



COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE /
TY PENALLTA, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY 2010 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

Community Councillor C. Roberts - Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, H.A. Andrews, J. Bevan, D. Bolter, D.G. Carter, M.H. Newman,
Mrs. D. Price, J.A. Pritchard, A.S. Williams, Mrs. L. Williams,

Aber Valley	- Mrs. E. P. Prendergast, Mr. J.S. Humphreys (Clerk)
Argoed	-
Bargoed	- Mrs J. Morgan
Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	- Mrs. S. Chick (Clerk)
Blackwood	-
Caerphilly	-
Darran Valley	- C.R. Roberts
Gelligaer	- Mrs. C. Mortimer (Clerk)
Llanbradach	- K. Chooyin
Maesycwmmmer	- Miss. J. Rao, Mrs. G. Thomas (Clerk)
Nelson	- Mrs. B. Miles
New Tredegar	-
Penyrheol, Tre cenydd and Energlyn	- Mrs. A. Nash, Mrs. H. Treherne (Clerk)
Rhymney	- D.T. Williams
Rudry	- Mrs. S. Chick (Clerk)
Van	-

Together with

Alison Palmer (Community Planning Coordinator), Tina McMahon (Senior Community Regeneration Co-ordinator), Marcus Lloyd (Highways Operation Group Manager), Steve Hodges (Network Operation Manager), Tom Llewellyn (Senior Assistant Engineer), Gareth Richards (Highways Maintenance Manager), Dean Clarke (Assistant Engineer), Helen Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. A. Collins, A.G. Higgs, C.P. Mann, Mrs. K. Presley and J.E. Roberts, Community Councillors Mrs. K. Halvey, D. Barry, A Farina-Childs, Mrs. U. Newman, A. Angel, D. Woodman, P. Blight, Mrs. E. Macey and Mr. G. James, Mr. J. Hold, Mr. K. Williams, Mr. W.M. Thompson, Mr. A. Hoskins and Mr. J. O'Brien (Clerks of Argoed, Bargoed, Caerphilly, Llanbradach, Nelson and Van Community/Town Councils respectively).

1. MINUTES - 18TH NOVEMBER 2009

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

MATTERS ARISING

2. Anti-Social Behaviour and the Tenancy Enforcement Section (minute no. 4)

It was agreed that there would be no requirement for the Tenancy Enforcement Officer to attend a future meeting.

3. Budgetary Issues/Financial Outlook 2010/2015 (minute no. 5)

It was noted that the budget proposals are to be presented to Special Council on 25th February 2010 and agreed that whilst the details are available on the website, for ease of reference a copy of the report would be circulated to each Clerk for information.

4. New Refuse Collection/Recycling Arrangements (minute no. 8)

As requested the concerns raised had been brought to the attention of the Head of Public Services who had advised that Crews will be reminded of the requirement to clear spillages and to replace bins from where they are taken. With regards to the costs of food waste bags, residents have been advised that any food waste could be wrapped in newspaper which is also composted during the process.

5. Decision Making When Repairing (Patching) Highways (minute no. 10)

It was confirmed that with regards to the responsibility of statutory undertakers, defective utility apparatus is brought to the attention of the relevant utility and the usual response time for them to carry out remedial action is 21 days. Emergency repairs can be carried out within two hours or twenty four hours if requested.

TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS LIAISON COMMITTEE

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

6. HOLIDAY SCHEME CO-ORDINATOR

Alison Palmer (Community Planning Coordinator) and Tina McMahon (Senior Community Regeneration Co-ordinator) attended to give an update on the progress made by the Holiday Co-ordinator.

Alison Palmer confirmed that the purpose of the Holiday Scheme Co-ordinator is to strategically plan holiday activities for children and young people by making existing services work better together, pooling and re-distributing existing funding and resources, including staff time to suit the needs and provide better value for money. As part of this process a mapping audit exercise has been undertaken to collate information on each ward in order that the current holiday activities available can be logged and any gaps in provision be identified. This will seek to sustain the holiday provision currently available and extend the choice. Unfortunately, as the Holiday Scheme Co-ordinator has been away from the Office for a considerable period of time there have not been sufficient staff resources available to collate

and map the information collected and progress the initiate. This is now being addressed and, as soon as a person is in post, those who have provided information as part of the mapping exercise will be contacted.

It was confirmed that the role is to strategically plan the holiday activities for children and young people up to the age of twenty five years, for all the school holiday periods. It was noted that holiday activities themselves could range from recreational sessions such as dance, sports or pottery, to freely chosen play opportunities at a play scheme setting. A query was raised with regards to the age range specified and it was confirmed that specific schemes would have prescribed age ranges and that the age group would not be relevant for all schemes.

Discussion ensued on the role of the Co-ordinator and the practical assistance and support that can be offered to specific Groups who provide such activities. Alison Palmer and Tina McMahon responded to a number of questions raised over and above those which were considered during the course of their presentation.

It was noted that it was intended to arrange a Practitioners Day towards the end of April in order to bring together interested parties and proposed that two/three nominated representatives from the Liaison Committee be invited to attend at that time.

Members thanked Alison and Tina for their informative presentation and for responding to questions and issues raised during the course of the debate and welcomed the opportunity for representatives take part in the Practitioners Day.

7. CARBON REDUCTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ON THE STREET LIGHTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Steve Hodges (Network Operation Manager) and Tom Llewellyn (Senior Assistant Engineer) attended to give an overview on the approved carbon reduction strategy and highlighted the consultation process being undertaken with regards to street lighting. The survey conducted was aimed at providing a wide opportunity for all the Authority's residents and stakeholders to have a say in the way in which the Authority tackles its carbon reduction strategy.

It was pointed out that the government is intending to make substantial charges against local authorities who are not reducing their carbon footprint. The council has set a target of 45% reduction by 2019, street lighting makes up 27% of the footprint and therefore can have a significant impact on this reduction target. It is recognised that any decrease in carbon could not be implemented without street lighting reduction playing a part.

Reference was made to the proposals contained within the consultation document (which focuses on seeking an indication of the public's preferred option for how long and where lights are left on in the county borough and clarification was given on the implications for whichever is selected:-

Option 1 - Between 12 midnight and 5.30 a.m on all main roads connecting towns and villages including industrial areas.

Option 2 - Permanently along all main roads connecting towns and villages including industrial areas.

Option 3 - Between 12 midnight and 5.30 a.m everywhere except junctions

Option 4 - Between 12 midnight and 5.30 a.m in residential areas and permanently on all main roads connecting towns and villages including industrial areas.

There then followed a debate on the proposals and reference was made to the potential increase in crime and anti social behaviour if the lights were turned off in residential areas. It was pointed out that if option 1 or 2 is selected there will be no change to street lighting within residential areas. With regards to other concerns raised it was clarified that whichever option is selected lighting at junctions will remain unchanged as required by legislation. It has also been agreed that that no streetlights that assist in the monitoring of CCTV cameras would be considered to be turned off.

Reference was also made the omission of a 'do nothing' option and it was confirmed that the strategy is to reduce carbon and, as street lighting is a significant contributor to this, this option was not provided. This consultation is about how we can reduce our carbon footprint. Street lighting is a substantial element of that footprint and therefore the consultation is seeking the public's opinion on which option to reduce this footprint would be their preference. No change would have no impact on the footprint and the Authority would find it inherently difficult to meet its carbon reduction commitment without street lighting providing a contribution.

Members then raised on the consultation exercise that had been undertaken. It was confirmed that a borough wide consultation had taken place with the questionnaire included in Newline which is distributed to every property in the county borough. Advisory leaflets were also printed and placed in various office locations and 4 libraries, where the public could also access touch screen facilities set up to complete an electronic version of the questionnaire. Arrangements are also in place for votes to be made via the Internet and the viewpoint panel. The consultation deadline had been extended from 5th to 19th February 2010 to allow as many interested parties as possible to respond.

Once the consultation is concluded on 19th February 2010, the data gathered will be used to prepare a report considering the options set out in the survey and by default the do nothing option will be factored into the debate. Any decision to change street lighting policy will be a Council decision, and therefore county borough Councillors, through the normal democratic process, will have opportunities to consider a status quo position alongside the options contained in the survey and with the benefit of the results of the public consultation exercise.

The Chairman thanked both Steve Hodges and Tom Llewellyn for attending and for responding to the issues raised by the Members.

8. WINTER SERVICE PLAN

Marcus Lloyd (Highways Operation Group Manager) referred to the winter service plan which detailed the Council's responsibilities, strategy/policy and operational procedures in respect of the management and maintenance of the highway infrastructure network during the defined winter maintenance period, covering precautionary salting operations and clearance of ice and snow.

The borough council aims to provide a winter service which, as far as possible, facilitates the safe movement of traffic and keeps to a minimum delays and accidents caused by adverse winter weather conditions. In practice this is achieved by taking precautionary measures to pre-salt certain routes, taking account of weather forecast and local observations. In order for essential goods and services to be maintained, priority is primarily given to the 'A' and 'B' routes (the core transportation network). Members noted that 1100 km of highway has to be maintained and that 480 km of the highway gritted (43% of county borough highways gritted compared to a national average of 37%).

The extended periods of inclement weather throughout the country depleted previous fully stocked reserves of salt and there was a widespread national shortage of rock salt for treating highways. As a result from early January, Central Government took control of the supply

chain for salt distribution. In order to conserve critical salt supplies, Officers decided not to refill salt bins/salt tips, reduce the spread rate of salt in marginal circumstance and only salt the core critical network and patrol the remainder, monitoring for any dangerous formations of ice. At present there is enough stock for three days gritting.

After listening to the concerns raised with regards to gritting frequency during the inclement weather, Mr. Lloyd confirmed that each of the vehicles would take approximately three hours to complete its route and are fitted with trackers so it is possible to determine their specific location at any given time. As previously stated priority was primarily given to the 'A' and 'B' routes and snow was cleared from non-priority highways as soon as possible thereafter. However, when notified, there were certain circumstances when higher priorities took precedence (medical emergencies, hospitals, surgeries, OAP accommodation and funerals) and hand gritting was undertaken in some areas as appropriate. Unfortunately there were occasions where public demands could not be met.

Mr. Lloyd then responded to a number of questions raised over and above those which were considered during the course of the presentation (including the use of Pontllynn depot, the centralisation of the service at Penmaen depot, secondment of staff to assist in the clearance of snow) and confirmed that as a result of a severe winter this year, it has been decided that a comprehensive review of the Winter Service Plan is required. There has been a debrief undertaken with Officers and a seminar is scheduled with Members to detail the experiences, actions taken at that time and the lessons learned. The revised document will be the subject of consultation with community/town councils as in previous years and the comment made during the course of the meeting would also be taken into account. The new plan is to be produced in readiness for the winter period 2010/2011.

Members thanked Mr. Lloyd for his informative report and for responding to questions and issues raised during the course of the debate. They recognised that the works undertaken during the extremely difficult period had enabled key and frontline services to be maintained.

9. EFFECTS OF SEVERE WEATHER ON HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Gareth Richards (Highways Maintenance Manager) detailed the content of the report and highlighted the effects that the period of severe weather has had on the road surfaces which has resulted in an increase in the number of potholes. He explained that probably the most damaging process that creates and accelerates pothole formation is that of the 'freeze, thaw' process from ice or snow, and if left, potholes can deteriorate, increase in size and affect other parts for the road surface.

Mr. Richards detailed the highway maintenance policy (planned safety inspections, non scheduled inspections and emergency response and pointed out that the costs of repairing the carriageway potholes within the county borough was approximately £650,000 for 2007-08. However, following this latest period of inclement weather it is envisaged that this figure would surpass £1,000,000 for 2009-10.

As a result of the severe weather, there is a national problem with a significant increase in potholes. The Welsh Assembly Government has recognised this problem and allocated £2.75M to be distributed to local authorities. The county borough has been allocated approximately £130K, however, WAG has also reduced the road maintenance grant from £15M to £5M (£750K to £250K for 2010/2011 in Caerphilly). All available resources have been redeployed to fill potholes.

In normal circumstances Officers work to a set criteria with regards to intervention levels for repairing a pothole. What the inspector has to do when on site is make a decision on the depth of the defect and if that defect is on or above the criteria. There will be times when an inspector will mark up one defect for repair but leave another defect in the same area until a

later date because it does not meet the criteria. There are tens of thousands of small blemishes in the carriageways and footways that the public may deem to be a pothole, but that blemish may be well within the criteria and not action a repair. However, if several defects are present in one location then the inspector would use their discretion and experience as well as the criteria to make a decision on what defects need to be repaired.

However, the volume of potholes currently being identified for repair has obviously significantly increased. As such, additional resources have been temporarily employed and others reallocated in order to undertake these urgent repairs. This will obviously have a detrimental effect on the capital works programmes for footway and carriageway resurfacing due to the reallocation of the resources. This reallocation does not only apply to the workforce but also to the budgets, where consideration to remove funding out of the capital budget and into the highway maintenance budget will be required.

Reference was made to the process for the repair of the highway and Mr. Richards detailed both the hot and cold patching process and to the marking of those which need to be repaired. Mr. Richards reported that in view of the number of potholes that have appeared there has been a need to review the criteria and how they are treated. When the Team is on site undertaking patching works they are able to repair other potholes that are in the vicinity rather than mark them for future attention. There is no easy solution to remove the threat posed by potholes. All efforts are made to mitigate the risk posed by them by ensuring that the highway inspection and maintenance regime are adequate but unfortunately the inclement weather has a dramatic effect on the number that appear and whilst every effort is being made to reduce them, unfortunately public demands cannot be met.

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

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10. SALE OF ISLWYN BOROUGH TRANSPORT

Although this item was not on the agenda, as an exception, the Chairman allowed the matter to be raised.

Reference was made to the sale of IBT and a request was made for details of any services which may have been affected as a result of the sale and whether the new owners would be providing exactly the same service. (one of the members mentioned that some of the buses were no longer stopping at certain of the recognised bus stops).

In noting that the next meeting is not due until May it was agreed that the details be sent to each Clerk.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm