



VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY 5TH DECEMBER 2018 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth (Chair)
Ms M. Jones – (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

A. Collis, K. Etheridge, J.E. Fussell, A.G. Higgs and R. Whiting,

Together with Representatives from:

Citizen's Advice Bureau (Ms J. Maddison), GAVO (Mr M. Featherstone), Caerphilly Groundwork Trust (Mrs K. Stevenson), Homestart Caerphilly (Mrs M. Snowden), Menter Iaith (Mrs L. Jones), Van Road United Reformed Church (Mr J. Wade), The Vanguard Centre (Mrs. M. Wade), Cefn Hengoed Youth and Community Centre (Mrs J. Pritchard) and Oakdale Community Centre (R. Evans).

Also present:

N. Scammel (Head of Corporate Finance and Section 151 Officer), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director – Children's Services), K. Morris (Service Manager - Social Services), L. Rawlings (Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), L. Allen (Principal Accountant), A. Dallimore (Team Leader – Urban Renewal and Conservation), P. O'Neil (Senior Youth Service Manager), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), A. Palmer (CCBC/GAVO), V. Doyle (Policy Officer) and K. Houghton (Committee Services Officer).

Town and Community Council Representative (Mr H. Llewellyn)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, S. Cook, R.W. Gough, D. Harse, Mrs B.A. Jones, Mrs T. Parry, A. Whitcombe, L.G. Whittle and W. Williams.

Abbeyfield (Mr H. Billington), Abertridwr Community Church (Mr. L. Clay), AMBITO (Mr M. Goldwyn), Bargoed YMCA (Ms. J. Price), Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly Care and Repair (Mrs P. Jones), Caerphilly People First (Mr. C. Luke), Charter Housing (Ms S. Howells), Cruse Bereavement Care (Mrs. C. Williams), Disability Cando Organisation (Ms. N. Perkins), Drugaid Young Persons Services (Ms L. Tibbs) Right From The Start (Ms C. Loring), South East Wales Carer's Trust (Ms N. George-Titley), YMLAEN (Mr D. Brunton)

ABUHB (Jonathan Lewis), Gwent Police (Chief Inspector N. Mclain), Office of the PCC (Ms J. Tippins), South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (Mr R. Hassett), Caerphilly Business Forum (Mrs D. Lovering) and Natural Resources Wales (Mr J. Goldsworthy).

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor A. Higgs declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in all agenda items in that he is a Council representative on the GAVO Executive Board.

Councillor R. Whiting declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 in that he is a former trustee for Channel View Community Centre.

3. MINUTES – 19TH SEPTEMBER 2018

The representative from the Vanguard Caerphilly requested a further correction to the minutes from the 14th March 2018, under agenda item 7 of those minutes, the section headed as follows should read;

Updates from Voluntary Sector Organisations

The Committee were pleased to hear that the Vanguard Caerphilly Centre currently have a busy schedule of events including several concerts which have featured professional opera singers.

Subject to the aforementioned amendment, it was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th September 2018 be agreed as a correct record and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that, subject to the aforementioned amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

During the approval of the minutes an additional matter was raised by a Member and discussed regarding the application process for grant requests and the need to simplify it. This was particularly in relation to applications to the Welsh Church Fund.

The Corporate Policy Manager informed Members that a review of the process had taken place. In terms of the Welsh Church Fund, the information requested from applicants has been looked at and deemed adequate for making a judgement on the awarding of funds.

Members were also advised that the Welsh Church Fund will need to be reviewed and the criteria adjusted, given that a larger amount of funding had reached communities and organisations this financial year, and a report on this would likely be produced in Spring 2019.

4. PRESENTATION BY BEDWAS WORKMAN'S HALL (VERBAL)

Due to unforeseen circumstances, representatives from the Bedwas Workman's Hall were unable to attending the Committee meeting to give a presentation therefore this item was deferred to a date to be confirmed.

5. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2019/20

Councillor R. Whiting declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 in that he is a former trustee for Channel View Community Centre.

The Head of Corporate Finance and Section 151 Officer introduced the report which updated Members on the Council's draft budget proposals for the 2019-20 financial year. She drew Members attention to the 2019-20 savings target of £15.6mil and the Council's legal duty to set a balanced budget. These savings are part of a larger savings target of £44mil over the next 4 years.

Officers referred Members to the details of the report and Appendix, and highlighted key points which included known pressures associated with the pay award and pensions and growth pressures associated with recycling and children and adult services. It was further highlighted to Members that to meet budget pressures the proposals included a 6.95% increase in Council Tax and cuts to services. Despite proposed service cuts the Authority continues to be a large one and 88% of services will remain in place.

The Head of Corporate Finance and Section 151 Officer provided Members with a timeline for the budget setting process, with the consultation period concluding on 11th January 2019 at which point the a report will go to Cabinet on the 13th January 2019. The budget will then be approved and set at the 21st February 2019 meeting of Council approval at Council.

Members were informed that their comments will be included as part of the consultation and their attention was drawn to Appendix B which detailed how Members could comment further as part of the public consultation.

The Chair thanked the Officer for their report and Members comments were welcomed.

Members discussed the non-renewal of the Authority's contract for the Family Support Service with Barnardo's. Members enquired as to how the Social Work Teams within Children's Services would prioritise those families with the greatest need of support and sought reassurance that there would be no drop in service delivery levels. The Assistant Director for Children's Services clarified to Members that the Barnardo's Family Support was a referral service so those families being supported will already be engaged with a Council Social Worker. The change to the service will mean the Social Worker will provide the support in house rather than referring the family to another organisation. He explained to Members that in terms of prioritising of families most in need of support, this was constantly changing and being reassessed to ensure the right support is given to each vulnerable family.

Members expressed concerns over reductions being made to the Authority's contributions to the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), Groundwork and GAVO. This was particularly in relation to the CAB and the additional pressure the introduction of Universal Credit will have on the organisation. The Corporate Policy Manager advised Members that the Authority had been able to protect funding to CAB for the previous 10 years but this situation has had to be reviewed, however the Authority are not the sole source of funding for the CAB. In terms of the introduction of Universal Credit, Central Government is providing £39mil to CABs across the country specifically to provide an enhanced advisory service and address any additional pressures on the organisation as a result of Universal Credit. Similarly the current service level agreements with GAVO and Groundwork have been protected up until

now but unfortunately this has also had to be reviewed due to the pressures facing the authority.

Members sought reassurance that the decommissioning of the final element of the grant to the GAVO Youth Service which funded an advisory post, will not result in the loss of youth engagements skills, particularly play engagement, specific to that role. The Senior Youth Service Manager provided Members with background information relating to this grant. The grant originally funded an advisory post to provide support to Community Groups wanting to or running holiday schemes in order to ensure that health and safety, and safeguarding regulation requirements were met and followed. Since this post was formed, legislation has changed and it has become a more onerous process for local groups to run these schemes and so there has been a drop in the numbers of groups requiring advice and support therefore the decision was made to phase out the post. The proposal in the report is the final stage of this. In addition the Youth Service has and continues to develop these schemes in house so the engagement skills, including play engagement, will not be lost.

A Member enquired about the reductions to the playground maintenance budget and the impact this would have on children's play areas. The Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services advised the Committee that the Authority had a statutory responsibility to ensure that local authority owned play equipment is safe and removed if irreparable. There will be a maintenance budget for this work to continue, but the budget will be reduced. In terms of play areas on housing developments then generally it would be the developer's management company who would be responsible for maintenance of equipment unless there was an agreement in place with the Authority to maintain, in those cases the budget for maintenance would be supported by S106 monies.

Members sought clarification on the proposal to reduce caretaker support across all Community Centres from October 2019 particularly regarding whether this would now result in the Community Centres becoming the direct employers of caretakers. The Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services advised Members that the proposal was a financial reduction therefore the Authority would remain the employers of caretakers but the Community Centres would fund the posts. Members expressed concerns that this would be potentially unsustainable for smaller Community Centres and further consultation with centres and analysis of centre specific data was needed. Officers highlighted that the impact level was set at high and alternative options would need to be explored. The funding is not scheduled to be reduced until October 2019 which provided the Authority and Community Centres an opportunity to work together to find alternative provisions.

Members further discussed the level of analysis that had taken place of centre specific income data and information and whether further consideration of this would impact on the decision to close community centres. Members enquired as to the extent that a comprehensive assessment of community centre assets in terms of facilities and services offered had been conducted and whether any work had been done to identify duplicate services within the community. The Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services assured Members that the Authority would be engaging with Community Centres to identify similar provisions in the community that could be directed toward the centres.

A Member highlighted that Community Centres struggled to recruit to their management committees; this has been made harder by the ceasing of management training which was provided by GAVO. This has impacted on the good management and therefore the survival of community centres. The representative from GAVO

informed the Committee that GAVO is also facing similar financial challenges as local authorities and difficult decisions have had to be made to protect frontline services and look at alternative service models. The training provision was not income generating and alternative training opportunities could be offered online.

Members raised concerns that the Community Regeneration Funding was being reduced long term and ceased temporarily for one year. These concerns included the impact on organisations that have benefitted from this fund previously and the criteria for awarding the grant re-focussing on stimulating economy and jobs which would mean some organisations may struggle to meet the criteria. Members also highlighted that some organisations may not be able to deliver revenue projects with the grant funding being bolstered by a capital budget. The Team Leader for Urban Renewal and Conservation clarified that the 50% reduction of the funding from 20/21 was as a result of a review conducted of revenue across the whole Service. Members were advised that the 100% reduction of the fund for one year is a temporary measure to balance the budget however there would still be the £100k capital budget to stimulate income generating applications from a number of bodies. Members were also informed that there was information available on the Council's website which lists the available grants that could be used as alternative funding for organisations that had previously used the Community Regeneration funding.

Members reiterated their concerns that the refocusing of the grant would adversely affect a number of organisations particularly those who may now no longer be eligible to apply for the grant as they are charitable bodies. Members requested that further discussion be had with the Committee regarding the revised criteria for the grant. The Officer stated that although the current focus of the grant was on income generating enterprises there would be further discussion with the Committee on how to take this forward. A Member proposed that a meeting take place with the Head of Planning and Regeneration, the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Public Protection, relevant Officers and any interested parties to discuss how to move forward with the funding. This proposal was agreed by the Committee and Members emphasised the need for GAVO to be included in these discussions. The representative from GAVO welcomed a discussion which not just looked at this grant but also the wider need for open dialogue with the 3rd Sector and consideration of the leverage for further funding that the Wellbeing Plan could bring to the voluntary sector.

A brief discussion was had in regard to improving communication and working between the Authority's Urban Renewal and Conservation team and the Voluntary Sector and members were directed to the Council website for information on grants and contact details for Officers from the team.

A Member enquired in regards to the non-renewal of the Mental Health Carers Support contract and the consultation currently being undertaken and whether the outcome of that consultation would affect the proposal to not renew the contract. The Service Manager for Social Services advised the Committee that a review of the Carers Trust had been conducted and it was found that there was a duplication of work taking place and the Service was confident that the work undertaken by the Mental Health Carers Support contract could be carried out elsewhere.

6. WELLBEING PLAN ACTION AREA UPDATE (VERBAL UPDATE)

With the agreement of the Chair and Committee approval it was agreed that this item be brought forward on the agenda.

The Policy Officer provided the Committee with a verbal update on progress made on the Wellbeing Plan Action Area. She informed Members that work was focusing on developing detailed action plans to deliver on the Action Area outcomes.

Members were advised that the Public Service Board had met on Tuesday 4th December 2018 to consider all the action plans. During this meeting the Board also endorsed the Council's Welsh Language 5 year strategy. Members were invited to contact the Corporate Policy Team if they wish to be included in any of the action area or enabler groups.

The representative from GAVO further updated the Members, informing the Committee that the action area steering group would be meeting to progress the tasks within the area and crosscutting opportunities, across the enablers and action areas of the Wellbeing plan, had been identified.

The Chair thanked the Officer and Representative for their updates and Members comments were welcomed.

The representative for Cefn Hengoed Youth and Community Centre enquired as to whether the various work streams from the Wellbeing Plan were supported by the Council's budget. The Corporate Policy Manager clarified that the Plan sits with the PSB and is supported by individual members budgets and the Council collaborate with the PSB who fund the County Borough staff working on delivery of the Plan.

7. ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR COMPACT PARTNERS (VERBAL UPDATES)

The representative for Cefn Hengoed Youth and Community Centre raised concerns regarding the process for receiving grant funding from the Welsh Church Fund once a successful application has been made. She highlighted that the current process of organisations paying for the grant activity upfront and then producing receipts in order to get the grant money paid out was difficult for smaller organisations who may not have those monies in reserve. This may be a deterrent to other organisations applying for the grant. The Policy Officer advised Members that it was possible for the grant to be paid out in stages but 'up front' payment was not allowed under the authorities financial regulations. Improvements have been made to the process so that the time taken to process grants has been reduced. She was happy to discuss this matter further with the Member outside of the meeting.

Officer highlighted to Members that although a paper booklet listing all available grants was no longer available, there is a list along with details of each grant available on the Council website.

The meeting closed at 12.05

Approved as a correct record and subject to amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2019, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR