



COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE
ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER 2010 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

D. Bolter, D.G. Carter, M.H. Newman, J.E. Roberts, Mrs. L. Williams

Aber Valley

Argoed

Bargoed

Bedwas Trethomas & Machen

Blackwood

Caerphilly

Darran Valley

Gelligaer

Llanbradach

Maesycwmmmer

Nelson

New Tredegar

Penyrheol, Trecenydd, Energlyn

Rhymney

Rudry

Van

Mrs. E.P. Prendergast, Mr. J S Humphreys (Clerk)

G. Lewis

D.T. Davies, Mrs. L. Tams (Clerk)

Mrs. U. Newman, Mr. K. Williams (Clerk)

Mrs. C. Mortimer (Clerk)

Mr. W. M. Thomson (Clerk)

Miss. J. Rao

Mrs. G. Davies

Mrs. E. Macey, Mr. J. O'Brien (Clerk)

Together with:

C. Campbell (Transport Engineering Manager), Sergeant C. Williams and Inspector W. Yandle (Planning Team - Gwent Police), T. Evans (Census Area Manager), P. Evans (Head of Information, Communications and Technology Services), N. Scammell (Head of Corporate Finance and Procurement), P. Gomer (Assistant Director for Community and Leisure), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. E. M. Aldworth, H.A. Andrews, J. Bevan, Mrs. A. Collins, C.P. Mann, Mrs. K. Presley, Mrs. D. Price, J.A. Pritchard and A.S. Williams, Community Councillors Mrs. R. Pritchard, C. R. Roberts, A. Angel, S. Taviner, D. Woodman, Mrs. A. Nash, Mr. P. Blight and J. Hold, G. Williams, Mrs. G. Thomas, A. Hoskins, Mrs. H. Treherne and Mrs. S. Chick (Clerks of Blackwood, Darran Valley/Rhymney, Maesycwmmmer, Nelson, Penyrheol, Trecenydd and Energlyn, Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen/ Rudry Community Town Council's respectively).

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

In the absence of both the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Councillor D.G. Carter was moved to the Chair for the duration of the meeting.

3. MINUTES - 15TH SEPTEMBER 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2010 were received and noted.

Arising from minute 9, 21st Century Schools Stakeholder Group, Community Councillor Garry Lewis wished it noted that due to his attendance at this meeting he had been unable to attend the meeting of the Group earlier in the evening and requested that in future they not be arranged at the same time. It was noted that it was difficult to cater for the diaries of all representatives on the Group but that the comments made would be drawn to the attention of the Director of Education.

4. PUBLIC EVENTS PLANNING - EVENTS SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP

Mr. Clive Campbell (Transport Engineering Manager) referred to the establishment of the Event Safety Advisory Group set up to offer guidance and support to event organisers to plan for and undertake successful, safe events for the public within the County Borough. He outlined the main information that is required by the Group and the issues that an organiser is required to consider prior to arranging an event to ensure it is safe and meets all legislative, legal and operational requirements. The Group acts as the first point of reference for all those who are intending to organise a public event, on or off the highway. It will provide advice and guidance regarding the specific areas of responsibility for both the organisers and the other agencies involved and also refer to aspects of best practice for the information of the organisers.

Mr. Campbell detailed the procedures required to temporarily close a road for such events and the necessity to undertake a risk assessment and put in place appropriate safety measures. He referred to the appendices attached to the report which detailed the protocol and terms of reference of the Group, an event notification form for event organisers to complete as part of the event planning and preparation and event planning guidance for event organisers that gives initial guidance to them on the issues they need to consider as part of the planning and preparation. The completion of such a form assists in identifying what licenses, permits, certificates, orders etc, may be required to enable a public event to proceed legally and safely. These documents were developed having considered existing practices in neighbouring local authorities and following consultation with external emergency organisations and internal service areas.

Sergeant Williams explained that in general public perception is that the Police are the lead agency for approving all public events, including those that take place on the highway. However, the Police have no authority to either approve or ban such events and in fact, Police powers to regulate traffic for planned events are extremely limited. Furthermore, the Police have no general duty to preserve public safety at any public event, except where there are imminent or likely threats to life. Legal opinion suggests that the responsibility for public safety rests with the organisers of an event, the owners of the land on which it takes place and possibly the Local Authority if the event takes place on a road. However, other persons or agencies who undertake actions regarding public safety at an event may assume a duty of care and, therefore, also become responsible.

It was explained that the reason for the change in Police practice dates back to a change in the Association of Chief Police Officers policy in 1999 that Gwent Police decided to implement last year. This policy standardises the Police approach to all organised events staged in a public place and on all public highways. It creates an environment where, through

consultation and partnership, public events will continue to take place. A greater awareness of the individual responsibility of the organisers and those of the other agencies involved has emerged, which will ensure a more focused approach by all concerned resulting in a better planned, safer and more resilient event. In essence it is inappropriate for the Police to use their emergency powers under the Town and Police Clauses Act 1847 to undertake road closures for planned events on the highway. They advise that such closures should be undertaken via local authorities utilising their powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Thus the police will support but will no longer use their uniformed officers to close roads for such events on the highway. As such, the Council must utilise its traffic power for roads to be closed before they can deal with any such event.

Sargent Williams and Inspector Yendle confirmed that the police will continue to support and attend events but their attendance will be based on the discharge of their core responsibilities and community engagement. Uniformed officers will no longer be used to close roads. They confirmed that along with a number of other agencies a representative of Gwent Police does sit on the Event Safety Advisory Group, to offer advise and provide appropriate assistance for anyone planning an event.

5. 2011 CENSUS

Mr. Terry Evans (Census Area Manager) attended to highlight the importance of the 2011 census and to detail the role that the community/town councils can undertake in promoting the significance of the data collecting exercise. He reported that Parliament passed the Census Act in 1800 and the first official census of England and Wales was taken on 10 March 1801. Since then a census has been taken every ten years (except in 1941 during World War II). He confirmed that the answers would be turned into statistics about the community and groups within it. Personal census information will be kept confidential for 100 years and is not shared with anyone else, including any other government bodies or department.

Mr. Evans advised that census statistics are vital to help plan for the future and are used to:-

- provide accurate information on numbers of people, where they live, their characteristics and their needs - this helps government decide the allocation of resources to public services;
- help central and local government to plan local services, including education, healthcare and transport;
- benchmark and update the statistical base for population and households for use across all sectors;
- provide national, consistent insights and contextual information for small areas and population groups;
- support public policy development and evaluation.

It was noted that a tool kit has been launched to ensure that local residents are aware that the census will be taking place next year and that they complete and return their forms following census day, 27th March 2011. Press articles, TV advertisements, leaflets and information on websites will all be used in the run up to the census. The form can be completed on line (with an internet security code) or returned by post in a pre paid envelope. Assistance will also be available to those who have difficulty in completing the form.

Mr. Evans referred to the recruitment of staff and the range of temporary part time and full time jobs which are available associated with the census activity, from supervisory roles to general collectors (which had been forwarded to all Clerks earlier in the year) and encouraged the representatives to promote the vacancies within the community.

In closing Mr. Evans reiterated that the census is about counting numbers and types of people so that statisticians can identify and analyse trends. All local councils rely on census population statistics to define the needs of their community and help make sure they get

enough government funding to serve it. As such, the census needs to include everyone, and every householder must, by law, complete and return a 2011 Census questionnaire. Those who do not respond could face prosecution.

TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL'S LIAISON COMMITTEE

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

6. Closure of Cash Offices/Customer First Strategy

Mr. P. Evans (Head of Information and Citizen Engagement) attended to give an update on his original report which had been shared with community/town councils as part of the consultation process. He referred to the number of responses received from community/town councils, Trade Unions, staff and community partnerships as part of that process which will be incorporated within the final report to be presented to Members for consideration.

Mr. Evans first referred to proposals for the provision of an alternative service to the cashiering function to enable payment via a swipe card at a number of locations including Post Offices. A query was raised on the use of the swipe card generally, including the locations that it can be utilised. Mr. Evans advised that the card is an electronic means of payment that allows cash/cheque collection at a significant number of locations, including Post Offices, Petrol Stations and Local Shops (i.e. PayZone Outlets). The card is issued from a bank via the Authority and has a unique identifier to the individuals account. A number of Authorities offer this type of payment method. He detailed the advantages of using this as an alternative to the cashiering function and advised that the introduction of the system would require a transitional period where for up to 6 months cash offices remain open to promote the swipe card and ensure cash income is unaffected. There would likely be a lead in time in any case to enable the redeployment of up to 8 staff albeit that there would be a need to revisit the existing housing benefit transactions. He advised that should the proposal be acceptable there would be the removal of all or part of the cashiering function.

With regards to the customer first strategy, Mr. Evans referred to the report that had been presented to Cabinet on 5th October 2010 and had been circulated to each community/town council as part of the consultation process. The report had detailed a proposed review of the strategy and a new approach to providing services utilising new technology and also expanding on the current services provided by the existing Call Centre and the Council's web site and DigiTV channel. Responses received as part of the consultation process will be incorporated within the final report to be presented to Members for consideration.

The report advised that One-Stop Shops are currently located at Ty Penallta, Blackwood town centre, Pontlottyn together with cashiering, plus a limited service offering at Bargoed, Newbridge, Risca and Caerphilly. It had been planned that at Risca, Bargoed and Caerphilly, the existing cash offices would be transferred to a combined Customer First/Library provision when new development opportunities arose and until this review, plans had been made to deliver this policy. The report proposed a revision of this strategy by closing the current facilities at Blackwood and Pontlottyn and not developing specific customer service areas within the new library projects. Face-to-face services will be continued at Ty Penallta, thus enabling this style of interaction between the public and officers to take place. Following the closure of the cash office at Pontllanfraith, the reception area will be improved to enable visitors to that office, who are meeting officers located at that site, to be dealt with appropriately.

Mr. Evans advised that at the main library sites, librarians would be trained in handling many of the requests currently handled by Customer First staff. More complex queries will be dealt with by contacting the call centre. There will be access available using PC's at each site for a person to forward a query, via the website or by using a free phone service, enabling people to speak to a member of staff at the call centre. It is proposed that two staff initially are made available from current resources to provide a peripatetic service, travelling either to an appointment at a convenient library location, or when necessary a person's home. As this reactive service is developed, it is anticipated that these appointment style meetings can include officers from the services, perhaps where travelling to an office by a member of the public is restricted.

A query was raised as to the disruption this will cause to existing users of the library and it was noted that the layout of the premises will be taken into account with a room being designated to enable a call to be made privately. It would also be available for confidential exchanges, or if an appointment is made with an officer.

Mr. Evans confirmed that the report had been considered at the Policy and Resources Committee and had been deferred for further consideration. He advised that comments received as part of the consultation process, including those raised by community/town councils, both in writing and during the course of the meeting, will be presented to Members for consideration. It was confirmed that a copy of that report would be circulated to the community/town councils once it is available.

7. COMMUNITY CENTRES

Mr. Peter Gomer (Assistant Director Community and Leisure) attended to give an update on the information he had presented to the last meeting and the content of the report subsequently prepared which had been shared with community/town councils as part of the consultation process.

He reminded those present of the community asset transfer initiative which suggests that certain of the county boroughs existing assets, including land buildings and other structures used for a variety of social, community and public purposes, could be transferred to the ownership of community and/or other voluntary sector management who would continue to deliver the service.

He reported that he has attended a number of meetings with both the community/town councils and community centre management committees as part of the process and, whilst some have indicated that they would not be in a position to take the initiative forward, others have requested further details in order that they can make an informed decision.

He advised that any management committee or community/town council agreeing to take over their community centre would be fully supported during the transition process and where possible, repairs to make buildings suitable for transfer would be an option for consideration. The county borough would need to invest into the buildings to be transferred and to ensure the facilities meet statutory health and safety requirements.

Members were reminded that the closing of centres was only one of the options for discussion and it would need to be determined as to whether it could be declared surplus to service requirements. It would be for individual community/town councils to determine whether they would wish to seek the transfer of the centre and it was anticipated that should a centre be transferred it would continue to be managed through the present community centre management process.

Mr. Gomer reiterated that discussions are at an early stage and the views expressed by the community/town councils will form an important part of the process of change. As such, he would be more than happy to work with any of the community/town councils who may wish to participate in the delivery of the service.

8. MOBILE LIBRARIES

Mr. Gomer advised that his report on mobile libraries which had been shared with the community/town councils as part of the consultation process had been considered and approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 19th October 2010.

Members had been informed of the options under consideration with regard to the future viability of the community and specialist library link service and sought views on the removal of the library service and the increase usage of the library link to those in residential nursing homes and to those individuals and communities particularly disadvantaged by immobility.

The mobile library service has been the subject of a number of reviews and reports in recent years, the most recent recommending that whilst mobile libraries were the preferred method of service delivery to remove communities that the fleet of vehicles, in service at that time, was not sustainable in their present form or designation.

Cabinet had subsequently agreed to extend the current mobile library vehicle lease until December 2010 and that the two new 5.5 ton specialist 'Library Link' mobile vehicles will come into service from November 2010.

Mr. Gomer advised that community mobile library customers will be provided with information highlighting their nearest static library site, its services, and hours of opening, well in advance of the vehicle being withdrawn. All present mobile library vehicle users will be informed of the new criteria for eligibility to access the new library link vehicles.

9. REVIEW OF CHARTER

It was noted that comments on the review of the charter had been collated and considered at the meeting of the Town and Community Council Liaison Committee on 19th October 2010 where, subject to the changes identified at that time there had been general consensus that its content be approved.

However since that date further views have been expressed and it was agreed that these should also be taken into account as part of the process. As such it was agreed that this item be deferred and comments be sought from community/town councils in order that they can be collated for consideration at the next meeting of the Town and Community Council Liaison Committee scheduled for 19th January 2011.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN