



## VOLUNTARY SECTOR COMMITTEE – 18TH SEPTEMBER 2013

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

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

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### POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 24TH JULY 2013

#### **Notice Of Motion – “Bedroom Tax”**

Committee is asked to consider the Notice of Motion as set out in Part 2 of the Report, and make appropriate recommendations to Council. The report also includes officer comments in relation to known facts that should help members in their deliberation.

A notice of motion has been received by the Council’s Interim Monitoring Office from Cllrs C. Mann, J.A. Pritchard, K. Lloyd, L. Ackerman, P.J. Bevan, C. Elsbury, J. Taylor and A. Angel. They ask the Council to consider the following notice of motion included within the quotation marks below:

“That this Council wishes to express its serious concern regarding the impact of Welfare Reform measures on people of the Caerffili County Borough.

Specifically the Council is concerned that measures to reduce housing benefit for tenants of local authorities introduced last April have not taken into account the acute shortage of one-bedroom homes. The fact that down-sizing will not be a realistic option for most tenants will mean significant hardship for tenants and increase the risk of homelessness. The council is further concerned that these measures may have an adverse impact on council and housing association landlords’ rental income and their ability to invest in improving their own stock and in building new, affordable homes.”

#### **Welfare Reform Programme Update**

The changes in benefits introduced by the UK Government via the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Localised Finance Act 2011, have been seen as a priority by CCBC. A Programme Board was established in July 2012 to oversee projects that would prepare the authority and its residents for the changes.

The report is providing information on the relevant activities to-date. The wide ranging changes introduced by the U.K. government to the welfare system, including Universal Credit, benefit cap, council tax reduction scheme, social sector size criteria housing benefit reduction and other general welfare changes, have been seen as a priority by CCBC from a very early stage.

A Programme Board of senior management and a cross-functional team was established to oversee and coordinate initiatives in July 2012. The core team is made of officers from all key service areas, including Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits Section, Housing, Community Regeneration / Communities First, Social Services, Supporting People, Customer Services, Education/Children and Young People Partnership.

The overall aim of the programme is to ensure that the Local Authority and its residents are adequately prepared for the impact of the Welfare Reform Act and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The programme currently includes four projects:

- 1) Welfare Reform Act and Council tax reduction Scheme Awareness;
- 2) Under-occupation (also known as "Bedroom tax");
- 3) Universal Credit Local Authority Led Pilot;
- 4) Local Support Service Framework.

## **CABINET - 16TH JULY 2013**

### **Blackwood Youth Centre**

The report updated Members on the Blackwood Youth Centre development. At its meeting on 10th May 2011 Cabinet approved the relocation of the former Blackwood Youth Centre (which was demolished by fire in October 2009) to the Blackwood Comprehensive School site.

As at financial year-end there remains a sum of circa £130k left against the project. There is circa £30k required to complete the basketball court area and associated drainage works leaving a residual sum of circa £100k.

Members considered the report in detail and it was proposed and seconded that the recommendation in the report be endorsed. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed. Therefore it was resolved that for the reasons contained in the officer's report, the use of the residual sum of 100k to support Youth Service provision across the County Borough to help meet the Council's Improvement Objective (as outlined in paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10) be approved.

A further report identifying the initiatives financed by this sum would be presented to Cabinet in due course.

## **CABINET – 30TH JULY 2013**

### **Newbridge Regeneration - Funding To Complete Physical Regeneration Scheme**

To report on the allocation of funding from the Council's identified departmental Reserves towards the completion of the Newbridge Regeneration Programme, which had to be approved as the works had reached a critical point.

A significant investment package has been put together for the delivery of a major regeneration programme for Newbridge Town Centre. The scheme comprises a landmark pedestrian footbridge (the "Calzaghe Bridge"), major enhancements to the town's High Street and public realm and the restoration of the town's nationally important, historic cultural/community buildings, the Newbridge Institute and Memorial Hall (the "Memo").

The Calzaghe Bridge opened in 2009. Stage 1 of the Public Realm Enhancement Scheme, comprising of improvement works to the town's High Street and main feeder and side roads, is at Practical Completion stage. Stage 2, which includes enhancement works around the "Memo" buildings and the town's Conservation Area, is due to commence July 2013. The refurbishment of the Grade II Listed Institute is largely complete with work due to start on the Grade II\* Memo building in summer 2013. Current figures indicate a capital-funding shortfall of £160,000 in respect of the regeneration programme.

An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan. The non-delivery of the full public realm enhancement works would negate the potential positive impact the scheme will have on various groups or individuals.

### **National Mining Memorial, Senghenydd**

Report to inform Members of the current position with the development of the Welsh National Mining Memorial at Senghenydd and to provide an update on the current financial position with the project,

including the Council's contribution, as we move towards the Centenary on October 14th this year.

Given the high profile nature of this scheme and the fact that the deadline is not flexible, the Council has committed substantial funding, time and resources to ensure its success. This report outlines the contributions made in more detail and seeks to secure the Council's continuing commitment.

The Project comprises of a number of distinct phases, namely:

1. Site Preparation, Design and the Memorial statue (Phase 1),
2. Memorial Garden (Phase 2),
3. Centenary Event (Phase 3),
4. A Memorial Pathway (Phase 4).

The report asks Cabinet to note the utilisation of urban renewal capital budget under spend from 2012/2013 financial year as outlined.

Phase 1	Site Preparation and Design and Memorial Statue	£41,000
Phase 2	Memorial Garden	£49,000
Phase 4	Memorial Pathway	£ 7,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>£97,000</b>

In addition the report requires Cabinet approval to the utilisation of £15,000 Phase 3 from existing divisional reserves to fund the centenary events as outlined in the report.

Total required funding is £112,000 as noted in the report.

Cabinet previously approved a decision to donate £50,000 to part fund phase 2 of the Memorial Statue.