



VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN
ON WEDNESDAY 16TH MARCH 2016 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Cllr. D. Carter – Chair

Councillors:

R. W. Gough, C. Hawker, A. Lewis, R. Woodyatt

Together with:

Abertridwr Community Church	-	Mr. L. Clay
Bargoed YMCA	-	Ms. J. Price
Caerphilly 50+ Forum	-	Mr. D. Morgan
Caerphilly Parents & Carers Forum	-	Mrs. B. Helps
Caerphilly People First	-	Mr. C. Luke
GAVO – Assistant Chief Executive	-	Mrs. E. Forbes
GAVO (Vice-Chair)	-	Mr. R. H. Cooke
Homestart Caerphilly Borough	-	Mrs. M. Snowden
Menter Iaith	-	Mrs. L. Jones
Right From The Start	-	Ms. C. Loring
The Vanguard Centre	-	Mrs. M. Wade
Van Road United Reformed Church	-	Mr. J. Wade

Also present:

J. Dix (CCBC Policy & Research Manager), J. Elliott (CCBC Senior Research Officer), A. Palmer (CCBC/GAVO), G. Jones (GAVO), M. Featherstone (CEO – GAVO), D. Titley (Customer Services Manager), R. Hassett (South Wales Fire & Rescue Service)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Ms. L. Ackerman, Mrs P.A Griffiths, C. Hawker, D.W.R. Preece, and also from, Ms. P. Jones (Caerphilly Care & Repair, Mr. A. Read (Cancercareline), Ms. S. Crane & Ms. C. Gregory (Aneurin Bevan University Health Board), Chief Insp. N. McLain, Mr. H. Llewellyn (Town & Community Council Representative).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

3. MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December 2015, and they were accepted as a true record.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF WORK OF JOHN ELLIOTT

Cllr Carter the Committee Chair opened the meeting acknowledging all the good work of John Elliott (Research Officer) in supporting the Voluntary Sector since 1996 with the formation of Caerphilly Borough County Council, and noted that John had worked for Local Government for almost 45-years. Cllr Gough echoed the Chair's comments noting that John Elliott has been "a good friend to the Voluntary Sector, and had provided valuable information of funding sources through the grant funding booklets he produced annually." Bob Cooke the Committee Vice-Chair thanked John for all his help and guidance, and said his dedication and support to the Voluntary Sector had been much appreciated over the years. Cyril Luke (Caerphilly People First) also commented on the support his organisation had received and the excellent relationship they had with John. Cllr. Woodyatt noted that John had become a pillar of support, and acknowledged the commitment given to support the Voluntary Sector by both John Elliott, and Jackie Dix (Policy and Research Manager).

John expressed his thanks for the kind words and comment it had been "an honour and a privilege to work with the Voluntary Sector."

The Committee asked to be informed of the future contact officers for the Voluntary Sector once the Policy Unit restructuring has been finalised.

5. PRESENTATION: WELFARE REFORM AND SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTS – DAVE TITLEY, CUSTOMER SERVICES MANAGER

Dave Titley (DT) introduced the work of the Gwent Money Advice (GMAP) Project, which had been a two-year project looking at mitigating the impact of the welfare reforms on people in Gwent. A research project was undertaken as part of the project, with the research ending in November 2015, with the report currently being finalised for publication. DT explained that the research showed that "being poor is more expensive" with greater costs incurred through not having the necessary documents to open bank accounts, affecting the ability to reap the savings of paying for utilities by direct debit. Again not having access to the Internet will mean people miss out on financial saving deals. People on low incomes have to pay more for insurance cover. Credit charges may have higher levels of interest, particularly because people may be using illegal money lenders as a source of readily available income. Figures from the Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) suggest that some people may be in debt with several loans at any one time.

Caerphilly County Borough Council has the second highest number of people claiming benefits, with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council being the highest. The estimated loss in unclaimed benefit over the year was £119 million. The amount of debt within the population according to the CAB in the north-west of Gwent is now 33%, the Caerphilly borough and Blaenau Gwent areas.

Statistics indicate that correspondingly the same areas have a high rate of disabilities within the population. This in itself will have an effect on finances. Many people from the areas have trouble in paying Council Tax and are consequently in arrears, and may also have trouble paying essential bills such as gas, electricity and water.

DT noted poverty also affect working households, which is often unrecognised, with benefit support providing a much needed safety net. DT commented it is essential that any financial problems are addressed early on and before they reach crisis point. After this point is reached it becomes incredible harder to improve the situation.

The Gwent Money Advice Project has provided a coordinated approach to tackling poverty. DT noted that fuel poverty is now being addressed by the provision of good technical advice to encourage savings on bills such as improved house insulation. The Project has developed on line training on debt for Local Authorities, and a website has been developed on useful sources of information around debt management. DT emphasised that debt advice services must be registered with the Financial Conduct Authority to provide information. The Welsh Government is currently looking at advice services and considering rolling out the work of the project across Wales as part of this work.

DT agreed to pass the finalised report to Jackie Dix for circulation to the Committee.

The Chair thanked DT for his presentation.

6. BUDGETS – VOLUNTARY SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES QUESTION TO COMPACT PARTNERS: THE THIRD SECTOR WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT SCRUTINY PROCESSES ARE IN PLACE TO ENSURE THAT BUDGET DECISIONS FOR ALL FUNDING, INCLUDING HYPOTHECATED FUNDING, WHETHER AT OFFICER OR ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL ARE BASED ON AN EVIDENCED BUSINESS CASE AND WHETHER RISK AND EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENTS ARE CARRIED OUT

Martin Featherstone (CEO of GAVO) introduced the Voluntary Sector Representatives question, which is around the transparency of the evidence base from Compact Partners for making decisions on budgets and undertaking Equality Impact Assessments on decisions made. He noted that third sector organisations wanted to ensure that the scrutiny process around decision making on budgets was tackled fairly, and to ensure that there was sufficient accountability when decisions are made. Jackie Dix (JD) noted she had discussed the question with Nicole Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services and S 151) and was able to impart that the following reports in respect of budgets are presented to scrutiny committee meetings throughout the year, with these meetings open to the public, and the reports posted on the Authority's website. These reports typically cover:-

- Grant funding
- Budget monitoring
- Budgets by service area
- Anticipated Outturn position and issues re potential overspends
- Savings proposals

The above reports include an equalities paragraph, with savings proposals prior to consideration by Full Council including an Equality Impact Assessment.

Where appropriate business cases are produced for committee meetings such as on procurement of new services, and decisions to collaborate.

JD recalled the budget discussion at the December 2015 meeting of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee, with consultation undertaken with the committee by the Interim Chief Executive Officer, the Acting Director of Corporate Services and Head of Service Performance and Property before a report on proposed reductions to the Voluntary Sector budget was considered by the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee. Subsequently the proposal to reduce the Voluntary Sector budget was rejected by Full Council.

JD also referred to work in hand at the Council to improve the effectiveness of scrutiny committee working, with a recent review being undertaken by Democratic Services, which has been followed by a training programme for committee members.

Cyril Luke (Caerphilly People First) noted how positive he found it representing the Voluntary Sector on the Health, Social Care and Well-being Scrutiny Committee. He said that these meetings had good open dialogue.

Cllr Woodyatt commended both Cyril Luke and Margaret Veater for their immense contributions to the Health, Social Care and Well-being Scrutiny Committee.

Cllr Gough commented that the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee he sits on requests that the Head of Service gives budget updates. Cllr Gough noted that there was no third sector representation on the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee but that all scrutiny committee meetings are open to the public.

Third Sector representatives made a number of statements on this agenda item. Most wished the point to be made that impacts on the third sector should be discussed at scrutiny committees with the lead officers concerned, and with the third sector in attendance. This would ensure that the representatives of the third sector would know what decisions have been made. It was also suggested that the third sector should be involved early on in discussions with Heads of Service, and Directors in making budget decisions.

Martin Featherstone thanked the Council for its response, and asked in the spirit of the question for a response from other Compact Partners, and in particular in relationship to hypothecated funding. He gave the example around officers' decisions on Communities First funding. It was noted however, that with Communities First funding the Welsh Government did not give much local determination.

7. COMPACT REVIEW – JACKIE DIX POLICY AND RESEARCH MANAGER CCBC

JD informed that the inaugural meeting of the Compact Review Group had gone well with both the Chair and Vice Chair attending, and nominated Voluntary Sector Representatives and a councillor representative, and a representative from the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner Office. A detailed discussion had taken place around: the new Public Service Boards coming into being on 1st April 2016, the requirements of the Future Generations legislation, and the Local Government (Wales) Draft Bill and potential local government reorganisation, and the ongoing review of the Welsh Government's working group on the Third Sector Scheme on which the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of GAVO sits. The following recommendations were made by the review group:

- 1) Compact review to be put on hold until September 2016 to enable clearer direction following:
 - i. National Assembly for Wales elections – Welsh Government senior civil servants working around the implementation of Public Service Boards, and the future Generations legislation have indicated a steer will come in autumn 2016 on the Local Government (Wales) Draft Bill, with the consultation comments, currently being analysed, used in the future shaping of legislative content.
 - ii. It is envisaged that the current Caerphilly local well being assessment currently being drafted, will be available for the wide engagement of partners in looking at what the data is telling us, and the identification of possible areas for tackling through partnership work.
 - iii. A better steer will be available through the Welsh Government's working group on the Third Sector Scheme.
- 2) It is proposed that the Compact Partners shape the content of the interim Compact Action Plan for 2016-17 by outlining their key activities with the Voluntary Sector, which will be shaped by the Policy Unit into a proposed Annual Compact Action Plan 2016-17 for the consideration of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee Meeting on the 15th June 2016.
- 3) It is recommended that Natural Resources Wales is invited to become a Compact Partner.

All the recommendations were agreed by the Committee. JD noted her intention to take the Future Generations assessment of local well-being to the September 2016 meeting of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee.

JD was requested by the Chair to contact Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to nominate a representative to the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee.

8. OPEN DISCUSSION: WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE COUNTY BOROUGH

No issues were raised.

9. ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR COMPACT PARTNERS

a) Update from the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB)

A written report was provided with the committee papers. Some questions were asked on the report regarding Community First funded health projects/interventions, and the lack of representation at committee meetings from the ABUHB. JD agreed to contact the ABUHB over these issues.

b) Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations

A written report was provided with the committee papers. MF explained the breadth of activities mentioned in the GAVO report, and the forthcoming change from Local Service Boards to the Public Service Boards and the Future Generations Well-being legislation. MF also noted that the Third Sector will continue to be represented by GAVO on the new Caerphilly borough Public Services Board coming into being in April 2016. Alison Palmer reminded the Committee that the Standing Conference being held on the 22nd March 16 at Llancaiach Fawr Manor will focus on the Future Generations legislation.

c) Digest of Caerphilly County Borough Council Committee Reports

A written report was provided with the committee papers. There were no questions raised on this report.

d) South Wales Fire & Rescue Service

A written report was provided with the committee papers. There were no questions raised on this report.

e) Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Gwent

A written report was provided with the committee papers. Cllr Carter (Chair) noted that Ian Johnston has announced he will not be seeking re-election as the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner. He requested a letter of thanks to be sent to Mr. Johnston from the Committee for being "a great friend of the Voluntary Sector", and for presenting to the Committee when initially setting up his Office on the police priorities for the area and establishing a crime plan. Bob Cooke (Vice Chair) also noted the valuable help and support that had been provided to the Third Sector by Mr. Johnston. He commented that a firm foundation had been established for his successor in working with the Third Sector.

f) Gwent Police

A written report was provided with the committee papers. There were no questions raised on this report.

10. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) BILL

JD introduced this work as an information item of the Council's response to the Welsh Government's consultation contained in the committee papers. JD noted the Welsh Government has received a good response to the consultation on the draft Local Government (Wales) Bill. However, the reporting of outcomes from the consultation by the Welsh Government will not be made before the autumn post the National Assembly Elections in May.

11. COMMUNITY PLANNING QUARTERLY BRIEFING JANUARY TO MARCH 2016

To receive and note the following information items attached.

- a) At this point Cllr. Dave Carter as Chair of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee thanked the Committee for their support over the past year, and that as is the established procedure he would be standing down with the Council's AGM in May 2016 to allow a Voluntary Sector Representative to assume the Chair. Bob Cooke as Vice-Chair conveyed his appreciation to Cllr. Carter for his chairmanship of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee meetings over the past year.

12. DECISION & ACTION SUMMARY

SUBJECT	DECISION	ACTION
1. Gwent Money Advice Service Final Report	Dave Titley to pass finalised report to Jackie Dix	Jackie Dix to circulate to the committee
2. Voluntary Sector Representatives Budget Question to Compact Partners	Martin Featherstone thanked the Council for its response, and asked in the spirit of the question for a response from other Compact Partners to be made, and in particular in relationship to hypothecated funding	All Compact Partners contacted post meeting to pass their written comments to Jackie Dix for forwarding to Martin Featherstone
3. Compact Review	<p>Following recommendations agreed by Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compact review to be put on hold until September 2016 to enable clearer direction. 2. For the Compact Partners to shape the content of the interim Compact Action Plan 2016-17 by outlining their key activities with the Voluntary Sector, which will be shaped by the Policy Unit into a proposed Annual Compact Action Plan 2016-17 for the consideration of the Voluntary 	<p>Jackie Dix (JD) following the meeting has written to Compact Partners of the approval of recommendation by the Committee for their proposed activities of work with the Voluntary Sector to be submitted to JD for forming the content of the Annual Compact Action Plan 2016-17.</p> <p>Jackie Dix following the meeting has invited National Resources Wales to join the Committee as a Compact Partner</p> <p>Jackie Dix noted her intention to take the local assessment of local well-being to the September 2016</p>

	<p>Sector Liaison Committee Meeting on the 15th June 2016.</p> <p>3. Natural Resources Wales to be invited to become a Compact Partner.</p>	meeting of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee.
4. Matters Arising from written report by the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	The Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee asked if a representative from the ABUHB could regularly attend their quarterly meetings. It was also asked by the Committee if the ABUHB could give an update at their next meeting on Communities First funded health projects/interventions.	Jackie Dix following the meeting contacted the ABUHB. Bronwen John, Head of Partnerships, will attend the 15th June committee meeting to give a presentation on Communities First funded health projects/interventions.
5. Cllr Carter (Chair) noted that Ian Johnston has announced he will not be seeking re-election as the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner and requested a letter of thanks to be sent to Mr. Johnston from the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee		A letter has been sent by Cllr Carter to Ian Johnston
6. Cllr Carter to stand down as Committee Chair In May 2016		Voluntary Sector Representatives to nominate Chair for June 2016 meeting of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday 15th June 2016 at 10.30am in the Sirhowy Room, Penallta House.

Future dates:

Wednesday 21st September 2016

Wednesday 14th December 2016

Meeting ended 12.05 pm.