



## **VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY 14TH MARCH 2019 AT 10.30 A.M.**

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**PRESENT:**

Ms M. Jones – (Vice-Chair)

**Councillors:**

A. Collis, S. Cook, K. Etheridge, J.E. Fussell, R.W. Gough, D. Harse, A.G. Higgs, Mrs B.A. Jones, Mrs T. Parry, A. Whitcombe, R. Whiting, and W. Williams.

**Together with Representatives from:**

Abertridwr Community Church (Mr. L. Clay), Caerphilly Care and Repair (Mrs P. Jones), Caerphilly People First (Mr. C. Taylor), (Cefn Hengoed Youth and Community Centre (J. Pritchard), GAVO (Mr M. Featherstone and Ms G. Jones), Caerphilly Groundwork Trust (Mrs K. Stevenson), Homestart Caerphilly (Mrs M. Snowden), Menter Iaith (Mrs L. Jones), Oakdale Community Centre (R. G. Evans), Right From The Start (M. Lippard), The Parent Network (Ms. M. Jones), Van Road United Reformed Church (Mr J. Wade), The Vanguard Centre (Mrs M. Wade).

**Also present:**

K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), A. Palmer (CCBC/GAVO), V. Doyle (Policy Officer (Statistics and Funding), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), A. Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal and Conservation) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

Mr N. Maidman (Theatre Chairman) and Ms J. O'Callaghan (Tickets and Membership Secretary) - Blackwood Little Theatre.

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth (Chair), J. Bevan, A.G. Higgs, A. Whitcombe and L.G. Whittle and Mr H. Llewellyn (Town and Community Council Representative).

#### **2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

#### **3. MINUTES – 5TH DECEMBER 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 5th December 2018 were approved as a correct record.

#### **4. BLACKWOOD LITTLE THEATRE - PRESENTATION**

Mr N. Maidman and Ms J. O'Callaghan delivered the presentation that provided an overview of Blackwood Little Theatre (BLT). They set out how BLT operates, its many successes and the challenges faced in what is a fully functioning theatre. In terms of the future they explained that they need to stay relevant in maintaining their high standards. A key priority will be to maintain the building ensuring it is both safe and welcoming and will provide a positive experience to both patrons and members. They will continue to be a part of the community and ensure that the theatre is both challenging and entertaining. The intention is for the theatre to become a shining light for Youth Theatre and the team will continue to help the young people grow into confident, happy adults who'll be ready to take on the world!

Members were advised that the Theatre became a charity in 1972 and all activities are governed by the Charities Commission. The management structure is a simple one which consists of 7 people on the Committee. They are strictly a non-profit making organisation and have been able to be involved in charitable activities to benefit others within the community. The building is in need of upgrade in respect of the lighting and technical theatre requirements and once the building is watertight and fully functional the Committee will look to secure grants from Lottery Funding etc to fulfil this aspiration which will be somewhere in the region of £60K. The Committee were pleased to note that the team are celebrating 90 years of bringing theatre to Blackwood this year and they want to be there in another 90 years to keep bringing the magic of live theatre to the community.

The Vice-Chair thanked both representatives from BLT for attending the Committee and delivering their detailed presentation. She urged Members to attend BLT which is regarded as a 'hidden secret' within Blackwood and for this message to be passed on so that more people can attend future performances.

#### **5. REVIEW OF CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH REGENERATION GRANTS**

The Head of Regeneration and Planning and the Team Leader for Urban Renewal delivered the report which presented proposals to merge several grant programmes currently administered by the Council's Regeneration Division. The report had been presented to Cabinet on the 27th February 2019 seeking approval to consult on the proposals. Cabinet unanimously recommended that Officers undertake a wider consultation exercise with the Voluntary Sector, Community Groups and the Business Sector on the contents of the report and following the consultation exercise, a further report be presented to Cabinet.

Officers explained that a review has been undertaken on the revenue and capital grant schemes currently administered by the Council's Regeneration Division. It is recommended that existing grants be amalgamated into a combined "Caerphilly Enterprise Fund" that focuses delivery on developing business growth and creating employment opportunities. The current grant schemes (summarised in paragraph 2.1 in the report) are administered by both the Urban Renewal and the Business Support and Funding Teams within the Regeneration Division. They offer financial support to both the commercial/business sectors and community/voluntary sectors. As there are a mixture of revenue and capital funded grants there is a requirement to manage and keep them separate. The potential to combine the grants into a single "Caerphilly Enterprise Fund" will offer improved support to start-up businesses, stimulate economic growth, fill identified supply chain voids and support job creation. Officers propose discontinuing the Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) programme and focusing its budget into the Caerphilly Enterprise fund. The good work that the voluntary sector and community groups undertake is fully recognised and greatly

appreciated but it is apparent that there are a number of external funding mechanisms that they are able to bid into in order to secure monies for localised community projects. Reference was made to Appendix 1 that sets out the current grants available to those groups. It was noted that should the CRF fund be closed, Officers will continue to offer support and guidance to groups looking for funding and will actively signpost them to suitable available external grants.

It is proposed that from 2019/20, the new Caerphilly Enterprise Fund will offer funding support under two categories, namely Fund 1 – Business Support Grants and Fund 2 – Property Improvement Grants. Details of which are set out in paragraph 4.25 in the report. In addition, the Oakdale Community Benefit Fund will continue and be administered separately.

The Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee discussed the current and proposed grant schemes and were sign posted to the Council's website to 'have your say' as part of the consultation process. The duration of the consultation process was discussed and it was noted that the consultation response would be presented to Cabinet at the end of May 2019. A Member expressed concerns with the proposals and emphasised the need to safeguard the Voluntary Sector. Another Member felt that the report was driven by the Business Sector and that the grants listed are comprehensive, not easily accessible and require strict criteria. He referred to the Welsh Church Act Fund being restructured and expressed his disappointment that there are no Voluntary Sector Representatives that sit on the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel.

Officers advised that there is extreme pressure on senior managers to make savings for the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and it is likely that these grants programmes will come under scrutiny. It is therefore imperative that available resources are aligned to make the greatest impact and help take forward the Council's Corporate Objectives. The proposed grant limits and intervention rates were set out in Table 1 (paragraph 4.31) in the report. In terms of the Oakdale Community Benefit Fund it is proposed that the existing geographical boundary is extended from 1.5 miles to 2 miles. This would add the communities of Markham, Cefn Fforest, Blackwood, part of Newbridge and Crumlin. The existing eligible communities are Argoed, Croespenmaen, Kendon, Oakdale, Penmaen, Pentwyn and Trinant. It also brings in the communities of Llanhilleth, Brynithel and Aberbeeg in Blaenau Gwent however the report recommended that the grant should not be available to communities outside of Caerphilly County Borough.

A Member referred to appendix 1 and felt that there is an in-balance and that money will be taken from the Voluntary Sector and given to the Business Sector. In addition, there is no list for business start-ups within the appendix and this was acknowledged by Officers. Assurances were given to the Committee that Officers are not looking to exclude Voluntary Sector Groups in this process. Officers explained the need for one year only savings on top of the original MTFP savings. The budget for business grants and the Community Regeneration Fund were both identified for one year only savings and would therefore be significantly impacted. The Committee were urged to put their views across as part of the consultation process.

The Committee expressed their concerns for the refocusing of the Community Regeneration Fund. This fund enables community and voluntary sector organisations in the County Borough to bid for capital and/or revenue funding to take forward initiatives they have developed as part of the community planning process. Members referenced the benefits this fund has had on their individual organisations previously and felt that this will now significantly impact the services provided. Officers confirmed that the Committee's views would be reflected within the report presented to Cabinet.

The Committee emphasised that the third sector has a huge role to play in preventative measures/services and they must be proactive. Reference was made to the match funding proposals and Members stated there are existing pressures on funding as it stands and it is important that the sector works together and consideration was given to setting up a focus group in moving forward. Clarification was sought as to whether a dedicated Officer would be nominated to provide support and assistance for organisations in applying for funding. Officers advised that interviews will be undertaken and once appointed officer details would be distributed and placed on the Council's website. A member stated that resources are not clawed back within the business sector if the project/role is unsuccessful and felt that operations within the Voluntary Sector should be treated the same as the Business Sector. In terms of how wellbeing can be quantified within funding requests, Officers clarified that in moving forward this will be considered as part of the application process however, there is a need to establish a principle setting out the finer detail.

In concluding, Officers advised that they have been tasked with the difficult position of having to make cuts that they don't want to make. It was explained that regeneration is not a statutory service and the Council has to protect its statutory services. Therefore regeneration is one of the areas where the biggest cuts have to be made.

The Vice-Chair thanked Officers for delivering their report and acknowledged that the third sector have a lot of work to do in moving forward.

## **6. WELLBEING PLAN ACTION AREA (VERBAL UPDATE)**

The Corporate Policy Manager provided a verbal update regarding the wellbeing action plan area. She advised that the Public Service Board's (PSB) annual Conference has been arranged for the 5th July 2019 and will be held at Llancaiach Fawr and urged Members of the Committee to attend, if possible.

Roger Evans and Judith Pritchard commented that they had put their names forward for input regarding the Assets area of the well-being plan. Reference was made to the wellbeing assessment that was undertaken in 2016 that is currently being digitised and will be made available on the PSB's website. This will make the document more accessible in terms of funding bids. Data Cymru are currently working on this and it is anticipated this will be available by June/July 2019. The Officer advised that the Community Asset Transfer Document is in the very early stages and this is being developed between the Policy Team and Property Services. It is recognised that there is a need to have an overarching document setting out the assets. An event has been arranged with the assistance of GAVO on the 26th March 2019 at 2pm at Tir-y-berth Community Centre to talk through the proposals and views considered prior to a report being presented to Cabinet.

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

The Committee expressed their disappointment that none of the Compact Partners were in attendance at the meeting and it was confirmed that this would be raised at the PSB's annual Conference.

A Member referred to the Asset Transfer document and in particular to Community Centres and asked what types of activities are held within these buildings. He said it would be helpful to know this type of information along with voluntary sector usage prior to next year's budget proposals. It was explained that the Council has not made

any decisions as to what assets are available for transfer at this stage, however this information, when available could be fed into the asset document. It was suggested that a sub-group could be set up from the Committee to consider this information which would be a positive way forward.

The meeting closed at 12.15pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2019, they were signed by the Chair.

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CHAIR