



SPECIAL VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 27TH JANUARY 2022 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Chair: L. Jones (Menter Caerfilli)
Vice Chair: Councillor Mrs E. M. Aldworth

Councillors:

A. Collis, S. Cook, Mrs T. Parry, Mrs D. Price, Mrs E. Stenner and W. Williams.

Also in attendance:

P. Cooke (Senior Policy Officer), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer)
S. Foley (Policy Officer), P. Massey (Policy Officer), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer)
and M. Afzal (Committee Services Officer).

Together with:

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector: GAVO, Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly Care & Repair Cymru, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Citizens Advice, Homestart Cymru, Parent Network and The Youth Centre, Cefn Hengoed.

Compact Partners: Gwent Police.

RECORDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairperson reminded those present that the meeting was being recorded and would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here to View.](#)

1. TO APPOINT A CHAIR FOR THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE

It was moved and seconded that L. Jones (Menter Caerfilli) be appointed as Chair. By way of a show of hands this was approved by the majority.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, K. Etheridge, J.E. Fussell, R.W. Gough, D.C. Harse, A.G. Higgs, Mrs J. Stone and L.G. Whittle. Apologies for absence were also received from representatives of Oakdale Community Centre, SSAFA Gwent, South Wales Fire and Rescue Services and Natural Resources Wales.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2022/23

Consideration was given to the report detailing the Draft Budget Proposals for 2022/23. The Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee was asked to consider and comment upon the content of the report prior to Final Budget Proposals being presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2022.

The Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer delivered a presentation on the 2022/23 Draft Budget Proposals to summarise the report and provide more detail around some of the key elements. The Committee was advised that details of the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement are normally announced by Welsh Government in early October each year. However, due to the delay in undertaking the UK Government spending review, details of the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement for 2022/23 were not released until the 21st December 2021. The Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer provided details of the 2022/23 draft budget proposals and outlined a range of cost and service pressures that require funding along with a proposed increase of 2.5% in Council Tax to enable the authority to set a balanced budget for the 2022/23 financial year. The ongoing financial impact of Covid-19 was highlighted and the Committee was informed that the Hardship Fund will cease on the 31st March 2022 and local authorities will be required to meet ongoing financial pressures linked to the pandemic from the funding provided in the Provisional Financial Settlement. A summary of the medium-term financial plan was also provided.

Clarification was sought on the Real Living Wage and how it will be enforced for services commissioned by Social Services from the independent sector. The Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer informed the Committee that the current Real Living Wage hourly rate is £9.90. Further detailed work will now be required with providers on an open book basis to establish fee rates moving forward that will ensure all care staff in commissioned services can be paid the Real Living Wage. Members of the Committee were also assured that this will be monitored by the Commissioning Team in Social Services.

A query was raised regarding additional staffing in a number of areas, including Town Centre Management, Community Safety and Environmental Health. The Committee was advised that there is a commitment to increase staffing capacity in key teams and to maintain these posts moving forward.

A request was made for the Third Sector to be involved in the budget setting process at an earlier stage. The Senior Policy Officer advised that he will be working with the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer in the new financial year and as part of the Transformation Programme representation from the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee would be included in the budget setting process. In response to a Members query it was confirmed that official notification of the Police precept has not yet been received.

A concern was raised in relation to raising awareness of climate change as it was felt that members of the public should be made more aware and be involved. The Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer advised the Committee that the Council has approved a Decarbonisation Strategy and also set aside £500,000 in reserves to drive the Strategy forward. The Committee was also advised that it is proposed to appoint a Lead Officer to support the delivery of the Council's Decarbonisation Strategy. It was noted the Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan are available on the Caerphilly County Borough Council website.

The Senior Policy Officer advised that the comments from the meeting will be captured as part of the consultation response and asked Members of the Committee to promote the consultation to the wider community.

A representative of the Voluntary Sector drew attention to a further Covid-19 non-domestic rates grant which is currently available and the Committee was advised that the closing date is 14th February 2022. It was noted that details of the Covid-19 non-domestic rates grant is available on the Council's website.

The meeting closed at 11.06 am.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2022, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR