



COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY, 15TH OCTOBER 2008 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

Community Councillor C. Roberts - Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, Mrs. K. Presley, Mrs. B.M. Toomer, A.S. Williams, Mrs. L. Williams, R. Woodyatt

Aber Valley	-
Argoed	-
Bargoed	- D. Llewellyn
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen	- J.R. Davies, Mrs. S. Chick (Clerk)
Blackwood	- D. Jones, Mr. J. Hold (Clerk)
Caerphilly	-
Darran Valley	- C.R. Roberts
Gelligaer	-
Llanbradach	- Mrs. J. Hanson, Mr. W.M. Thompson (Clerk)
Maesycwmmmer	- Mrs. G. Thomas (Clerk)
Nelson	- Mrs. B. Miles
New Tredegar	-
Penyrheol, Trecenydd & Energlyn	- Mrs. A. Nash, Mrs. H. Treherne (Clerk)
Rhymney	-
Rudry	-
Van	- Mrs. E. Macey, Mr. J. O'Brien (Clerk)

Together with

G. Bowes (Invasive Plant Species Officer), M. Williams (Head of Public Services), T. White (Refuse and Cleansing Officer), H.C. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.C.W. Bailie, J. Bevan, D. Bolter, Mrs. A. Collins, G.G. Hibbert, A.G. Higgs, C.P. Mann, M.H. Newman, Mrs. D. Price and J.A. Pritchard, Community Councillors Mrs. E.P. Prendergast, Mrs. U. Newman, G. Roberts, Mrs. J.H. Rao, A. Candy, D.T. Williams, D. Woodman and Mr. J.S. Humphreys, Mr. G. James, Mr. K. Williams, Mrs. C. Mortimer, Mr. A. Hoskins and Mr. J. Dilworth (Clerks of Aber Valley, Argoed, Caerphilly, Gelligaer, Nelson and Rudry Community/Town Councils respectively).

1. WELCOME - COMMUNITY COUNCILLOR LLEWELLYN

The Chairman welcomed Community Councillor Llewellyn to his first meeting of the Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee.

2. COMMUNITY COUNCILLOR MRS. JUNE RAO

It was noted that Community Councillor June Rao had recently undergone an operation and would soon be home to recuperate and those present requested their best wishes for a speedy recovery be sent to her.

3. MINUTES - 1ST SEPTEMBER 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st September 2008 (a copy had been sent to each member) were received and noted.

MATTERS ARISING

4. Recycling Provision - Garden Waste (minute no. 5)

It was confirmed that arrangements for the collection of bulky green garden waste require a request to the Customer Care Line on 01443 873727. The person will be advised of the date on which it will be collected (usually on the next available collection day depending on the geographical area). It was reported that the collection of the normal green waste collection (26 week period) had ceased and would resume in the spring.

5. Community Planning and the Local Service Board in the County Borough (minute no. 6)

It was noted that the request that the Local Service Board increase its membership had been considered at its meeting in August and it had been agreed at that time that for the foreseeable future the membership should remain as it is at present.

With regards to the Standing Conference it was reported that the Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee is able to elect two members and agreed that in addition to Community Councillor J. Rao, Councillor Mrs. E. Macey also be nominated to attend.

6. Code of Conduct (minute no. 8)

A query was made as to whether there would be any further training undertaken for those Members who had not been able to attend. This would be raised with the Monitoring Officer.

7. Flower Displays and Locations (minute no. 9)

Reference was made to the comments made at the last meeting in respect of the content of the flowering baskets in Caerphilly and Members were advised that Caerphilly had recently won a Silver Award in the 'large town' class at the Britain in Bloom Awards.

8. Community Partnerships (minute no. 10)

Reference was made to the showcase event which had taken place at Markham Community Centre when Community Partnerships across the borough had the opportunity to celebrate their success. It was confirmed that the partnerships are made up of people from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors - all working together to bring real improvements. The emphasis is on giving local people the opportunity to take an active role in shaping the future of their own communities.

TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS LIAISON COMMITTEE

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

9. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

The Sub-Committee received a presentation from Mr. Gethin Bowes, the Invasive Plant Species Officer, who confirmed that the invasive plant species project has been running throughout the county borough since October 2005 and its aim is to limit the spread of invasive plants and reduce and control areas currently colonised by three of the most problematic invasive species Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed. The invasive plant species project has been split into three tasks, a fine detail survey to identify colonised areas, responding to enquiries and giving advice and undertaking control measures.

The fine detail survey has been compiled using existing data from previous surveys, utilising local knowledge in the form of community groups who have assisted in surveying their local areas and physical surveys undertaken by the Invasive Plant Species Officer. This has resulted in approx 700,000m² of Japanese Knotweed being plotted onto the GIS arcview package. This survey data gives the location, approximate area of the stand, land designation, proximity to watercourses, owner data and any recommended control measures. In addition, once control works have been completed in an area this data can also be stored and accessed for future reference.

To date there have been in excess of 550 enquiries regarding invasive plant species, the majority of these enquiries have been in relation to Japanese Knotweed. Over the duration of the project there has been an increasing amount of interest shown in invasive plant species from across the authority and this has led to a variety of talks and presentations being given. The printing of invasive species information articles in newsletters and the attendance of the Invasive Plant Species Officer at events and community group meetings has assisted in the dissemination of the information. A Japanese Knotweed information leaflet is being produced by the project and is being made available for distribution.

Mr. Bowes then detailed specific control measures that have been undertaken and reported that treatment has been carried out nearly exclusively on land in the ownership of the county borough. Works that have been carried out on privately owned land have been completed to allow a strategic approach which enables straddling boundaries to be treated in their entirety, herbicide application is only undertaken with prior permission of the land owner. It should be noted however that whilst advice on invasive plant species can be readily given it is very much the exception to undertake treatment on private land as the project concentrates on areas in public ownership.

Mr. Bowes confirmed that it is not illegal to have any of the above plant species present on a property however the Countryside and Wildlife Act 1981 makes it an offence to spread or cause to grow wild Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed. The Environmental Protection Act and Regulations of 1990 and 1991 seek to ensure Japanese Knotweed is disposed of properly by classing it as controlled or special waste.

Giant Hogweed is the only plant from those identified that causes harm to human health. There has been a significant increase in the amount of Giant Hogweed located on the River Ebbw catchment that was first recorded in 2007. The seed has travelled down stream from neighbouring authorities and left unmanaged will pose a significant problem in the future, similar to that currently being experienced in the River Usk catchment. Himalayan Balsam is also spreading rapidly but is of less concern than the other species as it is far easier to control. With the adoption of good land management practices this spread could be reversed.

Mr. Bowes confirmed that Japanese Knotweed is undoubtedly the most problematic of the invasive plant species 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. It was pointed out that the plant has an expansive system of rhizomes, that is thought 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 reported that some progress has been made in isolating some of the natural controlling aphids which have so far shown no interest in other plants which grow here, although further thorough testing is required to ensure that they will attack only the knotweed before any further developments can be made.

With regards to control, Members were pleased to note the number of enquiries made and the printing of invasive species information articles in newsletters and the attendance of Officers at events and community group meetings. While some have been from the general public others have been received from developers, engineers and infrastructure stakeholders such as BT, Railtrack and Welsh Water requiring site-specific advice prior to or during works.

Mr. Bowes then responded to a number of questions raised (spraying of river banks, access to sites, importation of soil) over and above those which were considered during the course of the presentation and Members thanked him for his informative presentation and for responding to questions and issues brought up during the course of the debate.

10. CHRISTMAS LIGHTING GRANTS

It was reported that this year Christmas lighting grants will be dealt with by Tom Llewelyn and that grants will be available probably at the same level as last year.

11. GRAFFITI

Consideration was given to the report which provided an outline of the current provision for the removal of graffiti. It was noted that the county borough and the Safer Caerphilly Community Safety Partnership have processes in place to deal with graffiti. Further investigation is required to allow an assessment of the resources needed to enhance service provision to be carried out, subject to the need being established.

It was noted that there are a number of pieces of legislation that are relevant to the enforcement of graffiti and fly posting, including the Criminal Damage Act 1971, the Highways Act 1980, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. The placing of graffiti is a criminal offence under the Criminal Damage Act 1971.

A report is to be presented to the Living Environment Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 25th November 2008 outlining current provision and making recommendations with regard to future provision and a copy would be forwarded to each Clerk at the appropriate time.

12. ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

Details of the report which highlighted the initiatives and surveys carried out by the Trading Standards and Licensing Group and demonstrated the variety of areas in which they have an involvement were noted. Members also noted the information relating to issues regarding to the enforcement of litter and dog fouling.

Details of the powers available to the county borough as a waste collection Authority and the proposals for the future use of these powers in improving participation in kerbside recycling were outlined.

13. REMOVAL OF SIGNS

It was reported that the sign removal project is part of a move to reduce street clutter by the removal of obsolete signs (e.g. no parking at any time now no longer required where lines are in place, school signs where school as closed). A target to remove 1000 signs has been set. 1200 were removed last year and so far this year 500 have been removed.

It was noted that a specific query had been raised in relation to school signs (incorrectly timed flashing school signs) and it was requested that details of specific locations be forwarded for investigation.

14. COLLECTION OF FOOD AND GARDEN WASTE

The Sub-Committee received a presentation from Mr. Mark Williams, the Head of Public Services, setting out a series of options for providing a food waste collection service across the County Borough. The service will increase the Authority's composting and landfill diversion performance and assist in achieving landfill allowances thus avoiding fiscal penalties.

Due to stringent targets, increased public pressure and lack of landfill capacity, more and more Authorities across the UK, including 10 in Wales (with an additional 3 planning to introduce schemes later in 2008/9) are now collecting food waste either as a separate collection scheme or as part of an existing garden waste service. Waste composition analyses repeatedly show that food waste is one of the largest single fractions of the household waste stream.

Officers have researched various options for implementing food waste collections within the county borough. Due to the current collection infrastructure and the ability to co-treat garden and food waste, an integrated organic collection service would appear appropriate and eliminate the need for a fourth collection vehicle visiting all properties. From experience with other recycling services, the provision of a weekly service leads to greater tonnage and higher participation. As well as the obvious financial benefits, reducing the frequency of the current refuse collection service from weekly to fortnightly would have a significant effect on the capture rate of food waste.

Mr. Williams detailed the current provision (weekly wheeled bin refuse collection service, range of bulky collection services, clinical waste collection services, garden waste collection, and subsidised home composting containers) and referred to the twenty-nine mini recycling centres and six civic amenity sites and to the focus on waste minimisation with community works, initiatives in schools and other campaign work. He then made reference to the benefits of introducing a weekly recycling and food waste collection service, and in outlining the key options for implementation, it was noted that a wider range of material would be able to be collected. Brown 240 litre bins will be supplied for the collection of waste and smaller caddies for the collection of food waste.

Officers have examined a variety of food waste receptacles and have concluded that a 2-caddy system (adopted by many local authorities across England and Wales) would be the most appropriate way forward. Householders would be provided with a 5-litre indoor kitchen caddy to be placed, for example on a worktop or underneath the sink, and an external 20-25 litre caddy, which is placed at the front of the property for collection. This would accompany the provision of re-useable bags for green waste at a rate of 2 per property per year.

It was noted that the proposed changes would also give an opportunity to further consider front collections, have the scope to include outlying properties/farms, provide the integration of commercial premises and schools and allow further discussion on waste transfer and bulking facilities.

It was pointed out that the introduction of a new collection service must be supported by an effective marketing and public relations campaign to educate and advise householders on the new collection regime and influence those resistant to change. A Communication Plan will be implemented to help publicise the changes to recycling and waste collection practice. During October 2008 a first stage information leaflet will be issued to all residents informing them of their collection day, which, in some cases will not change. A Borough wide weekly kerbside recycling collection service will commence during November 2008.

Mr. Williams reiterated the importance of education and noted that public participation is essential to the success of any recycling scheme. At present there are two Waste Advisory Wardens employed and a further two will be employed later in the year. There are proposals for a recycling exhibition trailer and there will be further presence at community events.

Members agreed that the introduction of a new collection service must be supported by an effective marketing and public relations campaign to educate and advise householders on the new collection regime and influence those resistant to change with a doorstep presence if necessary. Mr. Williams reported that the Waste Advisory Wardens, whose main remit is to target householders who are not currently participating in the kerbside recycling scheme, will also advise and encourage residents to participate in the food waste scheme.

As to future plans, Mr. Williams referred to the collaboration with Project Gwyrdd (a consortium of South East Wales Local Authorities - Monmouthshire, Newport, Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Caerphilly County Borough Council) that have been working closely to initiate the procurement of a regional waste treatment facility in South East Wales. He confirmed that the draft outline business case is currently with the Welsh Assembly Government awaiting a funding support decision and once received, a procurement and facility development timescale will follow.

Mr. Williams then responded to a number of questions raised over and above those which were considered during the course of the presentation and Members thanked him for his informative presentation and for responding to questions and issues brought up during the course of the debate.

Mr. Williams sought the views of the Members on the proposals he had outlined. They were fully supported.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Town and Community Council meeting be rearranged for 17th December 2008 to 21st January 2009 with the subsequent Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee be arranged for 18th February 2009.
