



COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB - COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE/
TY PENALLTA, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 23RD FEBRUARY 2011 AT 7.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor C.P. Mann - Chairman

Councillors:

H.A. Andrews, J. Bevan, Mrs. A. Collins, D.G. Carter, M.H. Newman, Mrs. K. Presley,
J.A. Pritchard, Mrs. L. Williams

Community/Town Council Representatives

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| Aber Valley | - Mrs. E. P. Prendergast, Mr. J.S. Humphreys (Clerk) |
| Argoed | - |
| Bargoed | - |
| Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen | - Mrs. S. Chick (Clerk) |
| Blackwood | - |
| Caerphilly | - Mr. K. Williams (Clerk) |
| Darran Valley | - |
| Draethen, Waterloo and Rudry | - Mrs. S. Chick (Clerk) |
| Gelligaer | - A. Angel |
| Llanbradach | - S. Taviner, Mr. W.M. Thompson (Clerk) |
| Maesycwmmmer | - Miss. J. Rao |
| Nelson | - Mrs. G. Davies |
| New Tredegar | - |
| Penyrheol, Trecenydd and Energlyn | - Mrs. A. Nash, Mrs. H. Treherne (Clerk) |
| Rhymney | - |
| Van | - Mrs. E. Macey |

Together with

Tony White (Waste Strategy and Operations Manager), H.C. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, D. Bolter, Mrs. D. Price, J.E. Roberts and A.S. Williams, Community Councillors Mrs. U. Newman, D. Woodman, P. Blight, C.R. Roberts, D.T. Davies and Ms G. Gale, Mrs. L. Tams, Mr. J. Hold, Mrs. C. Mortimer, Mrs. G. Thomas, Mr. A. Hoskins and Mr. J. O'Brien (Clerks of Bargoed, Blackwood, Gelligaer, Maesycwmmmer, Nelson and Van Community/Town Councils respectively).

2. MR. JACK HUMPHREYS - ABER VALLEY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Chairman advised Members that Jack was due to retire after 18 years of working as the Clerk to Aber Valley Community Council Committee and that this was to be the last meeting of the Sub-Committee which he would attend.

Members paid tribute to the valuable contributions he has made to the Sub-Committee over the many years and for always dealing with matters in a professional and helpful manner. They expressed their appreciation for the work he has carried out during his lengthy period of office.

All present concurred that it had been a pleasure and privilege to have worked with him and wished him every success and happiness for the future and a long and happy retirement.

3. MINUTES - 17TH NOVEMBER 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2010 (a copy had been sent to each member) were received and noted. There were no matters arising therefrom.

TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS LIAISON COMMITTEE

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

4. WASTE COLLECTIONS DURING SEVERE INCLEMENT WEATHER

Consideration was given to the report which advised of the disruption caused to waste collections services during the recent inclement weather, the arrangements to clear backlogs and the rationale for co-mingling the various waste fractions.

Mr. T. White (Waste Strategy and Operations Manager) detailed the existing waste collection system, the difficulties faced when severe inclement weather occurs and the methods employed by the Authority to safely and efficiently deal with the backlog which subsequently arises. He advised that every day the county borough utilises 30 vehicles to undertake approximately 40,000 waste collections including food, refuse and recycling.

As a result of the severe weather conditions there were several days collections missed (as it had been unsafe to use the heavy vehicles on snow and ice. During the periods of inclement weather all available resources from Public Services worked with colleagues from Highways to undertake snow and ice clearance from OAP complexes, town centres and other areas that required improved accessibility.

Experience from last year showed that residents were often frustrated if it was only possible to get 1 or 2 of the vehicles to their properties there leaving behind 1 or 2 waste fractions either due to some drivers undertaking a risk assessment and determining that it was still unsafe to access certain streets still covered in ice/snow or different vehicles turning up at different times of the day when perhaps earlier or later in the day the street was/was not deemed safe to access. It was therefore concluded that it was not possible to maintain separate collections (sending 3 vehicles into a street to collect the different waste fractions).

Mr. White advised that crews were required to keep records of all properties missed during the periods of inclement weather and as soon as there were spare vehicles and crews available (and they could safely access the streets) they were all deployed to undertake collections to clear the backlog as quickly as possible. Unfortunately the days of missed collections were followed by repeat events of snow in subsequent weeks and a slow thaw with

ice remaining on the ground for prolonged periods which made it unsafe for heavy vehicles to enter many areas to undertake collections. He reiterated that there were systems in place to try and get collections back on track as soon as possible after the periods of inclement weather but advised that in the future it may be necessary to instigate co-mingled collections if there is a backlog to clear.

Members were advised that what is apparent from these circumstances, and has been enforced by Health and Safety Executive guidance, is that resolution of missed collections is not an emergency service and clearance of the backlog should not be at the expense of compromising safety. Normal collections should only be resumed when it is safe to operate the large vehicles on side roads and in rear lanes and Officers must have due regard for the health, safety and welfare of both crews and members of the public.

Members thanked Mr. White for his informative report and noted that whilst it was not possible to collect on certain days the staff involved had undertake snow and ice clearance from OAP complexes, town centres and other areas that required improved accessibility. They accepted that for health and safety reasons it would not always be possible to undertake collections in such conditions and that backlogs would be cleared once conditions allowed. They were complementary of the actions that had been taken and in paying tribute to the staff for undertaking their role in such conditions recognised that on some occasions such joint collections will be necessary.

5. WINTER SERVICE PLAN

The report advised that the main purpose of the plan is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice. It explained the Council's responsibilities, strategy/policy and operational procedures in respect to 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.

Members were advised that the aim of the county borough is 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 1150 km of highway has to be maintained and 486 km of the highway gritted (43% of county borough highways gritted compared to a national average of 37%). Clearance of snowfall and/or build-ups of ice on the remainder of the network, depends on priorities during adverse weather conditions.

Details of the salt supply, kept at three strategic locations, the gritting arrangements and the amendment to normal practice during the recent exceptional snowfall were outlined. The decision on whether to carry out salting is based on regularly updated specialist forecasts and monitoring from the Met office. It was noted that details of the winter road treatment and salted road network is available to view on the website. It was confirmed that some community/town councils have purchased grit bins through the Council (at approved locations) and it was agreed that details be forwarded to each Clerk.

It was pointed out that during such periods of weather there will be occasions where public demands cannot be met. Whilst the county borough will endeavour to clear snow from non-priority highways as soon as possible, there will be certain circumstances when higher priorities will take precedence (e.g. medical emergencies, hospitals, surgeries, OAP accommodation and funerals). As previously stated priority will primarily be given the 'A' and 'B' routes and snow cleared from non-priority highways as soon as possible thereafter.

Following the recent severe weather event, a further major review of the plan will be undertaken during the summer. From this debrief all feedback will be documented and will be built into the review of service delivery and the production of the Winter Maintenance Plan for 2011/2012 which will be the subject of consultation with community/town councils as in previous years.

6. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

The report advised that the main purpose of highway maintenance is to maintain the highway network for the safe and convenient movement of people and goods. The main objectives of highway maintenance are to deliver a safe and serviceable network, taking into account the need to contribute to the wider objectives of asset management, integrated transport, corporate policy and continuous improvement.

It was explained that patching and cyclic maintenance operations are planned and reactive treatments are of relatively small defects in the road surface such as potholes or cracks. Potholes form because asphalt road surfaces eventually crack under the heat of the day and the constant stresses of traffic. These cracks allow snow and rainwater to seep into the underlying dirt and gravel. During cold winter nights, this water freezes and expands. Some of the dirt and gravel is pushed out as a result, leaving a hole when the water eventually melts. Drivers continue to drive over these unseen holes, putting even more stress on the thin asphalt layer covering them. Eventually, the asphalt layer over these divots collapses, creating the traffic hazards potholes.

The patching repair technique can be used to prolong the life of a road avoiding the need for more expensive resurfacing treatments. Repairs to cracks and small holes in the surface are vital to maintain the integrity of the overall structure. These are important to ensure the surface forms a seal against water penetration that may damage the road foundation. There are occasions when temporary repairs are made to keep the road surface safe with a permanent repair following at a later date, usually as part of a programme of similar work. This makes the process more cost effective. 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

Reference was made to the highway maintenance policy (planned safety inspections, non schedules inspections and emergency responses) and it was noted that within this policy carriageways/footways are classified. Within this classification document the type of highway, routine inspection intervals and defect criteria are listed. The county borough has an annual highway maintenance budget of £1.4 million over an 1100km highway network which relates to approx £0.23p /sq.m. Following the latest bout of inclement weather in December 2010, in excess of 220 emergency response repairs have been carried out in addition to routine highway maintenance and an additional £400k has been directed into carriageway resurfacing resulting in 31,000sq.m of treated highway

It was noted that whilst it is very difficult to apply a stringent set of guidelines when repairing highways due to the varying condition of the network, the safety of the highway user is at the forefront of every decision. It also has to be appreciated that in the current economic climate and the demands placed on the highway budget, unfortunately there will be occasions where public demands cannot be met. Whilst there is a continual drive to try and minimise the reactive works in order to maximise the planned carriageway resurfacing works which provide a better longer term resolution, unfortunately due to the financial restrictions that are apparent, difficult decisions have to be made in order to prioritise which roads should be taken forward on the planned maintenance programme each year.

7. REVIEW OF CHARTER

It was noted that the comments received on the review of the charter had been collated and considered at the meeting of the Town and Community Council Liaison Committee on 19th January 2011 and that there had been no further comments forthcoming. In order to ensure that all of the views have been taken into account it was agreed that the charter be revised with the proposed changes previously identified and circulated for consideration at the next meeting of the Town and Community Council Liaison Committee scheduled for 20th April 2011 in order that feedback can be presented at the Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee on 25th May 2011

8. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

It was noted that should a community councillor wish to seek dispensation to enable them to take part in the debate on an item in which they may have an interest it would be necessary to contact the Monitoring Officer to discuss the specific aspects of the request to determine whether it is necessary to see dispensation from the Standards Committee. It was agreed that further information, including the circumstances in which dispensations may be granted, be forwarded to each Clerk for information.

The meeting closed at 8pm