



## VOLUNTARY SECTOR SUB-COMMITTEE - 20TH JUNE 2012

**SUBJECT: DIGEST OF CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF GAVO**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report from Caerphilly CBC contains a digest of committee reports containing items of interest for the voluntary sector. If there are reports of particular interest Members can request the committee report author to attend a future meeting of the Voluntary Sector Committee to prepare a further report/take questions.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 A quarterly summary of Caerphilly CBC committee reports selected as they contain areas of interest for the voluntary sector.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 All Caerphilly CBC reports relate to aspects of the Caerphilly County Borough Community Strategy.

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 The following reports have been selected as having particular interest on voluntary sector issues (note Members can request a full hard copy of any of the reports included) :-

#### **4.2 POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 17TH APRIL 2012 - DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF APPLICATIONS**

The following application for rate relief has been determined by the Head of Corporate Finance under delegated powers (Scheme of Delegation Item 5.2(t) refers). In arriving at her determination the Head of Corporate Finance has been guided by Council policy laid down by the former Finance Committee on 14 February 1996 and 30 April 1996, together with Welsh Office criteria for considering such applications.

#### **Bryncynon Community Revival Strategy Limited**

The applicant is a registered charity who has therefore been awarded 80% mandatory rate relief in accordance with statutory provisions. Their application is in respect of the organisation's café and premises situated within the confines of the new library building at Hanbury Road, Bargoed.

The organisation's main objectives are stated as being:-

To provide facilities in the interests of the advancement of education and social welfare with the purpose of improving the conditions and quality of life for residents of Bryncynon in the Rhondda Cynon Taff Unitary Authority Area.

The organisation states that the operation of the café at Hanbury Road, Bargoed particularly benefits the residents of Caerphilly County Borough Council in that it enhances and adds value to the library and new, one-to-one centre. Additionally it provides employment and training opportunities for local people. The organisation currently employs two local people as café assistants. They have both received the appropriate on the job training in hospitality, catering, customer service and also hold Level 2 Certificates in food hygiene.

The café is available to all sections of the community and actively encourages use by walking groups, members of local tenants and residents associations OAP's, youth groups, school pupils and members of the adjacent church's congregation. The café is at present funded entirely from Bryncynon Strategy's own reserves but it is hoped that it will be able to apply for external grants in the near future.

The current annual rate liability of the organisation's premises is £1969 and the cost to the Authority of awarding 20% discretionary top-up in rate relief at the present is £295 with the Welsh Government bearing the remaining cost of £99. The Authority is at present awarding discretionary rate relief to similar café premises which includes Ty Sign and Local Communities at 76 Elm Drive, Ty Sign, Abertridwr Community Church at 2 Thomas Street, Abertridwr and Croeso Christian Bookshop & Café at 8 High Street, Newbridge.

Decision: That 20% discretionary top-up relief be awarded.

#### **4.3 POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 17TH APRIL 2012 - YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

To inform Members of the findings of the Youth Unemployment Task and Finish Group and make recommendations.

In February 2011 Council agreed to establish a task and finish group to consider youth unemployment that would report to both Policy and Resources and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's.

The review groups' terms of reference were to:-

- Understand the context of youth unemployment.
- Map the current programmes to assist young people into employment.
- Identify and discuss the barriers to employment and skills gaps.
- Agree actions for improvement.

This report outlines the main findings of the review group and makes a number of recommendations for consideration.

The UK uses two measures of unemployment. One is the claimant count that shows the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits. The other measure comes from the Labour Force Survey that is based on standards set out by the International Labour Office (ILO).

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a household survey that collects information on the labour market. Data are collected on respondent's personal circumstances and their activities in the labour market. Since 2001 the LFS has been boosted in Wales by the Annual Population Survey (APS) to give a sample of 20,000 households.

There are three standard categories for respondents:

- In employment - as employees, self-employed, on Government supported training and employment programmes or as unpaid family workers.
- ILO unemployed - defined as all those who were without a job at the time the survey was conducted and who were able to start work within the next fortnight and had actively looked for work in the last four weeks or had recently found a job and were waiting to start.
- Economically inactive - including those looking after a house, those in retirement and children aged under 16 years, but also including those without work who are not actively seeking or available for employment.

Youth unemployment is defined as those aged between 16 and 24 years old. In the early 1990's an additional definition was created, that identified those aged between 16 and 18 years old, who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Recently the term NEET has also been used to refer to young people aged 16 to 24 years old.

## Findings

The review group received comprehensive statistical data on youth unemployment in order to give them an overview of the current situation. Members learned that Caerphilly county borough has a higher claimant count for unemployment benefits when compared to Wales as a whole. For June 2011 the claimant count for residents in Caerphilly aged 16 – 64 was 4.8% in comparison with 3.8% for Wales.

The review group were interested in the length of time young people are claiming unemployment benefits, the following table shows the duration and compares Caerphilly with Wales as a whole.

Date	Claimant Count					
	Up to 6 months		Over 6 months and up to a year		Over 1 year	
	Caerphilly	Wales	Caerphilly	Wales	Caerphilly	Wales
June 2009	7.3%	5.4%	2.4%	1.4%	0.7%	0.2%
December 2009	7.5%	5.6%	2.2%	1.2%	1.1%	0.4%
June 2010	5.5%	4.2%	2.1%	1.2%	1.6%	0.6%
December 2010	7.7%	5.3%	0.9%	0.6%	0.9%	0.4%
June 2011	7%	4.7%	2.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%

The review group were informed that it is also important to understand that there are a number of reasons why people are not in education employment or training. In some cases people may be taking a planned education or career break, or are staying at home to raise children.

However the review group learned that NEET's are more likely to experience the following:

- Homelessness
- Abuse
- Addiction issues
- Self harm
- Depression
- Low aspirations
- Low motivation
- Attitude issues

- Trust issues

Members agreed it is important to address youth unemployment at an early stage to prevent young people from becoming disengaged. In addition studies have shown that early unemployment can also adversely affect a person's longer-term employment and earning potential.

#### 4.4 COUNCIL APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINEE SCHEME

Members learned that the Council has a top-heavy workforce demographic, with more than 30% of staff over 50 years old and only 4% of the workforce aged between 16-21. This means that the Council could be exposed to a skills gap unless career opportunities and pathways are created. When an employee retires there may be an opportunity for an apprentice or trainee to be placed in that post.

The review group were informed of the progress with the Councils Apprenticeship and Trainee Scheme, which is funded by the £475,000 budget allocated from salary savings. Members learned that the scheme is structured into 4 tiers, as follows:

- Tier 1 – this is a short-term placement of 1 to 8 weeks in duration and in total 52 young people were given placements.
- Tier 2 – these were made up of longer-term placements of up to 1 year made up of a few days per week. In total 26 placements were made. The young people were referred from further education colleges and Educ8 and also by working in partnership with ACT and ITEC training providers.
- Tier 3 - there were 54 apprenticeship posts created across the Council in a number of areas, and many more areas taking part. Members learned that Heads of Service have been asked to consider apprenticeships in their service area when vacancies become available. This has resulted in non-traditional apprenticeships being created in areas such as Media, Youth Service, Engineering, Marketing, Customer First and IT along with the more traditional areas such as the Direct Labour Organisation.
- Tier 4 – these are graduate posts and are generally taken up by 22-23 year olds and at present there are 12 posts within the Council. These posts are located within Engineers, Environmental Health, Ecology and Waste Management. Members asked if there is the potential to offer permanent posts in the future, it was noted that it is hoped they can be offered posts although nothing can be guaranteed.

#### BARRIERS TO PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

The review group received a presentation on a research project undertaken by Torfaen County Borough Council. The project looked at barriers to accessing public sector employment and interviewed a number of people to determine their views. The project was specific to Torfaen area and interviewed people of all ages and qualification levels.

There were a number of issues which were identified by the project and the following were of particular interest to CCBC:

- Suitability of application forms – it was felt that they are often seen as overly complicated and off-putting.
- Advertising of job vacancies – respondents felt that it was difficult to differentiate between Councils. In addition as many people often seek work with neighbouring councils they reported that it is difficult to trawl through each of the councils websites to find vacancies.
- Clarity of Information – many respondents felt that the use of language and jargon in job descriptions made it difficult and off-putting to potential applicants. In addition the person specification often seemed to be looking for a particular person rather than what the job actually requires.
- Too important – many people felt that public sector work was too important and they

weren't qualified to even apply. This showed a lack of understanding of the range of job opportunities for people within a local authority.

## BARRIERS AND SKILLS GAPS

The review group carried a workshop and invited representatives from the Youth Hub, National Training Federation Wales, Associated Community Training (ACT) and ITEC Training to take part. The groups considered the following questions in relation to young people:

Question	Responses
What are the barriers to employment in the county borough?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Application process – level of detail, feedback process, panel interview, experience of interviewers, jargon and person specification criteria.</li> <li>2. Low educational achievement - need to develop expectation introduce practical vocational element.</li> <li>3. Young people not work ready.</li> <li>4. Transport – accessibility &amp; availability.</li> <li>5. Hours of Work – part time &amp; vocational.</li> <li>6. Topography of some areas.</li> <li>7. Childcare.</li> <li>8. Younger people have an older person concept of local authorities.</li> </ol>
What could be done to reduce/remove barriers to employment?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Application process could be made easier.</li> <li>2. Getting young people to apply – tackle perception that only those highly qualified can apply.</li> <li>3. Promote local government as a career.</li> </ol>
What are the main skills gaps reported by employers?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customer service.</li> <li>2. Literacy and numeracy.</li> <li>3. IT skills.</li> <li>4. Confidence.</li> <li>5. Interview skills.</li> <li>6. Experience.</li> <li>7. Communication.</li> <li>8. Soft Skills – Attitude, work ethic.</li> </ol>
What can be done to provide opportunities for young people to overcome the skills gaps?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Voluntary work – to gain experience.</li> <li>2. Job clubs – targeted at specific age/peer groups.</li> <li>3. Mapping of job clubs.</li> <li>4. Engage with private sector.</li> <li>5. Self employment.</li> <li>6. Firewalls at public libraries – sometimes deny access to sites when searching for jobs.</li> <li>7. Mentors for new staff.</li> <li>8. Develop apprenticeship scheme in private sector.</li> <li>9. Develop employment skills in schools.</li> </ol>

## OPPORTUNITIES

The review group were informed that officers from Regeneration and Business Support have recently met with representatives from Morrisons Supermarkets to discuss the new store planned for Bargoed. They discussed the employment needs of the new store in terms of qualifications, skills and experience. The meeting was useful and officers were able to identify the range of jobs that will be available and are looking to develop training for local people to match the needs of the new store.

Members were impressed with the proactive approach to meeting the needs of the new employer and would like to see more of this in the future.

The review group was informed that CCBC officers are working with Caerphilly Business Forum to develop a private sector apprenticeship scheme, building on the success of the Council's model. The intention is to provide a co-ordinator who can assist local businesses to access the appropriate funding and support they need to take on an apprentice. It is hoped that JCP Flexible Support Fund can be utilised to enable the project to proceed.

#### **4.5 POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 17TH APRIL 2012 - MEMBERS' REMUNERATION 2012/13**

To report the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' determinations for 2012/13. To seek Members views on certain aspects of the travel allowance.

Members are entitled to receive remuneration prescribed by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales ("the Panel").

The Panel is a statutory body established by Welsh Government in January 2008 to determine the scope and maximum level of allowances payable to councillors in Wales.

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 recently gave the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales additional powers to prescribe the vast majority of Members allowances and expenses. This is a significant change to the well established practice of Members determining their own scheme of allowances within the maximums prescribed by the Panel.

The Panel have stated that it is an appropriate time to introduce prescription, as any current serving councillor cannot assume continuity of income after the local elections in May 2012. Furthermore, the Panel have long held the view that there should be a consistent framework of councillor remuneration across Wales.

This report reflects the Panel's determinations contained in their Annual Report dated December 2011.

#### **INTRODUCTION OF ELECTED MEMBERS' SALARIES**

A key change for the future is the Panel's decision to replace the term 'allowance' with 'salary'. They argue that the term 'salary' better describes Members' remuneration and will be more easily understood by the public. A Basic Salary replaces the Basic Allowance and a Senior Salary replaces the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)

Previously, the maximum basic allowance (now basic salary) represented 3/5ths of the median gross earnings of all full time employees resident in Wales. The SRA bandings also represented a different multiple value of the median gross earnings of all full time employees resident in Wales. However, given the difficult economic climate, the Panel have decided to discontinue the link and reduce the basic salary by 5% and the senior salary by 10% of the 2011/12 maximum levels.

#### **BASIC SALARY**

All Members are entitled to receive the Basic Salary, and for 2012/13 the Panel have determined that it will be set at £13,175 (the Council currently pays a basic allowance of £13,030).

#### **SENIOR SALARIES**

Senior Salaries are payable to Members that hold certain prescribed roles and are limited to a maximum of 18 posts. Senior Salaries are paid inclusive of the Basic Salary.

The Panel's prescribed roles and Senior Salaries set for 2012/13 are outlined below:

<b>Role</b> <b>£</b>	<b>Senior Salary 2012/13</b> <b>£</b>	<b>Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances Paid 2011/12 (Basic Allowance plus SRA)</b> <b>£</b>
Leader	47,500	47,627
Deputy Leader	33,460	32,058
Cabinet Member	28,780	30,328
Committee Chairs (Scrutiny, Planning, Licensing, Audit, Democratic Services)	21,910	18,557.20
Leader of the Largest Opposition Group	21,910	22,738
Leaders of Other Political Groups (not less than 10% of members)	16,920	N/A

Senior Salaries of Council Leaders and Executive Members are based on the assumption that the roles are full time. To underline this view, the Panel have determined that a Cabinet Member can no longer receive a salary (allowance) from any National Park Authority or Fire and Rescue Authority to which they have been nominated. A Member cannot receive more than one Senior Salary or a Senior Salary and a Civic Salary.

#### **CIVIC SALARIES**

Payments made to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are now under the control of the Panel but are not included as part of the 18 Senior Salary posts. Civic Salaries are paid inclusive of the Basic Salary. The Civic Salaries set for 2012/13 are outlined below:-

<b>Role</b> <b>£</b>	<b>Civic Salary 2012/13</b> <b>£</b>	<b>Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance Paid 2011/12 (Basic Allowance plus SRA)</b> <b>£</b>
Mayor	21,375	26,898
Deputy Mayor	16,625	17,648.04

#### **CO-OPTED MEMBER PAYMENTS**

The Panel have decided to change the structure of payments made to co-opted members from an annual fee to a daily fee (with provision for a ½ day payment) to take account of the variation in workloads across authorities in Wales. The Council must pay the following fees to co-opted Members with voting rights:-

<b>Role</b>	<b>Fee</b>	<b>Allowance Paid 2011/12</b>
Co-opted Chair, Standards Committee and Audit Committee	£256 daily fee (£128 ½ day)	£1,486 (Chair, Standards Committee)
Co-opted Member of Standards Committee	£226 daily fee (£113 ½ day)	N/A

who Chairs Standards Committees for Community Councils (Not applicable for CCBC)		
Co-opted Member of Standards Committee, Education Scrutiny Committee, Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee	£198 daily fee (£99 ½ day)	£779 (Co-opted Member of Standards Committee)

The daily rate fee is capped at a maximum of 10 full days a year per co-optee. Payments are made for meeting time only and are inclusive of preparation time and travelling. A full day is defined as meeting lasting over 4 hours, and a half-day as up to 4 hours.

### **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Panel expects every Member 'to undertake such training and personal development opportunities as are required to properly discharge the duties for which they are remunerated'.

### **CARE ALLOWANCE**

This relates to dependent children below the age of 15 where costs are incurred in providing care while Members or Co-opted Members are engaged on Council business and, to a dependent over the age of 15 years who requires care while Members or Co-opted Members are away from their home on Council business.

The Panel have determined that the maximum Care Allowance payable for 2012/2013 is £403 per month. The Council currently pays a maximum of £384 per month.

The Care Allowance shall only be payable for actual and receipted costs.

### **TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES**

The Panel have decided to keep the current HMRC mileage rates for 2012/13:

Motor vehicles up to 10,000 miles – 45p per mile  
 Motor vehicles over 10,000 miles – 25p per mile  
 Passenger supplement – 5p per passenger per mile  
 Motor cycles – 24p per mile  
 Pedal cycles – 20p per mile

All other claims for travel such as bus/train/taxi fares (when authorised by the Democratic Services Manager) must be accompanied by appropriate receipts showing the actual expense. Members should always be mindful of choosing the most cost effective method of travel. Members should also be aware that tickets for public transport can be organised by Democratic Services.

The Panel have introduced an additional definition of 'official business' to allow for the reimbursement of travel allowances for Members undertaking constituency business. It is a matter for each Council to decide whether it wishes to implement this change. If Members are minded to do so then these journeys will be subject to the same random percentage checking that is currently undertaken for mileage claims.



## **SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES**

The maximum subsistence allowance for 2012/13 is set at £28 per day (including breakfast when not provided as part of overnight accommodation). This is paid as a reimbursement of actual costs for approved duties with receipts provided. The Council currently pays £26 per day.

The allowances available for an overnight stay whilst undertaking an approved duty are set at £150 for London, £120 for Cardiff and £95 elsewhere with receipts to be provided. The Council currently pays subsistence rates of £105 for London and £90 elsewhere.

A maximum of £25 is available for an overnight stay with friends or relatives whilst on approved duty. This is the same as is currently paid by the Council.

The Panel has decided that subsistence expenses can no longer be claimed for official business which takes place in county.

Members are reminded that the prior agreement of the Democratic Services Manager should be sought before overnight accommodation is booked. Whenever possible overnight accommodation will be booked and paid for by Democratic Services prior to Members travelling.

## **FORGOING PAYMENTS**

Members or Co-opted Members may forgo any part of their remuneration entitlement by giving notice in writing to the Chief Executive.

## **PUBLICITY**

The Panel has introduced a new requirement for Councils to publish a 'Schedule of Member Remuneration' no later than 31 July each year. A copy of the Schedule must also be sent to the Panel at the same time as it is published and contain the following information:

- The payments the Council intends to make to Members and Co-opted Members, their names and positions that will attract a senior salary.
- A statement to confirm the maximum limit of Senior Salaries has not been exceeded.
- A statement of allowable expenses and the duties for which they may be claimed for care, travel and subsistence.
- Arrangements for the payment of salaries, allowances and fees to Members and Co-opted Members.
- Arrangements for making claims for care, travel and subsistence expenses.
- Arrangements for the avoidance of duplication.
- Arrangements for the re-payment of salaries, allowances and fees.
- Duties for which Members and Co-opted Members are able to claim travel, subsistence and care allowances.
- A statement to confirm whether a description of the basic responsibility of a Councillor is in place.
- A statement to confirm whether role descriptions for senior salary holders are in place.
- A statement to confirm whether records are kept of Councillor attendance.
- A statement to confirm whether records are kept of any councillor activity. (Further clarification will be sought from the Panel about what they require of Councils.)
- A statement to confirm whether annual reports are prepared by councillors and published on the Council's website.

The Panel will also require local authorities to publish no later than 30<sup>th</sup> September following the end of a municipal year:

- The amount of Basic Salary, Senior Salary and Co-opted Member fee paid to each Member and Co-opted Member, whether any Member had chosen to forego all or part of the salary or fee and the titles of senior office holders in receipt of a Senior Salary.
- The amount of any further remuneration received by a Member nominated to or appointed by another relevant authority (either a National Park Authority or Welsh Fire and Rescue Authority).
- Members who did not receive a Basic or Senior Salary because they were suspended for all or part of the municipal year.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Panel's determinations for the Basic Salary will come into force after Members have signed the 'Declaration of Acceptance of Office', but no earlier than Monday 7th May 2012. As 7th May is a bank holiday, the earliest practical time the Panel's determination can come into effect is Tuesday 8th May.

The Panel's determinations for Senior Salaries will take effect from the date of the Council's Annual General Meeting.

### **4.6 CABINET 17TH APRIL 2012 - PROVISION / UPDATE OF BYE-LAWS FOR PARKS, PLEASURE GROUNDS, PUBLIC WALKS AND OPEN SPACES**

This report outlines the draft proposals which following extensive consultation and agreement by Cabinet, can be sent to the Welsh Government (WG) for approval prior to adoption in Caerphilly County Borough.

Improving community safety and quality of life by reducing crime, anti social behaviour and the fear of crime are key objectives of the Living Environment theme within the Corporate Improvement Plan/Community Strategy.

The last occasion the bye-laws were updated covering parks, pleasure grounds, public walks and open spaces in Caerphilly was 1999, prior to this revision many bye-laws had not been updated for many years and originated from many of the past urban district councils, including Caerphilly, Bedwellty, Islwyn, Abercarn and Mynyddislwyn. The proposals outlined in Appendix 1 to this report are set against the changing lifestyles of residents and visitors to our parks, pleasure grounds and open spaces and the adoption of new areas from housing, commercial developments and the establishment of community partnership facilities.

The range of risks and level of claims that the Council now faces require the provision of up to date bye-laws covering all areas and facilities which are managed and maintained by the Council. The public awareness and right to a reasonable level of community safety and behaviour by individuals and groups has also to be supported via up-to-date rules and guidance. Without such structure and guidance covering public areas being available to officers and the police, the cost in terms of resources in dealing with anti-social behaviour and the impact of the same on local residents could be quite considerable. Well-defined and modern bye-laws permit the police and council officers to deal with such anti-social issues quickly and efficiently.

The Scrutiny Committee is therefore asked to comment on the proposals and to agree that officers submit the same to WG for consideration and comment, due to the attached proposals being different in several areas to those drawn up as "model bye-laws" by the Welsh Government. The differences in the proposals include:-

Reducing the upper age limit for using play equipment from 14 (WG model) to 12 (play industry standard). In this regard it is the view of officers that multi-use games areas (MUGAs), youth shelters (which often are adjacent to play areas) and aerial slides /ropeways

are more appropriate for children over the age of 12.

Opening Times – the WG Model includes standard opening times for Summer and Winter months. However, officers are of the view that, in light of experience, more flexible and local options will be of greater benefit to Council and Police Officers in dealing with antisocial behaviour.

It should be noted that the proposed bye-laws (Appendix 1) are divided into three main areas, Schedule 1 includes all Caerphilly parks, pleasure grounds, open spaces, welfare grounds, soccer/rugby grounds and land adjacent to ponds/small lakes (e.g.: Cwm farm balancing lake).

Schedule 2 includes a comprehensive list of Caerphilly Play grounds and attached open spaces and finally, Schedule 3 lists all Caerphilly areas designated for ball games, additional to suitable areas in schedules 1 and 2. An additional section has been added to all areas in each schedule to include ordnance survey (OS) references for each site. This will aid any disputes in Court where the specific location of an offence is called into question. The OS reference has generally been taken to be the centre of the location.

On presentation to WG the changes/differences will need to be justified and in this regard officers feel that sound reasons and examples can be made to support the Caerphilly changes. The draft byelaws have been the subject of consultation with various groups (e.g: Community/Town Councils, partnership & resident groups, etc) prior to the planned discussion with the WG. It is then planned to return to Cabinet with a final version of the Caerphilly byelaws for approval/signing off.

It is anticipated that discussion with the WG and relevant consultation will take a number of months. It is therefore likely that the byelaws will be adopted in late 2012.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There will be a revenue cost to provide appropriate signage at all locations; some large parks will require several signs in order to inform the public and users of the areas/facilities. This provision will be covered over a period of time, installation being funded out of the parks revenue maintenance budget.

## **4.7 NEW ROADS IN CAERPHILLY - HIGHWAY DESIGN GUIDE AND SPECIFICATION**

To seek comments from Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the adoption by the Council of the *New Roads in Caerphilly* highway design guide and specification document and those items in the recommendations.

The Council's previous highway design guide for residential and industrial development has been updated to accommodate current design standards, construction methods and Government guidance in two volumes. Volume 1 contains the framework within which developers should design new roads that they will offer for adoption and volume 2 contains the specification for such work and a set of standard detail drawings.

The Council as Highway Authority enters into Highway Agreements with Developers to adopt newly built roads that are constructed to its satisfaction for future maintenance at public expense.

Engineering Division strategy is to represent and safeguard highway users' interests against activities and development detrimental to users.

The Council in its role as Highway Authority has a statutory responsibility for the management and maintenance of the highway network that includes a need to keep the network safe for its

users. It necessarily follows that all developers' proposals to either build new roads or make alterations to existing roads in order to accommodate the traffic generated by their development must follow acceptable standards and be built to an appropriate specification.

The Council's first highway design guide for developers was issued for use in 2003 having been adopted by the Local Planning Authority as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Substantial changes in both highway construction methods, and design standards and general design requirements have taken place since 2003 and this guidance document is now outdated.

For these reasons two volumes of new, current guidance documentation named *New Roads in Caerphilly* have been prepared for the benefit of developers to assist them to prepare road schemes that are likely to prove acceptable to the Highway Authority for adoption but also to secure consistency of detail matters in order to facilitate future maintenance of adopted roads by the Highway Authority.

*Volume 1 of New Roads in Caerphilly* contains a framework for design that outlines the design standards required, relevant legislation and model highway agreements. *Volume 2* carries the detailed specification for all developers highway works and includes a set of standard detail drawings for the use of developers in preparing their design submissions for vetting by Highway Authority staff. The documentation covers residential, commercial and industrial development estate roads.

A CD containing all the standard detail drawings has also been prepared for the convenience of developers who can then cut and paste the relevant details on to their own drawings. It is requested that the Highway Authority now formally adopt this documentation for use. The detailed technical information contained within *New Roads for Caerphilly* is currently correct, but will require updating as and when necessary to accommodate new or changing technology. It is suggested that this activity be delegated to Officers to undertake as and when may be required.

The previous guidance documentation was sold as hard copy to developers and their agents both as an individual supply and also on subscription, the offer being that it would be kept up to date in return for the payment of an annual subscription. This latter arrangement was put in place to satisfy quality assurance requirements for those external organisations that maintained a technical library and were quality assured. Since publication the sales of this documentation have raised the sum of approx. £6,000.

For the above reason it is suggested that each volume of the new documentation be sold as a hard copy at a cost of £150.00 per volume, with updates charged at £25.00 per annum to those customers who wish to receive them when available.

As in the past a CD containing all the standard drawings will also be offered to developers to enable them to 'lift' these details onto their development drawings. It is suggested each CD be sold at a cost of £200 and again on subsequent subscription at £50.00 per annum

#### 4.8 **POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 6TH MARCH 2012 - UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS HELD WITHIN THE POLICY UNIT WITH VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN THE BOROUGH OCTOBER 2011 TO JANUARY 2012**

To provide members for information with a quarterly update on the activities of voluntary sector organisations that the Policy Unit holds service level agreements (SLA's) with in the borough. This report is as requested by Members following a previous six month progress SLA update made to the November 2011 Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

The report covers the SLA activities of Caerphilly County Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), Groundwork Caerphilly, and the Valleys Regional Equality Council (VALREC) for the period October 2011 to January 2012.

The Policy Unit is supporting key voluntary sector organisations in the borough, which make a significant contribution to the 28 objectives of the Caerphilly borough Community Strategy.

The report contained in appendix 1 provides an account of how the voluntary organisations supported have delivered on their SLAs with the Policy Unit. All have met the performance requirements of their SLA service objectives and service delivery with the Policy Unit.

#### 4.9 **CABINET 17TH APRIL 2012 - FOCHRIW COMMUNITY CENTRE**

To seek approval, in principle, to lease the site of Fochriw Community Centre to the Management Committee on the basis of a 25 year lease to enable the Committee to apply for external funding to extend the building to accommodate the youth service.

Due to building condition concerns, Fochriw Youth Centre was closed during the summer term 2011. Since this time, the Youth Centre has been relocated on a temporary basis within Fochriw Community Centre. This has meant a reorganisation of the Community Centre's timetable, which is not sustainable on a permanent basis.

A Task and Finish Group has been established to fully investigate the feasibility for a permanent location for the Youth Centre and possible funding routes. The Group concluded that the only viable option available is to extend the Community Centre to provide suitable accommodation for the youth service, thus alleviating the pressure on limited space and enabling the continuation for the service delivery in the long term.

A number of funding sources have been identified, including Heads of the Valley Fund and Community Facility Activity Programme (CFAP), but as yet, no funding has been confirmed. In order to assist the Management Committee to move forward with their proposals, this report seeks an approval in principle to lease the site of Fochriw Community Centre on terms to be agreed. Should Cabinet agree to the principle, Fochriw Management Committee will have the necessary assurances in place to progress their funding application.

Should the funding application be successful and subject to the necessary approvals and planning consent, a Lease will then be granted

The Area Review exercise was a key process in the Council's Asset Management Strategy. It was implemented to help support the council in its aim of delivering services effectively and ensuring value for money. The process identified opportunities to achieve shared use of buildings, potential disposal opportunities and joint development projects.

Youth provision in Fochriw has for many years been housed in an aging demountable classroom within the site of Fochriw Primary School. The Youth Centre operates two evenings per week and is extremely well attended with an average of 40 young people attending per evening.

In March 2011, Caerphilly Council received a petition from the young people of Fochriw via the Caerphilly Youth Forum, raising concerns regarding the poor state of the building. Subsequently, a health and safety survey and building survey were undertaken which identified substantial defects with the building. The building surveyor advised that although the building fulfilled an important function, in their opinion, it had surpassed its economic life expectancy and could be classed as physically obsolete. Estimated remedial costs to bring the building to a good standard of repair would be in the region of £87,000, excluding fees and contingency. The figure does not include any additional work that might be incurred whilst remedial work is being undertaken. Based on the evidence of both surveys, and the cost implications, it was decided to close the building from the end of the summer term 2011.

On a temporary basis, youth provision is being housed in the Community Centre two evenings per week, which has been accommodated by reorganising the Community Centre's timetable.

This is not sustainable on a permanent basis due to the disruption and restricted use for existing users.

A Task and Finish Group consisting of officers from Communities First, Property Services, Heads of the Valley Co-ordinator, Community Education, the Local Member of Fochriw and the Chairman of the Fochriw Community Centre was established to investigate the feasibility and possible funding routes for a permanent location for the Youth Centre in Fochriw.

Having reviewed possible alternative sites, the Group concluded that the only feasible location was the existing Community Centre and an extension would be required to enable the Youth Centre to function without disrupting the regular users of the centre. This conclusion also fits with a community facility recommendation identified in the Caerphilly Local Development Plan 2010 – 2012 (LDP) regarding a new Youth Centre in Fochriw.

The plan for an extension is envisaged over two stages, dependent on funding. First stage includes toilets, kitchen, office, separate entrance, internal access to the main Community Centre building, estimated cost £252,000. The second stage consists of an activity hall/space linked to the first stage estimated cost £126,000. Costs associated with associated parking and providing additional parking have not yet been considered.

A future potential allocation of £126,000 has been identified in the Education and Leisure Capital programme 2013-14 as a contribution towards the Fochriw Community Centre extension.

Consultation has been carried out with the young people of Fochriw to involve them with the extension if funding can be secured. The Task and Finish Group is currently exploring funding from a number of sources such as Heads of the Valley funding and Community Facility Activity Programme (CFAP). At present, no funding has been confirmed.

A report detailing the requirement for the extension was presented to the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on the 8th November 2011. The Scrutiny Committee having fully considered the location and associated issues for youth provision in Fochriw noted the report.

The criterion for such funding includes a requirement for the applicant to have security of tenure. Currently, the Management Committee holds an annual Lease agreement, which is not sufficient to meet the funding requirement. Therefore, to facilitate any funding application, an in principle approval is being sought to grant a long Lease of approximately 25 years to satisfy the funding criteria.

Although the terms of the Lease are to be determined, it is proposed that the management arrangements for the Community Centre will reflect current arrangements. Therefore, Caerphilly Council will remain responsible for all associated repairs and maintenance.

The possibility of asset transfer has been discussed with the Management Committee; however, this was not considered a viable option due to the implications of taking on the liabilities and responsibilities associated with such a transfer. The Community Centre is located in a rural community with limited community resources. As such, the Centre is well patronised by the local residents. However, due to its location, there is little scope for the Management Committee to generate additional funds, which would be required to cover the additional costs associated with taking on the obligations of a fully repairing lease. The Management Committee does not believe it has the capacity to sustain the service in the long term, and would not be able to generate sufficient funds to cover the ongoing costs associated with the full management role.

For this reason, officers are minded to recommend retaining the repair obligations at this site in order to facilitate the funding application and support the provision of community facilities in this location in the long term. Should the funding be successful, the extension will benefit the young people and wider community.

Planning advice is that the proposed scheme accords with the general principles of the LDP. Planning permission would be required for the extension, however it is currently deemed acceptable in planning terms subject to compliance with standard development control criteria, including the provision of adequate car parking. Work is ongoing to develop an acceptable design and determine an appropriate number of spaces as this may affect the viability of the scheme.

Legal advice is that there is nothing that would prevent the grant of a 25-year Lease. The additional land required to extend the Centre and provide additional parking is currently held within the HRA and, as such, it will need to be formally appropriated by Community Education. Housing Services has confirmed that they are in support of the proposal and the land can pass to the holding service along with associated maintenance obligations.

If the funding application is unsuccessful, the Management Committee will not require a lease agreement and the management of the Community Centre will continue on the current terms.

The general powers of the Council to dispose of land are contained in the Local Government Act 1972, Sections 123 – 127. The Local Government Act 1972; General Disposal Consent (Wales) 2003, allows a local authority to lease land at less than best consideration without specific consent of the National Assembly, provided:-

- It contributes to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area, or all or any persons resident or present in its area, and;
- The undervalue does not exceed £2m.

This criteria is linked to the “well-being” powers contained in the Local Government Act 2000, which states that every local authority has the power to do anything that it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of well being in its area.

Consultation has been carried out with the young people of Fochriw to involve them with the extension if funding can be secured. As part of ongoing consultation process, the plans will be presented to the Caerphilly Access Group for comment at the appropriate time.

Should the funding be successful, the extension will benefit the young people and wider community. The extension will go beyond the current building regulations minimum requirements in relation to Part M accessibility requirements. The existing Community Centre has been DDA assessed and is reported to be reasonably accessible with adequate ramps, automatic door to the main entrance and accessible disabled toilet is also provided. Work is ongoing to undertake various improvements to include modification to disabled parking.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Equalities implications have been taken into account for a number of reports submitted to Cabinet and other committees.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None, this is an information paper only on the contents of Caerphilly CBC reports which contains items of interest for the Voluntary Sector Committee.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None arising.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 Not applicable.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 Members are invited (if they feel appropriate) to select any report for further consideration by the Committee by requesting the report author to attend a future meeting of the Voluntary Sector Committee to take questions/prepare another report.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 To ensure Members are fully briefed on items of interest for the Voluntary Sector.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

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