display a notice on the premises detailing the application. It is at that stage that the community/town councils would have the opportunity to submit their views to the local authority. Those parties which make submission would then be invited to the hearing in order that they can formally make submissions to the Sub-Committee which is determining the application.

7. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY PLAN

Dr. T. Peppin (Head of Policy and Central Services) referred to the progress on the community strategy and pointed out that it is seen as one of the key strategy documents for the county borough in setting out a vision for the future of the area developed in partnership with other organisations and local communities. He confirmed that this vision covers all four themes (regeneration, education for life, health, social care and well-being and the living environment), takes account of 'cross-cutting' objectives (in relation to sustainable development and equalities) and highlights beacon projects. Dr Peppin confirmed that it is intended that the strategy will look at ways to tackle issues and take advantage of opportunities. It will set out short, medium and long term priorities, which will guide the development and improvement of the county borough in the coming years and is being developed by a wide range of partners. This is taking place at three, interrelated levels - through local community partnerships (involving local residents), at the area level (with five geographic areas covering the county borough), and at the county borough level (involving the Standing Conference and the Standing Conference Executive).

Mrs. Bennett (Community Regeneration Officer) then highlighted the role of the Community Regeneration Unit in supporting the strategy, assisting in the establishment of the local community partnerships and working in close liaison with all partner agencies and local residents. She outlined the role of the local partnerships in bringing together a number of bodies and recognised that the community/town councils are an essential part of the process and need to be an active part of those groups. She indicated that they are intended to be inclusive and work together and noted concerns expressed that at certain of the partnerships, there is no community/town council representative. It was pointed out that it is intended that there should be one on each of the partnerships and that nominations had been sought when they had been established. It was requested that those who are not already represented should forward details of their nominee in order that they can be invited to future meetings.

It was noted that to date, the Unit have assisted in the establishment of twenty eight community partnerships and that a further partnership, in Ystrad Mynach, is in the process of being developed. It was noted that these community partnerships (comprising one third community representation, one third business and voluntary representation and one third statutory representation) are working to develop a local action plan to meet local needs and Members were pleased to note that Aber Valley has already produced, and had approved by the Welsh Assembly Government) its action plan. The difficulties in establishing community partnerships in certain areas were highlighted and it was noted that in some areas there have been difficulties in getting the public involved in establishing local groups

Mrs. Palmer (GAVO) then referred to the area level. She explained the background whereby

area forum meetings had made a significant contribution to the initial consultation element of preparing the strategy. As the process moves from strategy development to implementation, she noted the need to review arrangements at the area level. It has been proposed that new 'Area Steering Groups' will be established to assist in implementation, bringing together community partnerships and other partners operating in each of the five areas. She reiterated the need to ensure that community/voluntary bodies are represented on the new Area Steering Groups along with the statutory and business agencies and welcomed the involvement of community/town council in this process.

Concerns were also expressed that developments are being progressed without the knowledge of the relevant community/town council and Dr. Peppin pointed out that all proposals are developed over a period of time with no major decision being taken until detailed consultation has taken place. He confirmed that the establishment of beacon projects was based on extensive consultation and development by the Standing Conference Executive and that as part of an evolving process, draft strategies developed by community partnerships will be fed into each of the strategic partnerships for comments and feedback. An example of the development of the Aber Valley action plan, where a series of public consultation exercises had been undertaken and over 1,000 responses analysed, was highlighted.

It was pointed out that on occasions, the correct Officers were not in attendance at the community partnership meetings. Mrs. Bennett indicated that there are twenty-eight partnerships and on occasions, Officers have been in attendance when issues relating to their particular area of activity have not been raised and as such, had not needed to be there. However, if that Officer is made aware of issues that are scheduled to be raised then every effort will be made to ensure that an Officer is in attendance to respond.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

In noting that the date of the next meeting (19th April 2006) is on the same night as the Planning Committee, it was agreed that it be re-arranged to Wednesday 26th April 2006.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.