



VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE – 16TH SEPTEMBER 2015

SUBJECT: DIGEST OF CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report from Caerphilly CBC contains a digest of committee reports of 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):-

RIVER RHYMNEY TASK GROUP 2ND MARCH 2015

Presentation - Healthy Rivers And Rivers Schools Projects

The Healthy Rivers - Project Officer, Groundwork Wales, advised that the Healthy Rivers and Rivers Schools Projects are partnership projects co-ordinated by Groundwork Caerphilly and involve the South East Wales Rivers Trust (SEWRT), Environmental Agency Wales (EAW) and local authorities. The aims and objectives of the original project were to achieve good ecological status for the River Sirhowy (according to Water Framework Directive legislation), increase populations of migratory fish, educate local people about the river ecosystem, promote angling and tackle invasive weeds.

In 2014 Healthy Rivers received funding to improve the ecological status for the Rhymney, Nant Bargoed, Rhondda Fawr and Rhondda Fach, the removal/modification of 7 barriers to fish migration to increase populations of migratory fish, educate local people about the river

ecosystem and deal with litter and waste. Members were pleased to note that with regards to education, and as part of the Salmon in Classrooms Project, Healthy Rivers has a live display of salmon eggs/young salmon to take to local primary schools and will teach children about the life cycle of the salmon and about issues affecting their survival in local rivers and encourage them to better understand and appreciate the river environment. The River School Project enables children to visit the river to take kick samples and to measure its width, depth and flow rate.

The Officer advised that a further 2 years funding had been granted by Natural Resources Wales to continue work on South East Wales Rivers with emphasis on working with young people. He referred to proposals to work with NRW to carry out walk over surveys, undertake further works on the Nant yr Aber (including the clearance of the tree blockage at its confluence with the river Rhymney), to investigating the major litter issue at Caerphilly Retail Estate and to continue to work with schools.

REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 19TH MAY 2015

Monmouthshire And Brecon Canal Action Plan

The Head of Regeneration and Planning, together with the Group Manager, Strategy, Funding and Support, presented the final draft version of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Action Plan.

This Action Plan was drafted following a request from Members of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Crumlin Arm Working Group, so that the future direction of investment and activities relating to the Canal could be considered. The draft Action Plan was considered and endorsed by Member of the Canal Group at their meeting on 26th February 2015 and was subsequently considered and endorsed by the Corporate Management Team in March 2015.

The Action Plan sets out the history of investment, maintenance and development of the Canal as a local asset, and also describes a list of potential actions and activities that could develop it further over the years ahead. It was explained that the actions were not prioritised but can be used flexibly depending on the availability of funding. For example, the Canal forms part of ongoing work to develop a regional European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) proposal based on tourism and urban priorities.

POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2ND JUNE 2015

Anti Poverty Strategy

The Head of Public Protection, presented the report, which outlined the proposed Caerphilly County Borough Council's Anti Poverty Strategy. The report sought the views of the Scrutiny Committee prior to its presentation to Cabinet and Council. Members were informed that the Council delivers a significant programme of work that contributes to tackling poverty, such as Welsh Government-funded programmes (Communities First, Families First, Flying Start and Supporting People) as well as the Welsh Housing Quality Standard investment and a range of other services and activities. Caerphilly Council has a significant track record in regeneration and was the first in Wales to become a Living Wage employer. However, there are still individuals and households within the county borough living in poverty and an Anti Poverty Strategy has therefore been developed to set out the Council's position and bring together that activity at a high level.

The draft Strategy has been the subject of consultation, and a final draft version, together with consultation comments, was appended to the report for views and approval. The draft Anti Poverty Strategy sets out the Council's position and aims, actions and measures in relation to tackling poverty. It is intended that the Strategy will be reviewed annually and progress reported. It is also proposed that an Anti Poverty Board be established to provide oversight of the Strategy, which would include the new Member Anti Poverty Champion, Councillor Elaine Forehead.

Discretionary Housing Payments Policy

The Acting Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer, together with the Acting Benefits Manager, presented the report, which sought the views of the Scrutiny Committee on a new Discretionary Housing Payments Policy, prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

Members were informed that Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are additional short term payments made towards rent. They are only paid to customers already receiving Housing Benefit who need more help with their housing costs over and above their benefit award. Officers explained that to help Local Authorities mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform, funding for DHPs has increased in recent years. However, it is important that the limited funding available is targeted at those most in need. With this in mind, the Discretionary Housing Payments has been drafted and was attached to the report as an appendix. The Policy complies with the Department for Work and Pensions Discretionary Housing Payments Guidance Manual (April 2014) and the Pan-Wales Discretionary Housing Payment Policy Framework. Officers reiterated that DHPs are principally short-term financial support towards long-term sustainable solutions and payments cannot be made indefinitely, and for this reason it should not be viewed as an additional welfare benefit.

REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 30TH JUNE 2015

Secondary School Rugby Provision Within Caerphilly County Borough

This report outlines details of the current secondary school provision for rugby and the future plans for the development of rugby in partnership with the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) through collaborative working.

A Rugby development plan is in place between CCBC and the WRU and this collaborative approach ensures that the offer of school rugby is joined up and avoids duplication. Partnership meetings are held with the WRU on a monthly basis. Managers and Development officers review performance and evaluate progress against outcomes. The WRU have a Schools/Club programme which is an initial three year programme. The programme commenced it's roll-out across secondary schools in Wales in 2014. CCBC currently has 2 schools in Cohort 1 with further schools identified for the Cohort 2 September 2015 roll-out. The appendix to this report outlines the WRU School Club Hub Programme/Regional Plan 2014-2016, Newport Gwent Dragons Region.

Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel on Wednesday, 15th July, 2015

An update was given on the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy which had been presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in January 2015 for consideration and then recommended to Cabinet on the 4th February 2015. The Officer confirmed that the only change to the policy presented to the Panel on the 26th November 2014 was to Top-Up Discretionary Relief. Cabinet had resolved that this be removed where an organisation occupies one or more rating assessments properties within the Authority's area, which cumulatively amount to a total rateable value exceeding £100,000. It was noted that two organisations, Ystrad Mynach College and Coleg Gwent, would be affected and both had been informed of the change. The Panel were informed that this would generate £90,000 of savings for financial year 2016/17.

The updated forecast for Discretionary Rate Relief for 2014-15 was estimated as £223,095.00. This left a projected budget allocation of £32,125.00 for Grants to the Voluntary Sector, which combined with the carry forward from previous years of £83,258.00 gave a total allocation of £155,383.00. To date, grant awards for 2014/15 total £15,035.00 with a budget of £100,348.00 remaining for allocation.

With regard to the Welsh Church Fund Act Fund, the Officer confirmed that written confirmation had now been received from Monmouthshire County Council. The 2014/15

budget allocation will be £40,084.00 and that underspends from previous years of £132,720.00 can be carried forward, resulting in a total available budget for the current year of £172,804.00. Confirmation had also been received that the provisional allocation for 2015-16 will be £49,334.00 which is an increase of 9,286.00 on this year's allocation and the carry forward of unspent allocations will be allowed.

The Panel noted the amounts awarded and discussed how to raise awareness of the grants to encourage a greater number of applications. The Officer confirmed that the grants administration could be looked at and although there was no flexibility for change in the award process, there would be for the award amounts. Officer's agreed to look at the award process in other authorities and provide feedback to Members.

Noted that the Grant Schemes Booklet is available from the council in hardcopy and it is also available on the council's website.

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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