



## COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE, ON YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 29TH JULY 2015 AT 7.00PM

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PRESENT:

Councillor A. Lewis - Chair

D. Bolter, C.J. Cuss, C. Hawker, A.G. Higgs, G.J. Hughes, J.A. Pritchard

#### Community/Town Council Representatives

Aber Valley	-
Argoed	- G. Lewis, Mr. G. James (Clerk)
Bargoed	- H. Llewellyn
Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	- Miss L. Jones, Mrs A. McConnell
Blackwood	- J.B. Criddle
Caerphilly	- Mr K. Williams (Clerk)
Darran Valley	-
Draethen, Waterloo and Rudry	-
Gelligaer	-
Llanbradach	- C. Choo Yin, Mr. W.M. Thompson (Clerk)
Maesycwmmmer	- Miss J. Rao,
Nelson	-
New Tredegar	-
Penyrheol, Trecenydd and Energlyn	- B. Allen, Mrs. H. Treherne (Clerk)
Rhymney	-
Risca East	- J. Blackburn, Mr G. James (Clerk)
Risca Town	- M. Parker, B. Campbell (Clerk)
Van	- Mrs E. Macey, Mr J. Dilworth (Clerk)

#### Together with:-

G. Williams, Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, H. Rees (Chair of the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum and Caerphilly County Borough Council Armed Forces Lead Officer), H.C. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

#### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs G. Bevan, Mrs A. Blackman, H. Davies, N. George (Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services) and J.E. Roberts, Community Councillors Mrs A. Reed and Mrs J. Hibbert and Mrs S. Hughes, Mrs L. Tams, Mrs S. Chick, Mr J. Hold, Mr G. Williams, Ms C. Mortimer, and Mrs G. Thomas (Clerks of Aber Valley, Bargoed, Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen and Draethen, Waterloo and Rudry, Blackwood, Darran Valley and Rhymney, Gelligaer and Maesycwmmmer Community/Town Councils respectively).

**2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

Community Councillor J. Rao was appointed Chair of the Sub Committee for the ensuing year.

**3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Councillor A. Lewis was appointed Vice-Chair of the Sub Committee for the ensuing year.

**4. MINUTES - 4TH MARCH 2015**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2015 (a copy had been sent to each member) were received and noted.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**5. CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING (MINUTE NO. 4)**

It was noted that arrangements are in hand for code of conduct training for recently appointed community/town councillors and as a refresher for those who have already attended such a session.

**TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS LIAISON COMMITTEE**

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

**6. REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Mrs G. Williams, Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, provided an overview of certain provisions of the Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013, which came into force on 1st May 2015, and detailed the affect of this legislation on community/town councils. In summary, the Act requires community/town councils to have websites and to publish notices, papers and their register of member's interests electronically. The briefing note provided at the meeting was to supplement the guidance that has been produced by Welsh Government.

It was confirmed that each community/town council now has its own dedicated website. Section 55 requires a community/town council to publish certain information electronically. This includes contact information, and, if different, its clerk, a telephone number, a postal address, an email address and information about each of its members, including the member's name, contact, details of party affiliation (if any), the ward which the member represents (where relevant) and any office of the council held. It was clarified that it is not obligatory for individual members to have email addresses (or addresses) but members names and details of how they can be contacted must be available online.

Section 56 requires a public notice given by a community/town council to be published electronically. Under existing legislation, community/town councils are required to post any public notices in one or more conspicuous places, and anywhere else desirable for giving publicity to the Notice. The Act places an additional requirement to publish such notices electronically.

Section 57, requires that notices of forthcoming meetings must be published electronically. Under existing legislation community/town councils are required to give notice of forthcoming Council meetings three clear days before the meeting is to be held by displaying a notice in a conspicuous place in the community. The Act places an additional requirement for such notices to be published electronically. There is also a requirement to publish electronically, so far as is reasonably practicable, any documents relating to the business to be transacted at the meeting. This does not apply where the documents relate to business, which, in the opinion of the Council, is likely to be transacted in private or where the disclosure of such documents would be contrary to any other legislation.

Reference was then made to Section 58 of the Act as it relates to Members interests and those present were reminded that this Section transfers responsibility for the maintenance of community/town council registers of interest from the principal Councils Monitoring Officer to the Proper Officer of each community/town council. As such, in accordance with the Act, and from 1st May 2015, it is the Proper Officer (a member of the Council's staff designated by the Council for this purpose) who is required to publish all declarations of interest electronically.

Mrs Williams advised that she had sought guidance from Welsh Government and has been advised that Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000 does require community/town councils to maintain a register of interests. However community/town councils are not required to register certain financial and other interests upfront i.e. within 28 days of taking up office (which County Councillors are required to do). The view of Welsh Government is that the code of conduct has always required that all disclosed interests (whether under paragraph 11 or 15(1) of the code) should be entered into the Section 81 register. They will be modifying the code to make this clear when making other changes later this year.

Members were advised that prior to the introduction of Section 58 of the Act, the register needed to be available for inspection at council offices at all reasonable hours. The Section now requires that the register is also published electronically. Community Councillors will still be required to declare personal and, where appropriate, prejudicial interests at meetings, and these would be recorded in the minutes. The Proper Officer is now required to ensure that this interest is recorded in a register and displayed. The register must be available for inspection at all reasonable hours and must be published electronically.

A query was raised as to whether if the declaration of interest is recorded in the minutes, and subsequently published electronically, there is a requirement to also publish the details in a register. Mrs Williams advised that it is a requirement of the Act that a register is kept electronically for this purpose. It is taken as good practice for declarations to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and now there is the requirement to ensure they are published on a register kept for this purpose. The register should be updated as soon as practical after each meeting where new interests are declared and published. With regards to the 'Register of Members Interest', which is an up front declaration of members financial and other interests, it was noted that at present, there is no statutory requirement to publish this information.

Concern was expressed that there may be occasions when it is known that a declaration should be made but is not or when it is known that the declaration made is incorrect. Mrs Williams advised that several training sessions on the code of conduct had been arranged to which all community/town councillors and Clerks had been invited. In that a further session is to be arranged for new members, it was proposed that those who require a refresher course be invited to attend. Mrs Williams referred to the flow chart produced with regards to declarations of interest with specific reference to the question that members should ask themselves when considering if there is an interest to declare (personal or prejudicial) and it was agreed that a copy would be sent to each Clerk. It was confirmed that should there be an alleged/potential breach of the code of conduct, it should be referred to the Monitoring Officer in order that it can be determined whether it should be passed to the Ombudsman.

Members thanked Mrs Williams for her informative presentation and for responding to the queries that had been raised during the course of the debate.

## 7. **ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT**

Mr H. Rees, Chair of the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum and Caerphilly County Borough Council Armed Forces Lead Officer, gave a presentation on the Armed Forces Community Covenant and its link to the designated military unit - 203 Welsh Field Hospital. All Armed Forces Community Covenants exist to redress any disadvantages that the Armed Forces community faces in comparison to other citizens, and to recognise the sacrifices that they have made. There is also a nominated dedicated Armed Forces Community Covenant "Champion" - Councillor Alan Higgs.

In opening his presentation, he advised that an Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement at a local level, the Armed Forces Covenant introduced nationally by Central Government in 2011, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces Community. He advised that the purpose of such a scheme is to ensure that the armed forces community has equality of access to local public services, and are not disadvantaged by their military service.

He explained how the local covenant compliments both the national covenant and a number of other support services that are available from partner organisations. Mr Rees referred to the role of the local multi agency Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum (which comprises of representatives from the county borough, Royal British Legion (RBL), Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA), 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital, Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Gwent Police, Gwent Police & Crime Commissioner, Probation Service, Wales Community Rehabilitation Company, Job Centre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations, Veterans UK; Change Step; Defence Medical Welfare Service, Caerphilly Business Forum, Caerphilly Federation for Small Businesses.

Hire-A-Hero and First Choice Housing Association and to the process of encouraging local communities to support the service community in their area, and to develop an understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community (which includes both serving and former serving personnel (veterans) and their families).

It was noted that when an Armed Forces Community Covenant is in place, local groups and organisations are then able to bid for funds from the Community Covenant Grant Scheme, which is administered by the Ministry of Defence. The aim of this grant scheme is to financially support projects, at a local level, which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces community and the wider community in which they live.

Mr Rees gave examples of the support that is available and also referred to the number of community events that have been held/are programmed to further this aim:-

**Encourage Armed Forces and civilian community to help and support each other by participation in events, joint projects, or other forms of engagement** - Armed Forces Day; Remembrance Day; Big Cheese; Freedom of the Borough; Homecoming Parade.

**Create opportunities for the Armed Forces community to work closely with the council and other partners** - Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum.

**Recognising and remembering the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces Community** - Armed Forces Day, Remembrance Day, World War 1 commemorations, Rededication of memorials, Freedom of the Borough, Homecoming Parade.

**Higher prominence to the Royal British Legion, SSAFA and Veterans Associations** - key partners in CAFF; Armed Forces Day; Remembrance Day; RBL Outreach; Change Step.

**Free/discounted access to leisure facilities and discounts at shops/restaurants** - CCBC free swim, Heroes Welcome, Defence Discount Service etc.

**CCBC full disregard** of War Disablement Pension, War Widows Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments when 'means testing' for Council Tax and Housing Benefit.

**Royal British Legion Outreach Service** - delivered from country borough offices at Ty Penallta and Bargoed library

Specific reference was made to the 'Help the Heroes' initiative and the support given by the shopkeepers whereby they were invited to place a notice advising that 'Heroes Welcome in Caerphilly County Borough'. Building on the success of this scheme, Officers are supporting the Welsh Government initiative to highlight and promote the Defence Discount Service and the Defence Privilege Card, which provides veterans with substantial discounts from registered retail outlets. Reference was also made to the role of the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum network and "virtual network", town centre management groups and businesses, Caerphilly Business Forum, Federation of Small Businesses and articles that appeared in Newsline and the Town Centre Gazette which all strive to promote the aims of the covenant and of course the availability and advantages of the Defence Privilege Card. Details are available through a dedicated Armed Forces Community Covenant page on a Council's Website.

Mr Rees referred to the most recent event at the Caerphilly Big Cheese which, within the Caerphilly Armed Forces marquee, showcased the Armed Forces community, with assistance from the Royal Welsh, REME, Royal Artillery, Royal Logistics Corps, Army Cadets, Recruiting for Armed Forces Reservists and support from service charities and providers - RBL, SSAFA, Poppy Factory, Change Step, Hire-A-Hero, CAB.

In closing, Mr Rees advised that the Forum will continue to help and support the Armed Forces community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement and encourage the civilian community to extend their support beyond Armed Forces Day, throughout the year and on longer-term projects that benefit their local community. Support will continue to be provided to create opportunities for the Armed Forces community to work closely with the council and other partners.

Members thanked Mr Rees for his informative presentation and for responding to the queries that had been raised during the course of the debate.

## **8. NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Town and Community Council Liaison Committee is scheduled for 28th October and the Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee for 2nd December 2015.

The meeting closed at 8pm