



COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT DUFFRYN HOUSE, DUFFRYN BUSINESS PARK,
YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH JANUARY 2007 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

Community Councillor C. Roberts - Chairman

Councillors:

H.A. Andrews, Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, C. P. Duggan, G.G. Hibbert, M.H. Newman,
Mrs. D. Price, G.R. Price, Mrs. J.A. Pritchard, C.P. Mann, Mrs. B.M. Toomer, A.S. Williams

Representing Community/Town Councils:

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| Aber Valley | - Mrs. E. P. Prendergast, Mr. J.S. Humphreys (Clerk) |
| Argoed | - Mr. G. James (Clerk) |
| Bargoed | - |
| Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen | - Mr. D. Allinson (Clerk) |
| Blackwood | - A. Wilkins, Mr I. Palmer (Clerk) |
| Caerphilly | - Mrs. P. Newman, Mr. K. Williams (Acting Clerk) |
| Darran Valley | - C.R. Roberts |
| Gelligaer | - D. Roberts, Mrs. A. Davies (Clerk) |
| Llanbradach | - Mrs E.A. Reed, Mr. W.M. Thompson (Clerk) |
| Maesycwmmwr | - Mrs. J.H. Rao, Mr. D. Cooper (Clerk) |
| Nelson | - Mrs. B. Miles, Mr. A. Hoskins (Clerk) |
| New Tredegar | - |
| Penyrheol, Trecenydd & Energlyn | - Mr. R.B. Williams (Clerk) |
| Rhymney | - |
| Rudry | - |
| Van | - Mrs. E. Macey, J. O'Brien (Clerk) |

Together with

T. Peppin (Head of Policy and Central Services), T. Stephens (Development Control Manager), H.C. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Daniel Hurford (Welsh Local Government Association), Shyam Vining and Christian Durham Hall (Welsh Assembly Government Local Government Policy Unit) and Ken Burton (One Voice Wales).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, Mrs. A. Collins, N.S. Dix, and L. Gardiner, Community Councillors Mrs. J. Sweet, D. Woodman, Mrs. A. Nash, Mrs. M.J. Hallam and T. Wilkins and Messrs I. Palmer and Mr. J. Dilworth (Clerks of Blackwood, Rudry and Bargoed Community/Town Councils respectively).

2. BEREAVEMENT - MR. MALCOLM EVANS AND MR. JIM MATTHEWS

Members were advised of the death of both Malcolm Evans (Clerk to Caerphilly Town Council) and former Clerk to Rudry Community Council, Mr. Jim Matthews. Members and Officers stood in silence as a mark of respect.

Tributes were paid to both Malcolm and Jim for the manner in which they had carried out their duties during their years of Office and reference was made to the high esteem in which they were held by both Members and the community.

It was noted that at a recent meeting of the Caerphilly Town Centre Management Group it had been agreed to dedicate a memorial garden to Malcolm Evans and to site the garden entered by the Parks Department at the Royal Horticultural Show at Cardiff in 2005 at Morgan Jones Park in his memory.

3. MINUTES - 18TH OCTOBER 2006

Subject to it being noted that the details of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman have been transposed and should read - Community Councillor C. Roberts - Chairman and Councillor L. Gardiner - Vice - Chairman, the minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2006 (a copy had been sent to each member) were received and noted.

MATTERS ARISING

4. Caerphilly Youth Services (minute no. 4)

It was noted that a query had been raised at the last meeting as to whether, in view of responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act, if a respective community/town council were able to meet the required funding through partnership arrangements, additional hours/nights could be provided. As a result, information in relation to the costings for part time youth workers as a guide to potential costs should community/town councils wish to consider funding an enhanced youth provision had been provided.

5. A Charter for Community Town Council (minute no. 8)

It was agreed that in light of the recent developments on consultation a review of the Charter should be undertaken and Anne Davies, Jack Humphreys and Roger Williams were nominated to undertake this role on behalf of the community/town councils with the respective Officers.

6. MODEL CHARTER (ESTABLISHING GUIDANCE ON PARTNERSHIP WORKING BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND COMMUNITY/TOWN COUNCILS)

Members welcomed to the meeting Daniel Hurford (Welsh Local Government Association), Shyam Vining and Christian Durham Hall (Welsh Assembly Government Local Government Policy Unit) and Ken Burton (One Voice Wales).

It was noted that the University of Wales, Aberystwyth research study "The Role, Functions and Future Potential of Community and Town Councils in Wales" published in 2003 advocated charter agreements between unitary authorities and community/town councils primarily as a means of facilitating the delegation of functions. In its response to this recommendation the Welsh Assembly Government took the view that charters should be introduced by local agreement and it would be for individual local councils wishing to deliver the delegated services to demonstrate that they are able to do so effectively and enter into a service agreement with their unitary authority. The Welsh Assembly Government pledged to facilitate this process by liaising with the Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales to produce a model charter that may be adapted to suit individual circumstances.

Members were reminded that there had been a special meeting of the Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee held on 18th February 2004 to discuss the research report and following debate on its content, general support was given to the proposals contained therein, although the representatives present did indicate they would not generally be in favour of carrying out services delegated from the authority.

It was noted that early in 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government set up a Charter Working Group to look at how local authorities and community/town councils interact currently and by utilising good practice examples illustrate how effective relationships may be developed. The intention was that this would lay the foundation for delegation of services where this is identified to deliver the best outcomes for the community and where the town/community council is capable of taking this on.

It was noted that responses to a survey conducted by the Welsh Local Government Association with all twenty two unitary authorities revealed that most have a formal mechanism and that there are examples of positive and effective relationships between unitary authorities and community/town councils in Wales, albeit by a variety of different arrangements.

An update was given on the progress made towards fulfilling the commitment made and it was noted that the Charter Working Group is currently exploring the ways in which community/town councils work together in partnership with the unitary authorities in order to identify examples of good practice which may be rolled out.

Details of the timetable for developing the tool kit and drafting the model charter from now until the end of the year were highlighted and it was noted that in order to facilitate the process of developing and improving relationships by exploring various options and approaches, suggestions, experiences and comments are now being sought. This was the first of a series of liaison meetings throughout Wales. Feedback from these sessions will provide a "reality test" for the guidance and this will be used to inform the final document. These sessions will also be used to generate "living" case studies/examples.

The next meeting of the Group is scheduled for Friday 23rd February 2007 when the findings from the liaison meetings will be explored and the drafting of the final document will be discussed. The proposed draft model charter agreement will then be presented to the Minister for approval and detailed consultation would be undertaken on its content.

Discussion ensued on the process adopted by the county borough and it was noted that there is dedicated Officer who liaises with community/town councils and provides a point of contact for all queries - generally receiving their correspondence and seeking responses on their behalf. There is also an agreed Charter which highlights required exchanges of information, the liaison between the county borough and community/town councils and lists specific subjects which should be consulted on. This is regularly reviewed and amended/updated as necessary.

The Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee, which comprises of two representatives from each of the community/town councils and sixteen county borough members, meets on a quarterly basis. It was pointed out that the meeting of the community/town council representatives one month before the Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee is an effective method of identifying items to be included on the agenda in order to ensure that the relevant information is available and the respective Officer is present to answer any queries that are raised at that time. This process does not preclude any issues being raised with the Community Council Liaison Officer in the meantime.

It was generally accepted that there is a good communication with the community/town councils and that the existing process provides a meaningful exchange of information. While there are occasions whereby there can be a breakdown of communication and the necessary consultation on specific subjects as detailed in the Charter is not undertaken, its content is generally adhered to by the relevant Officers.

The role of Helen Morgan as the Liaison Officer was noted and seen as a key factor in the successful partnership work between the local authority and the community and town councils. It was agreed that having a central point of contact has proved to be an effective way of ensuring that all queries received are responded to within a specified time.

Members also accepted that there is a willingness and commitment to work together to reinforce the existing relationship and facilitate the process and in welcoming the opportunity to offer their opinions on the current process indicated that they would also offer their further comments on the proposed model charter agreement at the appropriate time.

The Chairman thanked the representatives for their presentation and welcomed the exchange of information between all parties present. He invited them to stay for the remainder of the meeting to listen to the debate on the items included on the agenda at the request of the Town and Community Council Liaison Committee.

TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS LIAISON COMMITTEE

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

7. PLANNING GAIN - SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

Mr. T. Stephens (Development Control Manager) confirmed that in accordance with the provisions of Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, the Authority has the power to negotiate various planning obligations with developers over a related issue.

He indicated that the agreement can act as a main instrument for placing restrictions on the developers often requiring them to minimise the impact on a local community and to carry out task which will provide community benefits. Such agreements can relate to the developer carrying out works in kind or the securement of funding to carry out ongoing grounds maintenance of open areas, parks, playgrounds, education or leisure provision or highways improvements.

Mr. Stephens responded to several questions in relation to the requirement for such an agreement and specifically to the areas which would benefit. He confirmed that the agreement with the land developer must be over a related issue and refer directly to the site and cannot be used at an alternative location. He also indicated that what is secured must be reasonable, necessary and relate to the size and kind of development. A request was made that community/town council be consulted on proposed Section 106 Obligations within their area. Mr Stephens indicated that whilst he had no objection in principle, he confirmed that the county borough is in the process of preparing its local development plan and that this request will be considered at that time.

Reference was then made to the standard planning obligation (roof tax) within the Caerphilly Basin whereby developers are required to contribute to the network improvements works needed to address the problems of traffic congestion. It was noted that this requirement and a Section 106 Obligation are separate issues and if the latter is in place for highway improvements in a specific area that is to be developed, it is that area that will benefit and it cannot be transferred to an alternative location.

9. CAERPHELLY BASIN STRATEGIC HIGHWAY NETWORK OBLIGATION – ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

Consideration was given to the report which provided information in relation to Development Design Guide (DDG) 18 – the Caerphilly Basin Strategic Highway Network Obligation, often referred to as the planning gain ‘roof tax’ (£5,000 per dwelling unit in the area of consolidation)

It was noted that the Caerphilly Basin Strategic Highway Network (Planning) Obligation has been established to help facilitate and fund a coordinated set of highway improvements to manage and mitigate the effects of increased traffic generation. At present there are six scheme locations identified (estimated to cost in the order of £8.5m). The Caerphilly Basin Strategic Highway Improvement Project is to be funded wholly from planning gain receipts.

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| Pwllpant Junction | various improvements to enhance junction capacity |
| St Cenydd Roundabout | junction reconstruction |
| Bedwas Bridge | two roundabouts plus second crossing |
| Taffwys Walk | install traffic signals |
| Northern By-Pass, Pwllpant | provision of crawler lane |
| Piccadilly Gyratory | capacity enhancement |

It was confirmed that the programme is in the process of being developed and a report will be presented to Cabinet and the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee in due course. At that point further details will be communicated to the Sub-Committee.

10. REVIEW OF PLAY AREAS AND PLAY EQUIPMENT

It was noted that Officers are in the process of undertaking a review of play areas and play equipment and that there will be consultation with the respective town/community councils at the appropriate time.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that as there is a Planning Committee scheduled for 18th April 2007, the next meeting of the Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee would be rescheduled to Wednesday 25th April 2007.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm