



COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TY PENALLTA, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY, 20TH MAY 2009 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor C.P. Mann - Vice Chairman - presiding

Councillors:

Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, J. Bevan, D. Bolter, Mrs. A. Collins, M.H. Newman, J.A. Pritchard,
Mrs. L. Williams

Aber Valley	- Mrs. E. P. Prendergast, Mr. J.S. Humphreys (Clerk)
Argoed	- G. Lewis
Bargoed	-
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen	- D. Barry
Blackwood	- A. Farina-Childs, Mr. J. Hold (Clerk)
Caerphilly	- Mrs. U. Newman, Mr. K. Williams (Clerk)
Darran Valley	-
Gelligaer	- Mrs. C. Mortimer (Clerk)
Llanbradach	- Mr. W.M. Thompson (Clerk)
Maesycwmmmer	-
Nelson	-
New Tredegar	-
Penyrheol, Treceenydd & Energlyn	- Mrs. A. Nash, Mrs. H. Treherne (Clerk)
Rhymney	- D.T. Williams
Rudry	-
Van	- Mr. J. O'Brien (Clerk)

Together with:

Jackie Garland (Service Manager - Social Inclusion), Brian Elliott (Senior Assistant Engineer)
Jonathon Jones (Scrutiny and Member Services Manager), Helen Morgan (Senior Committee
Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H.A. Andrews, A.G. Higgs,
Mrs. K. Presley, Mrs. D. Price, J.E. Roberts, A.S. Williams and R. Woodyatt, Community
Councillors Mrs. K. Halvey, C.R. Roberts, G. Roberts, Mrs. Choo Yin, Mrs. J.H. Rao,
Mrs. Miles, D. Woodman and Mrs. E. Macey and Mr. G. James, Mrs. S. Chick,
Mrs. G. Thomas, Mr. A. Hoskins (Clerks of Argoed, Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen,
Maesycwmmmer, Nelson Community/Town Councils respectively).

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor C.P. Mann was appointed Chairman of the Sub-Committee for the ensuing year. Members paid tribute to the way in which the outgoing Chairman, Community Councillor Clive Roberts had carried out his role during his term of Office.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

In his absence Community Councillor C. Roberts was appointed Chairman of the Sub Committee for the ensuing year.

3. WELCOME - COMMUNITY COUNCILLOR DENIS BARRY

The Chairman welcomed Community Councillor Denis Barry (Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen Community Council) to his first meeting of the Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee.

4. MINUTES - 18TH FEBRUARY 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th February 2009 (a copy had been sent to each member) were received and noted.

MATTERS ARISING

5. Revenue and Capital Budgets 2009/2010 (minute no. 8)

Reference was made to an announcement by the Welsh Assembly Government to unveil details of a £60 million investment fund to support the delivery of more effective and efficient public services as part of an 'invest to save' fund and a query was raised as to whether the county borough would be able to benefit from such an initiative.

Councillor Mann indicated that he was not aware of the announcement but once details have been received the options available to bring forward projects would be considered.

TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS LIAISON COMMITTEE

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

6. EXCLUSION DATA

Consideration was given to the report, which provided statistical and comparative information for exclusions, both fixed-term and permanent over a six-year period in primary and secondary schools and other educational settings within the county borough.

Ms. Jackie Garland (Service Manager - Social Inclusion) reported that the authority has demonstrated a commitment to reducing exclusions in all schools and educational settings and strategies are in place to promote the early identification of social, emotional and behavioural needs. The Authority demonstrates a commitment to early intervention and prevention by providing effective training, advice and support in relation to intervention strategies. She confirmed that the use of both managed moves and a very good range of specialist provision and alternative educational settings has helped to reduce the rate of exclusions. Rates of permanent exclusions have reduced significantly over a six-year period

in both primary and secondary (the total number of permanent exclusions has reduced from 55 in 2002/03 to 23 in 2007/08 and the total number of all fixed term exclusions has also decreased from 1365 in 2006/07 to 1054 in 2007/08).

Members were advised that there has been an overall downward trend in permanent exclusions at primary, and that exclusions in secondary was below the All Wales average in 2006/07 and noted the statistical information provided within the report. With regards to comparison data on exclusion from primary schools, Ms. Garland confirmed that the information is not available as this is not reported by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Specific reference was then made to the commitment to reduce all exclusions in secondary schools in Caerphilly and Ms. Garland detailed a number of alternative education strategies to prevent or avoid exclusion but pointed out that there will continue to be occasions when schools find it unavoidable to exclude and as such, it is unlikely that the country borough will experience zero exclusion. With regard to the School Improvement Agenda, staff within Learning, Education and Inclusion will continue to work closely with schools and other educational settings in order to raise standards and reduce exclusions.

Ms. Garland then responded to a number of questions raised over and above those which were considered during the course of the presentation (internal exclusion areas within schools to ensure continued integration, the development of 14-19 provision, drop in centres/tuition groups, specialist provision, packages of support and guidelines for exclusion).

Members thanked Ms. Garland for her informative presentation and for responding to questions and issues raised during the course of the debate. They were pleased to note the mechanisms that are in place to support schools in trying to reduce exclusions with the emphasis on meeting the identified needs of all children and young people.

7. SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL/ SAFE ROUTES IN COMMUNITIES

During the course of debate on this item, the Chairman, Councillor C.P. Mann had to leave the meeting. Councillor Mrs. Collins took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Mr. Brian Elliott (Senior Assistant Engineer) reported that the safe routes in communities initiative had been introduced in place of the safe routes to school programme and continues to focus on schools. It encourages the development of safe walking and cycling routes providing links within the communities to other key facilities, considering wider community benefits and greater social inclusion and improved community safety. The programme will give more children the opportunity to walk or cycle safely to school and will improve accessibility and encourage walking and cycling more generally within the community. The programme will deliver sustainable transport initiatives consistent with the Wales Transport Strategy.

Reference was made to the successful completion of the Rhymney Comprehensive safe routes to school initiative which was the first pilot scheme in 1999. The scheme had been phased over 3 years with a total scheme cost of £529k from Transport Grant funding. Risca Comprehensive/Crosskeys safe routes to school scheme commenced in April 2002 and Transport Grant awards of £580k over 3 years completed the scheme. Reference was also made to the improvement in sustainable transport links in New Tredegar and to the introduction of school travel improvement plans.

Mr. Elliott then detailed the current initiatives/priorities, the Newbridge safe route in the community (which closely links to the regeneration proposals for the town), the St. Cenydd safe route in communities and Blackwood Comprehensive school travel plan.

Mr. Elliott confirmed that each proposed scheme must meet the required aims and objectives before it is able to proceed (increase the number of pupils walking and cycling to school,

improve the safety of the school journey, improve accessibility and reduce community severance, improve the environment and regenerate the community, improve health and fitness and encourage healthy life styles, reduce congestion associated with the school run and promote sustainable transport initiatives).

Reference was then made to sources of funding, mainly transport grant set aside by the Welsh Assembly Government, for which bids have to be submitted and to a number of other initiatives including European finding. Mr. Elliott confirmed that any future programme remains dependent on the Welsh Assembly Government making funds available.

With regards to future commitments, Mr. Elliott outlined proposals for St Cenydd safe routes in communities (phases 2 and 3), Blackwood Comprehensive school travel plan (phases 2 and 3) and Bedwas (pending the outcome of the school travel plan).

Further details were request on the scheme for St. Cenydd and it was noted that the proposal will focus on improvements for walking and cycling to school and disabled access, road safety improvements, reducing congestion as part of the school run, improved sustainable links to Senghenydd/Abertridwr and the local communities of Hendredenny, Penyrheol and Trecenydd together with improved internal access/links within the school site, secure cycle parking and formalising vehicle access. The scheme will be programmed to be phased over 3 years. During the first phase, detailed design, together with the implementation of some initial improvements, had been progressed. Phases 2 and 3 over the next two/three years will enable the initiative to be completed.

With regards to the St. Cenydd scheme, a query was raised in relation to consultation with the community and it was noted that a Management Group had been established in the early stages of the project and, as the phases progress, further consultation would be undertaken with the relevant parties in order that every opportunity to maximise improvements as part of the initiative can be made within the budget available. A request was made for this to include representatives from all of the communities within the catchment area of the school.

Further clarification was sought on school travel plans generally and Mr. Elliott confirmed that they are a pre requisite of any bids and are prepared in liaison with the respective school to assess risks on school sites (traffic management on school sites, transport safety in and around school sites). It was noted that whist some may require substantial investments, minor improvements can be taken forward in conjunction with traffic management. A range of improvements are considered in response to developing School Travel Plans and the Authority's School Travel Plan Coordinator works closely with Education/Schools in developing the STP's.

Members thanked Mr. Elliott for his informative presentation and for responding to questions and issues raised during the course of the debate.

8. SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Mr. Jonathon Jones (Scrutiny and Member Services Manager) highlighted the content of the report which, following a enquiry on the opportunity to report/refer appropriate items to scrutiny committees, detailed the procedures which are available in order to achieve this and referred to future developments planned by the Welsh Assembly Government that will impact on referring issues to scrutiny.

Mr. Jones made reference to the agreed charter with community/town councils on exchanging information, liaison and consultation on specific subjects. This system of consultation is designed to ensure that community councils are consulted on important issues. Following consultation with external stakeholders scrutiny committees act as a final consultee before Cabinet is asked to make key decisions. Therefore, in practice a scrutiny committee will be made aware of any concerns that a community council may have before Cabinet is asked to

make a decision.

It was pointed out that whilst there are no formal arrangements for community/town councils to have the right to refer matters to scrutiny committees for consideration, there are a number of opportunities for community/town councils to engage with the scrutiny process (in some instances Community Councillors are also County Borough Councillors and can bring issues of concern to the attention of scrutiny committees in their capacity as a local member, community/town councils can contact their local member(s) or relevant chair to request that an issue is considered by a scrutiny committee and community council's can also request that a scrutiny committee consider an issue or, alternatively speak at a scrutiny committee meeting).

Mr. Jones then made reference to the agenda setting process and pointed out that managing the agenda of a scrutiny committee is challenging in terms of ensuring that the forward work programme does not exceed the committee's capacity. Members have the right to request reports to be considered by a scrutiny committee, however, they are encouraged to seek reports which are strategic in nature or focus on a subject have effect across the county borough. Whenever possible members are asked to take up local ward issues with officers in preference to requesting reports for scrutiny. Scrutiny committees are already facing capacity issues and the future policy drive of the Welsh Assembly Government will further increase the pressure on their agenda.

It was noted that the Welsh Assembly Government recently agreed to implement the Police and Justice Act 2006 with effect from October 2009 which will introduce a requirement for local authorities to scrutinise crime and disorder, including the power to require certain public bodies to attend committee meetings, submit evidence and information and respond to recommendations made by the committee. The new powers will also introduce 'Councillor Calls for Action' which empowers a local councillor to act together with their local community to make representations on a crime and disorder problem facing their area. The Welsh Assembly Government are also seeking the necessary legislative powers to increase the responsibilities of scrutiny committees to include the power to scrutinise public service providers that operate within the Council's boundaries

It was suggested that within the new model charter there should be included a requirement to formalise and encourage scrutiny committees to consult with town/community councils and it was noted that this would be taken into consideration at that time.

9. ROAD TRAFFIC SCHEMES/YSBYTY YSTRAD FAWR HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Details of the summary of schemes/works proposed for this financial year as outlined in the report were noted. It was requested that further details be provided on scheme which have been completed from section 106 Agreement/highway levy funding.

Members were advised that some of the budgets for this year have yet to be confirmed so the above is subject to change. Full details should be confirmed in the Divisional budget report that should be reported to the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee in July and will be forwarded for information at that time.

It was noted that a query had been raised prior to the meeting in relation to the proposed scheme at Taffy's Walk, Caerphilly and it was confirmed that at present the scheme is on hold pending land purchase issues. There is also a related issue of the air quality management that has recently been declared in the town and Officers are awaiting the outcome of some air quality modelling work to see if this will impact on the proposed schemes under the Caerphilly Basin development levy.

With regards to the current progress of the Phase 1 Hospital Highway Improvement Works, it was noted that the water main diversion has been laid and Welsh Water are carrying out commissioning tests with a view to make the system live toward the end of May 2009 and that construction has commenced on additional manholes on the trunk foul sewers adjacent to the eastern bridge abutment to satisfy Welsh Water/Dwr Cymru requirements, these works are programmed for completion mid-May 2009. Work is now underway on river bridge itself. Both the base and stem of the west abutment and the base of the central support are under construction and are progressing on programme. The next stage of works will involve construction of the central support column and the western bridge abutment.

Further traffic management arrangements to install narrow running lanes and create safe working space on the inner northbound on the A469 are programmed to be implemented in mid to late May. To install the traffic management arrangements will require some full and partial lane closures of the A469 over a weekend period similar to the arrangements implemented during the works to lay the water main across the A469. The actual dates of installation of the traffic management are to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 8.10 p.m.